*Art as Speculative Fiction*

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This lecture examines artists working in the 21st century who use strategies more familiar in the field of speculative fiction than in the visual arts. Such strategies include world building around themes such as the supernatural, magic, human-animal hybridity, and the extraterrestrial. Artists respond to what some cultural theorists have described as the current situation of being post-human and post-nature. Moving beyond anthropocentric paradigms that privilege the human experience, we will discuss artists who create fantastical, scifi-leaning narratives to picture the ways in which the fate of humans is inextricably tied to the animals, plants, and other non-human critters that co-populate our world. At least partially in response to the growing urgency of climate change, artists discussed here use a variety of media—collage, drawing, printmaking, painting—to explore the ways in which we might begin to understand humans as part of a larger, non-hierarchical network of inter-species relationships.

**Featured Artists:**

Amy Cutler (b. 1974, Poughkeepsie, NY)

ruby onyinyechi amanze (b. 1982, Nigeria)

Fay Ku (b. 1974, Taipei, Taiwan)

Firelei Báez (b. 1981, Santiago de los Caballeros, Dominican Republic)

Wangechi Mutu (b. 1972, Nairobi, Kenya)

Devan Shimoyama (b. 1989, Philadelphia, PA)

**Book reference:** Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene,* Durham: Duke University Press, 2016.

Select quotes:

“I think of paper as living, like a skin, things can be embedded into it, it is less a surface that things happen on top of, but a breathing material that can absorb and remember things.”

ruby onyinyechi amanze

“Most of my work deals with the body in context with history and nature. Because it’s so physical, I want the surface that I’m working on to reflect that. Paper reacts to the environment, it’s very flexible, it absorbs humidity or dryness, it expands and contracts like our bodies often do.”

Firelei Báez

“Human beings are not in a separate compost pile.”

Donna Haraway