

## *An Introduction to the Blue Humanities*

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During my residence at the RCC, I will complete the book *An Introduction to the Blue Humanities*.

This book, currently under contract with Routledge Publishing, will introduce the blue humanities as an academic and creative discourse to scholars, creators, students, and other readers who are interested in how humans engage with our planet's water in multiple phases and locations. The book will provide an account of scholarship and creative work that engages with blue humanities thinking, a trend that has developed in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. These ideas, texts, and other creations also embrace the long cultural history of humans' perception of water, from prehistory to the present. Exploring blue connections around the globe and throughout human history represents the ambition of this book. I hope to do justice to the intellectual culture that engages me and to the geophysical watery abundance that continues to inspire so many of us.

The book will contain seven central chapters, an introduction, and a conclusion. Each of the chapters will orient itself around one of large bodies of salt water that together cover most of the surface of our planet. Each chapter will also engage with fresh water, from glaciers to rivers and lakes to clouds, rainfall, and even the invisible water vapor in the air we breathe. The introduction, "Physical Properties," will focus on a few of water's distinctive physical and chemical features, including its common presence in our environment in all three physical phases, liquid water, solid ice, and gaseous vapor. Other meaningful physical properties include water's polarity and its capacity to be a "universal solvent," as well as the salinity and tidal oscillations of the large oceans. The seven chapters start with the Pacific Ocean and consider in turn the human, historical, and geographic qualities of all the world's oceans: the Southern, the Indian, and the Atlantic Ocean as well as the smaller but distinctive Mediterranean, Caribbean, and Arctic seas. The conclusion, "Inner Seas and Other Poems," returns to creative and imaginative relationships between humans and water, as represented by sea poetry from Homer to the contemporary Pacific Islander poet Craig Santos Perez.

Making sense of water's multiplicity on our planet and in human history begins with the fundamental distinction between salt and fresh. The vast majority—over 97%—of the water on our planet is salty, and the open oceans have always stimulated and continue to inspire human imaginations. The fresh water that supports human bodies and agricultural societies is much rarer, and access to fresh water has created conflict and social disruptions in many places, from civil conflict in twenty-first century Syria to the decades-long destructive drought that afflicted the Maya of the classic period in what is now called Mexico. Each chapter in the book divides itself between a saltwater geographic location and a source of fresh water. The larger salt bodies frame planetary movements and historical periods, while the freshwater sources provide human intimacy and scale. This book represents the first comprehensive introduction to a fast-growing discourse in the environmental humanities. In the project I will also attempt to shape and imagine some possible futures for blue thinking and blue creation.