

Critical Reading Group in Environmental Humanities

Rachel Carson Centre

SUMMER SEMESTER 2019

Meeting 1 06.05.2019 (launched by founder & organiser Dr Anna Pilz, RCC fellow)

Britta Padberg, '**The Center for Interdisciplinary Research (ZiF) - Epistemic and Institutional Considerations**', in Peter Weingart and Britta Padberg (eds), *University Experiments in Interdisciplinarity: Obstacles and Opportunities* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2014), pp. 95-113.

“When the *Center for Interdisciplinary Research* (ZiF) was founded in Bielefeld in 1968, it was one of the few university-based institutes in the world whose programs were oriented to cross-disciplinary research. Interdisciplinarity was at the time still rather exotic and was an exception to the common rule that research and teaching at universities had to be organized in disciplines. In the 45 years since then, there has been fundamental change in the organization of universities. Interdisciplinary centers, research programs and study programs have sprung up like mushrooms and the mission statements of almost all universities advocate the promotion of interdisciplinary collaboration as an institutional goal. In Germany, this development has experienced an additional boost in the past years through the Excellence Initiative. [...]

In the following, I first focus on the question which reasons speak for interdisciplinarity (1); I will contrast these reasons with institutional interests (2). Some epistemic considerations will follow (3). In the main part, I will take a differentiated look at interdisciplinary forms of collaboration and their scientific results by using a typological classification (4). In conclusion, I will present some institutional observations on the promotion of interdisciplinarity at universities.”

Text proposed by Simone Müller

Meeting 2 20.05.2019

Astrida Neimanis, Cecilia Åsberg, and Johan Hedrén, '**Four Problems, Four Directions for Environmental Humanities: Toward Critical Posthumanities for the Anthropocene**', *Ethics & The Environment*, vol. 20, no. 1 (2015), pp. 67-97.

Taking into account intersecting trends in political, academic, and popular engagements with environmental issues, this paper concerns the development of environmental humanities as an academic field of inquiry, specifically in this new era many are calling the Anthropocene. After a brief outline of the environmental humanities as a field, we delimit four problems that currently frame our relation to the environment, namely: alienation and intangibility; the post-political situation; negative framing of environmental change; and compartmentalization of “the environment” from other spheres of concern. Addressing these problems, we argue, is not possible *without* environmental humanities. Given that this field is not entirely new, our second objective is to propose specific shifts in the environmental humanities that could address the aforementioned problems. These include

attention to environmental imaginaries; rethinking the “green” field to include feminist genealogies; enhanced transdisciplinarity and postdisciplinarity; and increasing “citizen humanities” efforts.

Meeting 3 03.06.2019

Laura Severin, '**Doing "Cluster Hiring" Right**', Inside Higher Ed (30 September 2013).

[\[https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2013/09/30/essay-how-colleges-can-engage-cluster-hiring\]](https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2013/09/30/essay-how-colleges-can-engage-cluster-hiring)

Benjamin Mueller, '**Hiring that Crosses Disciplines Can Create New Tensions**', *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (24 February 2014).

Colleen Flaherty, '**Cluster Hiring and Diversity**', Inside Higher Ed (1 May 2015).

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/05/01/new-report-says-cluster-hiring-can-lead-increased-faculty-diversity>

Texts suggested by Matthew Booker.

Meeting 4 17.06.2019

Joni Adamson, '**Networking Networks and Constellating New Practices in the Environmental Humanities**', *PMLA*, vol. 131, no. 2 (2016), pp. 347-355.

Academic institutionalization of the environmental humanities began in the early 1990s, and since 2000 the field has grown rapidly because of infrastructural support and because of funding for curricular innovation and programming. The environmental humanities include historical, philosophical, aesthetic, religious, literary, filmic, and media studies; they are informed by the most recent research in the sciences of nature and the anthropogenic factors that contribute to increasingly extreme weather events—drought, fire, hurricanes, melting glaciers, and warming and rising oceans (see Adamson, “Humanities” 135; Nye et al. 22-28).

Notes:

To learn more about the 'Humanities for the Environment' and find out about the different communication strategies for various projects, you can have a look at the following webpage:

<https://hfe-observatories.org>

See furthermore Bethany Wiggin's discussion of the public face of the environmental humanities at the 'Beyond Despair' conference (April 2019). You can watch her presentation from 4:15 on the Panel 'Teaching Environmental Humanities' here:

<https://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/beyond-despair-next-steps-environmental-humanities/>

Text suggested by Diana Villanuevo-Romero.

Meeting 5 01.07.2019

Thomas G. Andrews, '**Contemplating Animal Histories: Pedagogy and Politics across Borders**', *Radical History Review*, 107 (2010), pp. 139-165.

This essay describes two experiments in integrating contemplative practices such as sitting meditation and lectio divina into an undergraduate seminar titled "Animals in America." It begins by giving account of the first iteration of the class, then discussing student evaluations. It proceeds to explain how the author subsequently revised the course to deepen students' engagement with the subject matter, as well as to heighten their confrontation with the realities of animal suffering in the past and present. The essay concludes by weighing some of the benefits and disadvantages that contemplative practices pose in the history classroom.

Text suggested by Rob Gioielli.

Meeting 6 15.07.2019

Michael B. Smith, '**Local Environmental History and the Journey to Ecological Citizenship**', *Urbana*, vol. 23, no. 2 (2014), pp.

This article describes a process of hands-on learning that Professor Michael Smith uses to help college students develop a sense of place and understand the meaning of civic engagement. It also suggests ways of evaluating a teacher's pedagogical effectiveness. This article first appeared in the book, *Citizenship Across the Curriculum*, which describes how similar approaches to civic education can also be used in political sciences, rhetoric and communication studies. Smith's inclusion of student comments about their course experience is especially insightful for scholars wishing to know more about the learning process.

Laura Kieran and Sally Haack, '**PRELOAD: A Rubric to Evaluate Course Syllabi for Quality Indicators of Community Engagement and Service-Learning Components**', *Journal of Community Engagement and Higher Education*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2018), pp. 39-47;

Faculty development programs have proven successful in teaching faculty how to develop community engagement and service-learning (CES-L) courses. Evaluating the outcomes of these programs can occur through assessment of course syllabi for CES-L elements. The PRELOAD rubric was created, which includes the following facets: Partnership, Reflection, Engagement, Logistics, Objectives, Assessment, and Definition. The rubric can support faculty developing CES-L courses and community engagement offices documenting the scope of CES-L opportunities across campus.

Eleanor E. ter Horst and Joshua M. Pearce, '**Foreign Languages and Sustainability: Addressing the Connections, Communities, and Comparisons Standards in Higher Education**', *Foreign Language Annuals*, vol. 43, no. 3 (2010), pp. 365-383.

This article describes an interdisciplinary collaboration, which combined the study of German with instruction in environmental issues (sustainable development). The project, involving both an independent study and a classroom unit, allowed students to make connections between disciplines, establish contact with German-speaking communities outside the university, and make cultural and linguistic comparisons. By expanding the German-language content on the website, Appropedia.org, which is devoted to global sustainable development, students took an active role in learning by creating content that can be read and used by the global community of German speakers. This project provided a model for successful interdisciplinary instruction. The results of this study show that integrating environmental issues with foreign language study provides significant opportunities for students to increase their language proficiency, develop their understanding of concepts related to the environment, and become more involved in a global community through a virtual service-learning project.

Texts suggested by Seth Peabody.

Meeting 7 29.07.2019

Emily O’Gorman et al, ‘**Teaching the Environmental Humanities**’, *Environmental Humanities*, vol. 11, no. 2 (2019), pp. 427-460.
<https://read.dukeupress.edu/environmental-humanities/article/11/2/427/140787/Teaching-the-Environmental-HumanitiesInternational>

This article provides the first international overview and detailed discussion of teaching in the environmental humanities (EH). It is divided into three parts. The first offers a series of regional overviews: where, when, and how EH teaching is taking place. This part highlights some key regional variability in the uptake of teaching in this area, emphasizing important differences in cultural and pedagogical contexts. The second part is a critical engagement with some of the key challenges and opportunities that are emerging in EH teaching, centering on how the field is being defined, shared concepts and ideas, interdisciplinary pedagogies, and the centrality of experimental and public-facing approaches to teaching. The final part of the article offers six brief summaries of experimental pedagogies from our authorship team that aim to give a concrete sense of EH teaching in practice.

Text was kindly provided by Christof Mauch, pre-publication.

WINTER SEMESTER 2019/2020

Meeting 8 23.09.2019

Donna Haraway's short '**Introduction**' to *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) as well as short reviews by Thom van Dooren, Deirdre Wilcock, Ursula Heise, and Eduardo Kohn, published in a Spring 2018 issue of *Dialogues in Human Geography*, along with Haraway's response to the critical reception of her book.

In the midst of spiraling ecological devastation, multispecies feminist theorist Donna J. Haraway offers provocative new ways to reconfigure our relations to the earth and all its inhabitants. She eschews referring to our current epoch as the Anthropocene, preferring to conceptualize it as what she calls the Chthulucene, as it more aptly and fully describes our epoch as one in which the human and nonhuman are inextricably linked in tentacular practices. The Chthulucene, Haraway explains, requires sympoiesis, or making-with, rather than auto-poiesis, or self-making. Learning to stay with the trouble of living and dying together on a damaged earth will prove more conducive to the kind of thinking that would provide the means to building more livable futures. Theoretically and methodologically driven by the signifier SF—string figures, science fact, science fiction, speculative feminism, speculative fabulation, so far—*Staying with the Trouble* further cements Haraway's reputation as one of the most daring and original thinkers of our time.

Meeting 9 07.10.2019

Nicole Seymour's '**Introduction**' to *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age* (University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

Nicole Seymour develops the concept of “bad environmentalism”: cultural thought that employs dissident affects and sensibilities to reflect critically on our current moment and on mainstream environmental activism. Funny and original, *Bad Environmentalism* champions the practice of alternative green politics and expands our understanding of how environmental art and activism can be pleasurable, even in a time of undeniable crisis.

Text suggested by Astrid Bracke & Katie Ritson.

Meeting 10 14.10.2019

Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Jill Didur, and Anthony Carrigan's '**Introduction: A Postcolonial Environmental Humanities**' of Elizabeth's co-edited volume *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches* (Routledge, 2015).

This book examines current trends in scholarly thinking about the new field of the Environmental Humanities, focusing in particular on how the history of globalization and imperialism represents a special challenge to the representation of environmental issues. Essays in this path-breaking collection examine the role that narrative, visual, and aesthetic forms can play in drawing attention to and shaping our ideas about long-term and catastrophic environmental challenges such

as climate change, militarism, deforestation, the pollution and management of the global commons, petrocapiatalism, and the commodification of nature.

The volume presents a postcolonial approach to the environmental humanities, especially in conjunction with current thinking in areas such as political ecology and environmental justice. Spanning regions such as Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Australasia and the Pacific, as well as North America, the volume includes essays by founding figures in the field as well as new scholars, providing vital new interdisciplinary perspectives on: the politics of the earth; disaster, vulnerability, and resilience; political ecologies and environmental justice; world ecologies; and the Anthropocene. In engaging critical ecologies, the volume poses a postcolonial environmental humanities for the twenty-first century. At the heart of this is a conviction that a thoroughly global, postcolonial, and comparative approach is essential to defining the emergent field of the environmental humanities, and that this field has much to offer in understanding critical issues surrounding the creation of alternative ecological futures.

Additional group meeting proposed by Elizabeth DeLoughrey, who joined the discussion during her Fellowship at the RCC.

Meeting 11 21.10.2019

Astrida Neimanis, '**No Representation without Colonisation? (Or, Nature Represents Itself)**', *Somatechnics*, vol. 5, no. 2 (2015), pp. 135-153.

Is representation always colonisation? This question has high stakes for feminist, anticolonial and environmental justice projects alike, where in each case, technologies of representation trace a fine line between the much-needed redress of injustice done unto others, and the various violences that accompany speaking *for* them. At the same time, some ecofeminist and postcolonial positions concur that while perhaps impossible, representation might nonetheless be necessary. My objective here is to assess and extend these discussions in order to suggest the possibility of posthuman representation of non-human natures – in other words, a representation without representationalism, where the notion of a pre-representational reality as ontologically distinct from its representation is rejected. This kind of representation would remain concerned with the urgent need to advocate for the interests of non-humans, but also with the risk of capture and appropriation that runs alongside the impetus to 'speak for others' that feminist and postcolonial debates highlight. Linking the problem of representation specifically to a tenacious nature/cultural dualism, I draw specifically on posthuman feminist theories, and the work of Vicki Kirby. At the same time, I argue that attention to the lessons of anticolonial feminism can guide a concerted ethics of response. What we need is a technics of representation that espouses a flat ontology, but firmly rejects the notion of a flat ethics.

Meeting 12 04.11.2019

Zoe Todd, "**An Indigenous Feminist's Take On The Ontological Turn: 'Ontology' Is Just Another Word For Colonialism**", *Journal of Historical Sociology*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2016), pp. 4–22.

In this article, I ask how anthropology can adopt a decolonial approach that incorporates and acknowledges the critical scholarship of Indigenous thinkers whose work and labour informs many current trends in Euro-Western scholarship, activism and socio-political discourse. I also query how to address ongoing structural colonialism within the academy in order to ensure that marginalised voices are heard within academic discourses.

Text suggested by Anna Antonova.

Meeting 13 02.12.2019

Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, '**Decolonization is not a metaphor**', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2012), pp. 1-40.

Our goal in this article is to remind readers what is unsettling about decolonization. Decolonization brings about the repatriation of Indigenous land and life; it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools. The easy adoption of decolonizing discourse by educational advocacy and scholarship, evidenced by the increasing number of calls to “decolonize our schools,” or use “decolonizing methods,” or, “decolonize student thinking”, turns decolonization into a metaphor. As important as their goals may be, social justice, critical methodologies, or approaches that decenter settler perspectives have objectives that may be incommensurable with decolonization. Because settler colonialism is built upon an entangled triad structure of settler-native-slave, the decolonial desires of white, non- white, immigrant, postcolonial, and oppressed people, can similarly be entangled in resettlement, reoccupation, and reinhabitation that actually further settler colonialism. The metaphorization of decolonization makes possible a set of evasions, or “settler moves to innocence”, that problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity. In this article, we analyze multiple settler moves towards innocence in order to forward “an ethic of incommensurability” that recognizes what is distinct and what is sovereign for project(s) of decolonization in relation to human and civil rights based social justice projects. We also point to unsettling themes within transnational/Third World decolonizations, abolition, and critical space- place pedagogies, which challenge the coalescence of social justice endeavors, making room for more meaningful potential alliances.

Text suggested by Kelly Bushnell

Meeting 14 16.12.2019

Tim Ingold's '**Toward a New Humanism: One World Anthropology**', *Journal of Ethnographic Theory*, vol. 8 (2018), pp. 158-171.

In this introduction to the special section, we revisit the case of humanism, including some challenges to its outworn and problematic metaphysical assumptions. We suggest that a new kind of humanism is demanded despite the many calls that humanism, of any form, should be jettisoned. The new humanism we propose rests on an ethnographically based philosophical anthropology which keeps in mind its reference to humankind while acknowledging the indeterminacy or inherent transcendence of human life in its sociocultural and ecological

situatedness. We believe that there are ontological, epistemological, and ethical reasons to pursue the idea of a timely humanism, without which the social sciences and the humanities are at risk of losing orientations to their own domains as well as their political bearings.

Text suggested by Sarah Yoho.

Meeting 15 13.01.2020

Alpa Shah, '**The Dark Side of Indigeneity?: Indigenous People, Rights and Development in India**', *History Compass*, vol. 5 (2007), pp. 1806-1832.

In the last two decades transnational concerns over indigenous people, indigenous rights and indigenous development has reignited a history of heated debate shrouding indigeneity. This article analyses these debates in the context of the anthropology and historiography of indigeneity in India. From the production of 'tribes of mind' to the policies that have encouraged people to identify themselves as 'Scheduled Tribes', or 'adivasis', the article reviews the context that gave rise to the tensions between claims for protection and assimilation of India's indigenous peoples. Today these debates are shown to persist through the arguments of those that seek to build a support base from an adivasi constituency and are most acute with on the one hand, the work of the Marxists and indigenous activists, and on the other hand, the Hindu right-wing. Inviting serious scholarly examination of the unintended effects of well meaning indigenous protection and development measures, the article seeks to move the debate beyond both the arguments that consider the concept of indigenous people anthropologically and historically problematic and those that consider indigeneity a useful political tool. In so doing, the article warns against a 'dark side of indigeneity' which might reveal how local appropriation and experiences of global discourses can maintain a class system that further marginalises the poorest.

Text suggested by Ajit Menon.

Meeting 16 27.01.2020

Mario Blaser, '**Is Another Cosmopolitics possible?**', *Cultural Anthropology*, vol. 31, no. 4 (2016), pp. 545-570.

The concept of cosmopolitics developed by Isabelle Stengers and Bruno Latour keeps open the question of who and what might compose the common world. In this way, cosmopolitics offers a way to avoid the pitfalls of reasonable politics, a politics that, defining in advance that the differences at stake in a disagreement are between perspectives on a single reality, makes it possible to sideline some concerns by deeming them unrealistic and, therefore, unreasonable or irrelevant. Figuring the common world as its possible result, rather than as a starting point, cosmopolitics disrupts the quick recourse to ruling out concerns on the basis of their ostensible lack of reality. And yet, questions remain as to who and what can participate in the composition of the common world. Exploring these questions through ethnographical materials on a conflict around caribou in Labrador, I argue that a cosmopolitics oriented to the common world has important limitations and that another orientation might be possible as well.

Text suggested by Kelly Donati.

Meeting 17 24.02.2020

María Valeria Berros' **“Defending Rivers: Vilcabamba in the South of Ecuador.”** *RCC Perspectives*, no. 6 (2017), pp. 37–44;
Fiona McCormack's **“Māori Saltwater Commons: Property, Wealth, and Inequality.”** *Commoning Ethnography*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2018), pp. 9–31.

This article draws on Māori claims to fisheries in Aotearoa New Zealand as well as their opposition to the establishment of a large scale marine protected area, to question whether commoning, as a conceptual frame, can account for indigenous resistances in ocean environments. It argues that the theorisation of horizontal collective activism, an emphasis on a politics of relationality encompassing humans and non-humans and the potential for transformative practice in commonings, is congruent with the indigenous sociality mobilised by Māori in relation to their seascapes. As an analytical tool, however, commoning pays inadequate attention to inequality. Inequality may amplify, for instance, in the process of claiming indigenous rights, or it may otherwise be reconfigured as it articulates with the imperative of neoliberal environmental capitalism. Property – alienated, usurped or reappropriated – while considered a reductive representation of the commons is, at least for indigenous peoples, a crucial feature of struggles, a phenomenon clearly articulated in Māori claims to fisheries and marine spaces.

Texts suggested by Anna Antonova.

Meeting 18 09.03.2020

Thomas Fleischman, **"A plague of wild boars": A New History of Pigs and People in Late 20th Century Europe'**, *Antipode*, vol. 49, no. 4 (2017), pp. 1015-1034.

This paper looks at an ungulate irruption of wild boars that occurred in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the 1970s and 1980s. It argues that this hybrid phenomenon resulted from the confluence of three historically specific, intertwined factors in late 20th century Europe: first, East Germany's embrace of development ideology to remake their farms and forests; second, the simultaneous introduction of a specifically East German conservation program; and third, a new era in the *longue durée* of human–pig relationships. This ungulate irruption was particular to the GDR and the central European landscape of the Cold War, and only becomes visible through careful attention to the historical context and the materiality of pigs (*Sus scrofa*). For this reason it is possible to call these pigs new creatures of development. More broadly this paper asks both historians and social scientists to account for the temporal and spatial context when analyzing hybrid phenomena, while also raising important questions about the meaning and application of the neologism Anthropocene.

Text suggested by Tom Lekan.

{Pandemic Reading Group kicks off via Go Meet, later Zoom, meeting on a weekly basis. Bonus: alumni are now able to join!}

Meeting 19 23.03.2020

Giorgio Agamben's controversial statement on the current situation: <http://positionswebsite.org/giorgio-agamben-the-state-of-exception-provoked-by-an-unmotivated-emergency/>;

Slavoj Žižek's response: <http://thephilosophicalsalon.com/monitor-and-punish-yes-please/>;

Agamben's clarification: <https://itself.blog/2020/03/17/giorgio-agamben-clarifications/>

Suggested by Anna Mazanik.

Meeting 20 30.03.2020

Michael Egan, '**Survival Science: Crisis Disciplines and the Shock of the Environment in the 1970s**', *Centaurus*, vol. 59 (2017), pp. 26-39.

The 1970s mark a critical departure point in the history of science. The rise of the environmental crisis prompted not just new avenues of scientific inquiry but also the integration of scientific expertise into complex interactions with politics and society. This paper investigates the history of the new 'crisis disciplines' that emerged in response to explicit fears that the world was on the verge of ecological collapse. Crisis disciplines – a term coined by the conservation biologist Michael Soulé – engage in the urgent and reactionary pursuit of solutions to pressing environmental problems and the evidence scientists bring to bear on their work. Crisis disciplines involve acting 'before knowing all the facts', and therefore constitute 'a mixture of science and art, and their pursuit requires intuition as well as information'. Combined, diverse crisis disciplines constitute a new kind of 'survival science', which emerged in the 1970s.

Text suggested by Anna Barcz.

Meeting 21 06.04.2020

Stephen Graham, '**Life support: The political ecology of urban air**', *City*, vol. 19, no. 2/3 (2015), pp. 192-215.

Humans, increasingly, manufacture their own air. In and around the three-dimensional aerial environments within and above urban regions, this manufacture of air reaches particular levels of intensity. For a species that expires without air in two or three minutes, this anthropogenic manufacture of air is of incalculable importance. Curiously, however, urban air remains remarkably neglected within the political–ecological literatures. Accordingly, this paper suggests a range of key themes, which a political ecology of urban air needs to address. These touch upon the links between global warming, urban heat-island effects and killer urban heatwaves; urban pollution crises; the paradoxes of urban pollution; horizontal movements of polluted air; the vertical politics of urban air; the construction of vertical condominium structures for elites; the vicious circles that characterise air-

conditioned urbanism; heat-related deaths of workers building air-conditioned structures in increasingly hot climates; the growth of large-scale air-conditioned environments; and, finally, the manipulation of urban air through political violence.

Text suggested by Jiat Hwee.

Meeting 22 20.04.2020

Vinciane Despret, '**From Secret Agents to Interagency**', *History and Theory*, vol. 52 (2013), pp. 29-44.

Some scientists who study animals have emphasized the need to focus on the “point of view” of the animals they are studying. This methodological shift has led to animals being credited with much more agency than is warranted. However, as critics suggest, on the one hand, the “perspective” of another being rests mostly upon “sympathetic projection,” and may be difficult to apply to unfamiliar beings, such as bees or even flowers. On the other hand, the very notion of agency still conveys its classic understanding as intentional, rational, and premeditated, and is still embedded in humanist and Christian conceptions of human exceptionalism. This paper seeks, in the first part, to investigate the practical link between these two notions and the problems they raise. In the second part, following the work of two historians of science who have revisited Darwin's studies of orchids and their pollinators, it will observe a shift in the meaning of the concept of agency. Indeed, creatures may appear as “secret agents” as long as we adopt a conventional definition of agency based on subjective experience and autonomous intention. However, when reframed in the terms of “*agencement*” — an assemblage that produces “agentivity” — agency seems to be much more extensively shared in the living world. We will then explore some of the concrete situations in which these *agencements* are manifested, and through which creatures of different species become, one for another and one with another, companion-agents.

Text suggested by Monica Vasile.

Meeting 23 27.04.2020

Rohan Deb Broy, '**White Ants, Empire, and Entomo-Politics in South Asia**', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 63, no. 2 (2020), pp. 411-436.

By focusing on the history of white ants in colonial South Asia, this article shows how insects were ubiquitous and fundamental to the shaping of British colonial power. British rule in India was vulnerable to white ants because these insects consumed paper and wood, the key material foundations of the colonial state. The white ant problem also made the colonial state more resilient and intrusive. The sphere of strict governmental intervention was extended to include both animate and inanimate non-humans, while these insects were invoked as symbols to characterize colonized landscapes, peoples, and cultures. Nonetheless, encounters with white ants were not entirely within the control of the colonial state. Despite effective state intervention, white ants did not vanish altogether, and remained objects of everyday control until the final decade of colonial rule and after. Meanwhile, colonized and post-colonial South Asians used white ants to articulate their own distinct political agendas. Over time, white ants featured variously as

metaphors for Islamic decadence, British colonial exploitation, communism, democratic socialism, and, more recently, the Indian National Congress. This article argues that co-constitutive encounters between the worlds of insects and politics have been an intrinsic feature of British colonialism and its legacies in South Asia.

Text suggested by Jenia Mukherjee.

(PANDEMIC) SUMMER SEMESTER 2020

Meeting 24 04.05.2020 (Danielle Scheil takes over leadership)

Radhika Govindrajan, '**Monkey Business**: Macaque Translocation and the Politics of Belonging in India's Central Himalayas', *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, vol. 35, no. 2 (2015), pp. 246-263.

The translocation of captured monkeys from lowlands to rural hill areas in the Central Himalayan state of Uttarakhand has become an incendiary social and political issue over the last five years. This essay asks what the recent outpouring of intense emotions and arguments around the issue of monkey translocation reveals about notions of belonging in this region. It contends that the reason there is such anxious public discourse around what is called the "monkey menace" is that it has dovetailed with a regional politics of identity and cultural meaning. What is at stake is the question of who belongs and what it means to belong in terms of moral and material access to resources. This essay further suggests that monkeys — the nonhuman actors in this story — play an important part in shaping the nature of these conversations about cultural meaning and belonging. Recognizing their vibrant semiotic-material presence in this landscape, this essay argues that the outsider monkey discourse has such resonance in this region precisely because the situated bodies of monkeys themselves play an important part in determining the nature of ongoing struggles over belonging and identity.

Text suggested by Ajit Menon.

Meeting 25 11.05.2020

Stine Krøijer, '**Slow Rupture**: The Art of Sneaking in an Occupied Forest', in Martin Hilbraad, Bruce Kapferer, Julia F. Sauma (eds), *Ruptures: Anthropologies of Discontinuity in Times of Turmoil* (UCL Press, 2019), pp. 157-173.

In 2012, a group of radical environmental activists took up residence in a little forest in the Ruhr district in Germany to counter the expansion of lignite mining in the area. Like many other environmental activists across Europe, the group had lost confidence in the ability and willingness of politicians to come up with solutions to catastrophic climate change and environmental destruction. After a decade of spectacular summit protesting from 1999 to 2009, during which the extra-parliamentarian left mainly directed their protests at meetings of heads of state, the global financial institutions and later the United Nations (UN) climate negotiations (Graeber 2002, 2009; Juris 2008; Krøijer 2013, 2015; Maeckelbergh 2009), radical environmental activists in Europe turned their anger directly towards the largest carbon emitters. Among these so-called 'carbon bombs' is the German electricity utility company RWE (Rheinisch-Westfälisches Elektrizitätswerk AG), which, according to the company itself, is one of Europe's largest emitters of carbon dioxide and is responsible for running an 85 square kilometre lignite mine adjacent to the old growth forest occupied by activists. In order to prevent the continuous expansion of the mine, activists have established a number of tree-sits in the forests, and engage in a mix of ecotage (sabotage on behalf of the environment) and civil disobedience directed at mining installations.¹ In the forest occupation where I did fieldwork, tree-sitting and other direct actions went hand

in hand with experiments in alternative, sustainable livelihoods based on the conviction that people must rewild and harmonize their life with nature.

Text suggested by Tom Lekan.

Meeting 26 18.05.2020

Frédéric Keck, **'Feeding Sentinels: Logics of Care and Biosecurity in Farms and Labs'**, *BioSocieties*, vol. 10, no. 2 (2015), pp. 162-176.

This article compares the treatment of living beings (unvaccinated chickens and infected cells) considered as sentinel devices in a farm and in a lab in Hong Kong. Sentinel devices are defined as living beings posted on a boundary from which they send signals of invisible threats. The ethnography looks at how they transform differences between ordinary lives and lives exposed, between good death and bad death, through the practices of those who feed them. In farms and labs exposed to Avian Influenza viruses, the logic of biosecurity intersects with a logic of care, blurring the distinction between self and other, friend and enemy through aesthetic judgments concerning what is a 'good death'. Metabolism and immunity are redefined when sentinels are fed to produce clear signals of the mutations of viruses.

Text suggested by Élisabeth Abergel.

Meeting 27 25.05.2020

David Farrier, Introduction to *Footprints: In Search of Future Fossils* (London: 4th Estate).

In *Footprints: In Search of Future Fossils*, the award-winning author David Farrier explores the traces we will leave for the very distant future. Modern civilization has created objects and landscapes with the potential to endure through deep time, whether it is plastic polluting the oceans and nuclear waste sealed within the earth or the 30 million miles of roads spanning the planet. Our carbon could linger in the atmosphere for 100,000 years, and the remains of our cities will still exist millions of years from now as a layer in the rock. These future fossils have the potential to reveal much about how we lived in the twenty-first century.

Crossing the boundaries of literature, art, and science, *Footprints* invites us to think about how we will be remembered in the myths and stories of our distant descendants. Traveling from the Baltic Sea to the Great Barrier Reef, and from an ice-core laboratory in Tasmania to Shanghai, one of the world's biggest cities, Farrier describes a world that is changing rapidly, with consequences beyond the scope of human understanding. As much a message of hope as a warning, *Footprints* will not only alter how you think about the future; it will change how you see the world today.

Text suggested by Anna Pilz.

Meeting 28 01.06.2020

Opera 'Anthropocene'

A team of scientists becomes trapped in the frozen Arctic wastelands. Tensions rise and relationships crumble, and then something appears, out of the ice. This fourth collaboration between composer Stuart MacRae and librettist Louise Welsh is their most ambitious to date. With unrelenting drama and superb storytelling, *Anthropocene* engages with the crucial issues of our time – climate change, sacrifice and our ceaseless quest for knowledge.

The opera can be accessed through the following link:

<https://operavision.eu/en/library/performances/operas/anthropocene-scottish-opera#>

Suggested by Élisabeth Abergel.

Meeting 29 08.06.2020

TJ Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today* (Sternberg Press, 2017)

Addressing the current upswing of attention in the sciences, arts, and humanities to the new proposal that we are in a human-driven epoch called the Anthropocene, this book critically surveys that thesis and points to its limitations... This book argues that the Anthropocene terminology works ideologically in support of a neoliberal financialization of nature, anthropocentric political economy, and endorsement of geoengineering as the preferred--but likely disastrous--method of approaching climate change.

Text suggested by Seth Peabody.

Meeting 30 15.06.2020

Christina Sharpe, Chapter 'The Weather' in *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Duke University Press, 2016)

In this chapter, Sharpe argues that the Weather is the totality of Black peoples' environments; the weather is the total climate; and that climate is antiblackness as 'the singularity.' In the chapter, Sharpe introduces the practices of black annotation and black redaction as more examples of wake work, as ways of seeing and imagining responses to the terror visited on Black life in the contemporary; the ways that Black people inhabit, are inhabited by, and refuse that terror as the totality of Black existence. The chapter ends with what Sharpe theorizes as an "ordinary note of care" among the shipped and the held in the weather in the wake of those slave ships whose names are the start of the chapter. Sharpe locates this ordinary note in *Beloved*, in Brand's "Ruttier for the Marooned in the Diaspora," in Sissako's 2014 film *Timbuktu*, and in two photographs by Roy DeCarava. This note, she argues, is practiced by Black people throughout the globe.

Text suggested by Kate Wright.

Meeting 31 22.06.2020

Kathryn Jusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (University of Minnesota Press, 2019)

A historically grounded and embodied understanding of geological transformation. Kathryn Jusoff examines how the grammar of geology is foundational to establishing the extractive economies of subjective life and the earth under colonialism and slavery. She initiates a transdisciplinary conversation between black feminist theory, geography, and the earth sciences, addressing the politics of the Anthropocene within the context of race, materiality, deep time, and the afterlives of geology.

Text suggested by Bettina Stoetzer.

Meeting 32 29.06.2020

Dorceta E. Taylor, Sophia Paul and Ember McCoy, '**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Salience of Publicly Disclosing Demographic Data in American Environmental Nonprofits**', *Sustainability*, vol. 11 (2019), pp. 1-38.

There has been a scholarly interest in the demographic characteristics of American environmental organizations since the 1960s, but until recently there was no readily available way of knowing the composition of the staff or board of these institutions as few revealed any of their demographic data publicly. For the past five years, there has been a high-profile campaign to get environmental nonprofits to disclose their demographic data. This paper examines 12,054 small, medium-sized, and large environmental organizations to find out how many of them have released diversity data on GuideStar. The article also examines how the state in which organizations are located, region of the country, urban or rural setting, organizational typology, amount of revenue, size of the staff, size of the board, gender of the chief executive officer (CEO), race of the CEO, and the year of completion of the GuideStar profile influenced the disclosure of diversity data. The researchers collected financial data from Internal Revenue Service tax forms and diversity data from GuideStar.

Meeting 33 6.07.2020

Kyle Whyte, '**Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene**', *English Language Notes*, vol. 55, no. 1/2 (2017), pp. 153-162.

Indigenous and allied scholars, knowledge keepers, scientists, learners, change-makers, and leaders are creating a field to support Indigenous peoples' capacities to address anthropogenic (human-caused) climate change. Provisionally, I call it Indigenous climate change studies (Indigenous studies, for short, in this essay). The studies involve many types of work, including Indigenous climate resiliency plans, such as the Salish-Kootenai Tribe's Climate Change Strategic Plan that includes sections on "Culture" and "Tribal Elder Observations," policy documents, such as the Inuit Petition expressing "the right to be cold," conferences, such as "Climate Changed: Reflections on Our Past, Present and

Future Situation,” organized by the Indigenous Peoples Climate Change Working Group, and numerous declarations and academic papers, from the Mandaluyong Declaration of the Global Conference on Indigenous Women, Climate Change and REDD+ to a special issue of the scientific journal *Climatic Change* devoted to Indigenous peoples in the U.S. context.¹

Text suggested by Élisabeth Abergel.

Meeting 34 13.07.2020

Ugo Bardi, *Before the Collapse: A Guide to the Other Side of Growth* (Springer, 2019)

Nobody has to tell you that when things go bad, they go bad quickly and seemingly in bunches. Complicated structures like buildings or bridges are slow and laborious to build but, with a design flaw or enough explosive energy, take only seconds to collapse... As we proceed blindly and incrementally in one direction or another, collapse often takes us by surprise. We step over what you will come to know as a “Seneca cliff”, which is named after the ancient Roman philosopher, Lucius Annaeus Seneca, who was the first to observe the ubiquitous truth that growth is slow but ruin is rapid.

Text suggested by Heidi Danzel.

Meeting 35 20.07.2020

Ilan Kelman, *Disaster by Choice: How our Actions Turn Natural Hazards into Catastrophes* (Oxford University Press, 2020)

An earthquake shatters Haiti and a hurricane slices through Texas. We hear that nature runs rampant, seeking to destroy us through these 'natural disasters'. Science recounts a different story, however: disasters are not the consequence of natural causes; they are the consequence of human choices and decisions. we put ourselves in harm's way; we fail to take measures which we know would prevent disasters, no matter what the environment does.

Text suggested by Heidi Danzel. Special Event discussion with Ilan Kelman.

Meeting 36 27.07.2020

Peter Coates, ‘**The Strange Stillness of the Past: Toward an Environmental History of Sound Noise**’, *Environmental History*, vol. 10, no. 4 (2005), pp. 636-655.

Even a decade ago, history came largely soundproofed as well as deodorized. But a welcome spate of publications over the past five years has thrust sound into the forefront of sensory history... Yet environmental historians are absent from the emerging cadre of sound historians that is challenging the visual bias of scholarly and popular culture.” In essence, Peter Coates asks us “why environmental historians don’t delve more into sound and noise as they seek information about the past.

Text suggested by Kara Schlichting.

Meeting 37 03.08.2020

Sarah Jaquette Ray and Jay Sibara, Introduction to *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities: Toward an Eco-Crip Theory* (University of Nebraska, 2017).

Although scholars in the environmental humanities have been exploring the dichotomy between “wild” and “built” environments for several years, few have focused on the field of disability studies, a discipline that enlists the contingency between environments and bodies as a foundation of its scholarship. On the other hand, scholars in disability studies have demonstrated the ways in which the built environment privileges some bodies and minds over others, yet they have rarely examined the ways in which toxic environments engender chronic illness and disability or how environmental illnesses disrupt dominant paradigms for scrutinizing disability.

Text suggested by Heidi Danzel; attendance of editor Sarah Ray organised by Heidi.

WINTER SEMESTER 2020/2021

Meeting 38 21.09.2020

Christopher Sellers, 'To Place or Not to Place: Toward an Environmental History of Modern Medicine', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, vol. 92, no. 1 (2018), pp. 1-45.

Both environmental and medical historians can seek to understand the past two centuries of medical history in terms of a seesaw dialogue over the ways and means by which physicians and other health professionals did, and did not, consider the influence of place—airs and waters included—on disease. Modernizing and professionalizing as well as new styles of science nourished attendant aspirations for a clinical place neutrality, for a medicine in which patients' own places didn't matter to what doctors thought or did.

Meeting 39 28.09.2020

Niki Vermeulen, Sakari Tamminen and Andrew Webster (eds), *Bio-Objects: Life in the 21st Century* (Ashgate, 2012)

Increasing knowledge of the biological is fundamentally transforming what life itself means and where its boundaries lie. New developments in the biosciences - especially through the molecularisation of life - are (re)shaping healthcare and other aspects of our society. This cutting edge volume studies contemporary bio-objects, or the categories, materialities and processes that are central to the configuring of 'life' today, as they emerge, stabilize and circulate through society.

Text suggested by Élisabeth Abergel and Johanna Conterio.

Meeting 40 05.10.2020

Herrera, César E. Giraldo. "Syncretic Ontologies of the Microbial-Shamanic Beings." *Microbes and Other Shamanic Beings*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018. 65-97.

Shamanism is commonly understood through reference to spirits and souls. However, these terms were introduced by Christian missionaries as part of the colonial effort of conversion. So, rather than trying to comprehend shamanism through medieval European concepts, this book examines it through ideas that started developing in the West after encountering Amerindian shamans... Giraldo Herrera reclaims this knowledge and lays the fundamentals for an ethnomicrobiology. It will appeal to anyone curious about shamanism and willing to take it seriously and to those enquiring about the microbiome, our relations with microbes and the long history behind them.

Text suggested by Huiying Ng

Meeting 41 12.10.2020

Hannaway, Caroline, '**Environment and miasmata,**' *Companion Encyclopedia of the History of Medicine* 1 (1993): 292-308.

The century-long primacy of the micro-organism in thinking about disease causation is being eroded. Yet, looking to the environment as a determining factor in health and disease is, in certain senses, a reinstatement of long-held beliefs seeking to link people's functioning, or malfunctioning, to conditions in the surrounding world. From the time of the Greeks to the nineteenth century, medical writers and practitioners, and also their patients, did not hesitate to make correlations between changes in the environment and the occurrence of disease.

Text suggested by Johanna Conterio

Meeting 42 19.10.2020

Candace B. Pert, ***Molecules of emotion: Why you feel the way you feel.*** (Simon & Schuster, 1997)

Why do we feel the way we feel? How do our thoughts and emotions affect our health? Are our bodies and minds distinct from each other or do they function together as part of an interconnected system? In *Molecules of Emotion*, neuroscientist Candace Pert provides startling and decisive answers to these long-debated questions, establishing the biomolecular basis for our emotions and explaining these new scientific developments in a clear and accessible way. Her pioneering research on how the chemicals inside us form a dynamic information network, linking mind and body, is not only provocative, it is revolutionary.

Text suggested by Diana Villanueva Romero

Meeting 43 26.10.2020

Stuckey, Priscilla, '**Being Known by a Birch Tree: Animist Refigurings of Western Epistemology**' *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature & Culture* 4.3 (2010).

New animism, as derived from Ojibwe philosophy and articulated by anthropologists of religion, begins in a relational worldview and implies ways of knowing that challenge Cartesian dualism. Opening with a story of my relationship with a weeping birch tree in Ohio, I use the relational epistemology of animism and of feminist theorist Lorraine Code to examine four ways in which my experience with the birch tree, interpreted within an animist-feminist relational worldview, challenges Cartesian dualism... My goal is to situate humans as but one extension of Earth's ability to know and to explore how we might take our places in a community of knowers, only some of whom are human.

Text suggested by Diana Villanueva Romero

Meeting 44 02.11.2020

Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants* (Milkweed Editions, 2013)

As a botanist, Robin Wall Kimmerer has been trained to ask questions of nature with the tools of science. As a member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation, she embraces the notion that plants and animals are our oldest teachers. In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Kimmerer brings these two lenses of knowledge together to take us on “a journey that is every bit as mythic as it is scientific, as sacred as it is historical, as clever as it is wise” (Elizabeth Gilbert). Drawing on her life as an indigenous scientist, and as a woman, Kimmerer shows how other living beings—asters and goldenrod, strawberries and squash, salamanders, algae, and sweetgrass—offer us gifts and lessons, even if we've forgotten how to hear their voices. In reflections that range from the creation of Turtle Island to the forces that threaten its flourishing today, she circles toward a central argument: that the awakening of ecological consciousness requires the acknowledgment and celebration of our reciprocal relationship with the rest of the living world. For only when we can hear the languages of other beings will we be capable of understanding the generosity of the earth, and learn to give our own gifts in return.

Text suggested by Milica Prokic

Meeting 45 09.11.2020

Sandra Steingraber, *Having faith: an ecologist's journey to motherhood*. (2001)

Full of beauty and mystery, this month-by-month story of her own pregnancy and childbirth weaves into its telling new discoveries about genetics, the intimate unfolding of embryonic organs, the architecture of the fetal brain, and the astonishing transformation of the mother's body as it prepares to nourish and protect the new life. At the same time, Steingraber reveals the alarming extent to which environmental hazards—from industrial poisons found in amniotic fluid to the toxic contamination of breast milk—now threaten each crucial stage of infant development.

Text suggested by Johanna Conterio

Meeting 46 23.11.2020

Deborah Bird Rose, ‘**Decolonising the discourse of environmental knowledge in settler societies**’, in G. Hawkins, S. Muecke (eds), *Culture and Waste: The Creation and Destruction of Value* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), pp. 53-72.

This chapter is devoted to a practical purpose: to open up an area of discursive space by analyzing and exposing a set of practices that serve to police certain boundaries of knowledge. The arena is indigenous people's claims to a tradition of environmental knowledge and ethics that have pertinent contributions to make to current debates about environmental crisis. Policing practices are fueled by a concept of waste. The proposition that the natives are wasteful stands as a mighty

and almost invariably unjustified barrier in excluding indigenous people from discourses of ecological knowledge, ethics, and sustainability; in some instances, this barrier even works to exclude them from shared land and resource management.

Text suggested by Danielle Scheil.

Meeting 47 30.11.2020

Moreton-Robinson, Aileen. **‘Towards an Australian Indigenous women’s standpoint theory: A methodological tool.’** *Australian Feminist Studies* 28.78 (2013): 331-347.

In this article I outline an Australian Indigenous women’s standpoint theory. I argue that an Indigenous women’s standpoint generates problematics informed by our knowledges and experiences. Acknowledging that Indigenous women’s individual experiences will differ due to intersecting oppressions produced under social, political, historical and material conditions that we share consciously or unconsciously. These conditions and the sets of complex relations that discursively constitute us in the everyday are also complicated by our respective cultural differences and the simultaneity of our compliance and resistance as Indigenous sovereign female subjects.

Text suggested by Élisabeth Abergel

Meeting 48 14.12.2020

Jamie Lorimer, *The Probiotic Planet: Using Life to Manage Life* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020).

Jamie Lorimer offers a sweeping overview of diverse probiotic approaches and an insightful critique of their promise and limitations. Informed by deep engagement with microbiology, immunology, ecology, and conservation biology as well as food, agriculture, and waste management, *The Probiotic Planet* offers nothing less than a new paradigm for collaboration between the policy realm and the natural sciences.

Text suggested by Sevgi Mutlu Sirakova. Special Event discussion with Jamie Lorimer.

Meeting 49 11.01.2021

A reflection written by **Peter Singer** in the book **“The Lives of Animals”** by J. M. Coetzee.

The Lives of Animals centers on the fictional character of Elizabeth Costello, a well-known novelist with strong views concerning the human treatment of animals. Invited to speak at a prestigious university lecture series, Costello uses the event as an opportunity to discuss the human/animal relationship. Different perspectives on the issues raised are explored through the responses of other characters, including Costello’s son and daughter-in-law... The idea of human

cruelty to animals so consumes novelist Elizabeth Costello in her later years that she can no longer look another person in the eye: humans, especially meat-eating ones, seem to her to be conspirators in a crime of stupefying magnitude taking place on farms and in slaughterhouses, factories, and laboratories across the world.

Text suggested by Diana Villanueva Romero

Meeting 50 18.01.2021

Malecki, W., Sorokowski, P., Pawłowski, B., & Cieński, M. *Human minds and animal stories: How narratives make us care about other species* (Routledge, 2019).

The power of stories to raise our concern for animals has been postulated throughout history by countless scholars, activists, and writers, including such greats as Thomas Hardy and Leo Tolstoy. This is the first book to investigate that power and explain the psychological and cultural mechanisms behind it.. Combining psychological research with insights from animal studies, ecocriticism and other fields in the environmental humanities, the book not only provides evidence that animal stories can make us care for other species, but also shows that their effects are more complex and fascinating than we have ever thought. In this way, the book makes a groundbreaking contribution to the study of relations between literature and the nonhuman world as well as to the study of how literature changes our minds and society.

Text suggested by Diana Villanueva Romero

Meeting 51 25.01.2021

Ursula K. Heise, '**Comparative literature and the environmental humanities.**' *Futures of Comparative Literature: ACLA State of the Discipline Record* (2014): 293-301.

Ecocriticism and the environmental humanities form part of an array of new interdisciplinary areas that have emerged across the humanities and qualitative social sciences over the last two decades. The story of ecocriticism - the study of texts, images, and films that construct and reflect humans' interactions with natural environments and, with nonhuman species - is usually told as a development from an original focus on mostly British and American literatures of the last two hundred years to a much broader comparatist spectrum of literatures and periods. During its first decade, ecocritical research engaged above all with US-American traditions of nonfiction nature writing, nature poetry, and Native American literature, as well as with British Romantic nature poets and their successors.

Text suggested by Danielle Scheil

Meeting 52 01.02.2021

Pratik Chakrabarti. Introduction to *Inscriptions of Nature: Geology and the Naturalization of Antiquity* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2020)

In *Inscriptions of Nature*, Pratik Chakrabarti argues that, in both the real and the metaphorical digging of the earth, the deep history of nature, landscape, and people became indelibly inscribed in the study and imagination of antiquity. The first book to situate deep history as an expression of political, economic, and cultural power, this volume shows that it is complicit in the European and colonial appropriation of global nature, commodities, temporalities, and myths. The book also provides a new interpretation of the relationship between nature and history. Arguing that the deep history of the earth became pervasive within historical imaginations of monuments, communities, and territories in the nineteenth century, Chakrabarti studies these processes in the Indian subcontinent, from the banks of the Yamuna and Ganga rivers to the Himalayas to the deep ravines and forests of central India.

Text suggested by Martín Fonck

Meeting 53 8.02.2021

Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Jill Didur, and Anthony Carrigan's '**Introduction: A Postcolonial Environmental Humanities**' of Elizabeth's co-edited volume *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities: Postcolonial Approaches* (Routledge, 2015).

This book examines current trends in scholarly thinking about the new field of the Environmental Humanities, focusing in particular on how the history of globalization and imperialism represents a special challenge to the representation of environmental issues. Essays in this path-breaking collection examine the role that narrative, visual, and aesthetic forms can play in drawing attention to and shaping our ideas about long-term and catastrophic environmental challenges such as climate change, militarism, deforestation, the pollution and management of the global commons, petroculturalism, and the commodification of nature.

The volume presents a postcolonial approach to the environmental humanities, especially in conjunction with current thinking in areas such as political ecology and environmental justice. Spanning regions such as Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Australasia and the Pacific, as well as North America, the volume includes essays by founding figures in the field as well as new scholars, providing vital new interdisciplinary perspectives on: the politics of the earth; disaster, vulnerability, and resilience; political ecologies and environmental justice; world ecologies; and the Anthropocene. In engaging critical ecologies, the volume poses a postcolonial environmental humanities for the twenty-first century. At the heart of this is a conviction that a thoroughly global, postcolonial, and comparative approach is essential to defining the emergent field of the environmental humanities, and that this field has much to offer in understanding critical issues surrounding the creation of alternative ecological futures.

Proposed by Elizabeth DeLoughrey, who joined the discussion along with Jill Didur and George Handley.

Meeting 54 15.02.2021

Scott Slovic, '**The Third Wave of Ecocriticism: North American Reflections on the Current Phase of the Discipline**', *Ecozon@*, vol. 1., no. 1 (2010), pp. 4-10.

'Third Wave Ecocriticism' has become accepted as the label for a new form of critical writing which transcends national and ethnic boundaries and compares human experience across cultures. This focus distinguishes it equally from first wave ecocriticism in the 1980s (which dealt mainly with nature writing, wilderness and women's special affinity with nature), and the second wave, which began in the mid 1990s (and turned its attention to other literary genres and media, environmental justice, and urban ecology). Critics adopting the transcultural approach are exploring tensions between the global and the local, new varieties of ecofeminism, conceptions of animality, and ways of integrating literature in environmental activism.

Text suggested by Danielle Scheil.

Meeting 55 22.03.2021

Keith Plummers, '**Cow Trials, Climate Change, and the Causes of Violence**', *Environmental History* (2020), pp. 1-23.

In 1641, according to the vicar Thomas Johnson, Irish rebels in Mayo, in "meere hatred and derision of the English," tried a group of English cattle for unspecified charges. They were convicted and executed. Many historians have pointed to this striking event as an example of the deep hatred underlying popular violence in the rebellion. The trials, however, were merely the most spectacular iteration of long-standing conflicts over transformations in animal husbandry between the Munster Plantation in the 1580s and the rebellion of the 1640s. The new pastoralism that emerged during these decades threatened traditional practices and landscapes while creating new vulnerabilities to poor weather and economic downturns. The combination of economic crises and harsh weather associated with the Little Ice Age exposed these vulnerabilities. The cow trials show that environmental forces shaped the 1641 Rebellion but demonstrate that historians assessing the impacts of climate and weather must attend to the social and economic contexts that produce vulnerability.

Text suggested by Kara Schlichting

Summer Semester 2021

Meeting 56 12.04.2021

Nils Gilman, **'The Coming Avocado Politics: What Happens When the Ethno-Nationalist Right Gets Serious about the Climate Emergency'**, *The Breakthrough Institute* (2020) Blog Article

This January, Austria's center-right People's Party entered a new political coalition with the Austrian Green Party. "It is possible to protect the climate and borders," the new Prime Minister, Sebastian Kurz proclaimed, as he announced that the coalition would unite "the best of both worlds" by mandating 100 percent renewable energy by 2030, banning Islamic headscarves, and detaining asylum seekers. Austria's new ruling coalition may prove to be a short-lived marriage of convenience for all involved. But it also illustrates that if and when right-wing nationalists accept the apocalyptic climate claims of progressive environmentalists, the results are unlikely to be particularly progressive.

Text suggested by Sevgi Sirakova

Meeting 57 26.04.2021

Antoine Acker, **'What Could Carbofascism Look Like? A Historical Perspective on Reactionary Politics in the COVID-19 Pandemic.'** *Journal for the History of Environment and Society* 5 (2020), pp. 135-148.

Political reactions to the COVID-19 crisis in the USA, Brazil and elsewhere have revealed the power of a proto-ideology which articulates environmental destruction with the sacrifice of human health to preserve a segregationist project of modernity. This essay suggests that this political trend which denies ecological connections and promotes a carbon intensive society could correspond to the notion of 'carbofascism', coined by the environmental historian J.-B. Fressoz. It addresses this trend in a historical perspective to discuss its ideological filiation with past fascisms and provide a hypothesis for the causes of its emergence. Carbofascism is possibly a product of the deep historical entwinement of modern democratic regimes with anthropocentric principles and the growth of fossil fuels. The coronavirus pandemic represents a turning point in which the integrity of human and non-human life is tested against the lingering toxicity of our patterns of energy dependency, making the transformation of carbon democracy into ecodemocracy urgent.

Special event with Antoine Acker

Meeting 58 10.05.2021

Hampton Carson, **'The Trial of Animals and Insects: A Little Known Chapter of Mediaeval Jurisprudence.'** *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* (1917), pp. 410-415.

In the open square of the old Norman city of Falaise, in the year 1386, a vast and motley crowd had gathered to witness the execution of a criminal convicted of the crime of murder. Noble- men in armour, proud dames in velvet and feathers, priests in cassock and cowl, falconers with hawks upon their wrists, huntsmen with hounds in leash, aged men with their staves, withered hags with their baskets or reticules, children of all ages and even babes in arms were among the spectators. The prisoner was dressed in a new suit of man's clothes, and was attended by armed men on horse- back, while the hangman before mounting the scaffold had provided himself with new gloves and a new rope. (...) The criminal was not a human being, but a sow, which had indulged in the evil propensity of eating infants on the street.

Text suggested by Alfonso Donoso

Meeting 59 31.05.2021

Christopher Stone, '*Should Trees Have Standing? Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects.*' *Southern California Law Review* 45 (1972), pp. 450-501.

In this book, Professor Stone traces the development of the idea of legal rights, reminding us that children, old people, women, aliens, and "minorities" have been treated as without rights in many societies throughout human history. Although each new movement to confer rights on some new "entity" may have seemed "odd or frightening or laughable" at the time, Stone points out that legal rights have been extended and previously rightless people (and things) have come to be recognized and valued for themselves. he then develops his thesis and proposal that we give legal rights to "natural objects" in the environment--and to the natural environment as a whole.

Text suggested by Veleria Berros

Meeting 60 14.06.2021

Alfonso Donoso, '*Toward a New Framework for Rights of the Biotic Community.*' *Rights of Nature: A Re-Examination* (2021), pp. 140-155.

Although I strongly support the need for progressing toward a different and less anthropocentric legal framework, in what follows I adopt a critical—yet friendly—stance toward the strategy of ascribing rights to nature. I do so on two independent but mutually reinforcing grounds. First, I raise doubts regarding the idea that rights can be adequately ascribed to nature or, more specifically, to some of its constituent parts. And second, I question the idea that the recognition of rights of nature is beneficial for all of the right-holders within nature. Despite this critical perspective, I embrace the fundamental motivation for ascribing rights to nature but contend that we should search for a different rights-based framework to protect the natural world and its members.

Special event with Alfonso Donoso.

Meeting 61 28.06.2021

Laura Ogden, '*The Beaver Diaspora: A Thought Experiment.*' *Environmental Humanitie* 10 (2018), pp. 63-85.

For decades the role of invasive species has been central to discussions of anthropogenic loss and change. Conceptual debates over whether “native” and “invasive” species are useful to our understanding of dynamic processes of world making have significantly challenged traditional approaches to conservation biology and conservation practices. Yet decommissioning the “invasive species paradigm” requires us to grapple with new ethical and political frameworks for stewarding the Earth in a time of loss. In response, this essay offers a thought experiment. Instead of referring to invasive species, I reframe the migration and settlement of nonhuman beings as diasporas. Doing so illuminates the political complexities of loss and change in Chilean Tierra del Fuego, where I have been conducting fieldwork for the past five years. Integrating approaches from political ecology, multispecies ethnography, and postcolonial theory, this essay focuses on the introduction in 1947 of Canadian beavers into the Fuegian archipelago (now considered the region’s most significant environmental problem).

Text suggested by Martín Fonck

Meeting 62 12.07.2021

Meg Lowman, '*The Arbornaut: A Life Discovering the Eighth Continent in the Trees Above Us*' *Atlantic Books* (2021), pp. 9-26.

One of the world's first tree-top scientists, Meg Lowman is both a pioneer in her field - she invented one of the first treetop walkways - and a tireless advocate for the planet. In a voice as infectious in its enthusiasm as in its practical optimism, *The Arbornaut* chronicles her irresistible story. From climbing solo hundreds of feet into Australia's rainforests to measuring tree growth in the northeastern United States, from searching the redwoods of the Pacific coast for new life to studying leaf-eaters in Scotland's Highlands, from a bioblitz in Malaysia to conservation planning in India to collaborating with priests in Ethiopia's last forests, Lowman launches us into the life and work of a scientist and ecologist. She also offers hope, specific plans and recommendations for action; despite devastation across the world, we can still make an immediate and lasting impact against climate change.

Special event with Meg Lowman

Meeting 63 26.07.2021

Alessandro Rippa, '*Hunting, Rewilding, and Multispecies Entanglements in the Alps*' *Ethos* (2021).

The rewilding of Alpine landscapes has often triggered the expansion of wildlife populations and the ‘return’ of previously near extinct species. Among those, the wolf has generated much debate and is a frequent object of contention between mountain communities and environmentalist groups. This paper aims to reorient

such polarising debate by foregrounding multispecies entanglements through the experience of wildlife hunters in an Italian Alpine valley. In doing so, I show that the core issue lies in socioeconomic ruptures and the ongoing disenfranchisement of mountain communities, rather than with rewilding per se. To this end, I argue, the return of ‘wild’ animals becomes contentious not because of the threatening or formidable nature of such creatures; but rather because it signifies the abandonment of the mountain, connoting a process that equates to the ultimate un-domestication of a familiar space – a point of no return for mountain communities’ social and cultural livelihood.

Special event with Alessandro Ripa. Text suggested by Sevgi Sirakova.