UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

5th I-CReST 2025

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON RESEARCH AND PRACTICES IN SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

SYNERGY FOR FUTURE SUSTAINABILITY:
BRIDGING SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND HUMANITIES

Abstract Book

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA
CAWANGAN SELANGOR, KAMPUS DENGKIL
MALAYSIA

13th SEPTEMBER 2025

ORGANISED BY: Centre of Foundation Studies

STRATEGIC PARTNER: UiTM Global

IN COLLABORATION WITH: UTM

I-CReST 2025: 044-077 – Teaching as Activism in Higher Education: Fostering Climate Crisis Awareness through Literary Engagement

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the transformative potential of teaching literature as a form of activism to cultivate awareness and critical engagement with the climate crisis, aligning with the aims of the United Nations' SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 13 (Climate Action). As global environmental concerns increases, the need for educational initiatives that promote ecological literacy and enable students to become environmentally conscious citizens has been more pressing. A descriptive quantitative design was employed in a university-level poetry course, where selected works by Muhammad Haji Salleh and E-Wen Chong were integrated into the syllabus to examine students' perspectives on the use of ecocritical poetry to raise awareness of the climate crisis and to explore pedagogical approaches that effectively foster awareness of climate change and SDG goals. Data were collected using a questionnaire adapted from established instruments and validated by two subject-matter experts to ensure reliability and contextual relevance. Findings reveal that literature, when taught through an activist lens, enhances students' emotional and intellectual engagement with environmental issues, challenges anthropocentric worldviews, and encourages sustainable thinking aligned with SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production). The study also underscores the critical role of educators as agents of change who can disrupt dominant narratives and foster ecological empathy through literary engagement. By framing the literature classroom as a space of resistance and awareness-building, the paper argues that climate-themed texts can function as powerful tools of pedagogical activism, bridging personal insight with collective responsibility. This research contributes to the expanding field of environmental humanities and offers practical insights for climate pedagogy in higher education.

Keywords: Ecocriticism pedagogy; Climate crisis awareness; Literature and activism; Sustainable developmental goals