

Planetary Health and the Humanities Conference

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Organized by the Glasscock Center for Humanities Research and co-sponsored by the Race and Ethnic Studies Institute

Speaker Abstracts and Biographies

Nancy Tuana, DuPont/Class of 1949 Professor of Philosophy and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Penn State University

Keynote: "Racial Climates, Ecological Indifference"

*Nancy Tuana is DuPont/Class of 1949 Professor of Philosophy and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at Penn State University and was the founding director of the Penn State Rock Ethics Institute. Dr. Tuana is a philosopher of science and feminist science studies theorist who has been a longtime advocate of interdisciplinary research and education. Her work on climate justice includes research on the topic of gender and climate change and her forthcoming book *Racial Climates, Ecological Indifference: An Ecointersectional Approach*, focuses on the infusions of systemic racisms and climate injustice. Tuana has developed expertise in working as a member of scientific teams to address issues of adaptation to climate impacts that are attentive to the values and lifeways of those impacted. She is currently a member of the NSF funded Megalopolitan Coastal Transformation Hub (MACH) <https://coastalhub.org/> which is developing a climate-resilient decision-making framework that will support coastal communities in the New York City-New Jersey-Philadelphia region and beyond as they navigate a deeply uncertain future. Her work contributes to MACH's commitment to the authentic integration of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into its practices.*

Jordan Daniels, Visiting Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, Pomona College, Pitzer College

"Mind-Body Dualism and Indigenous Place-Thought: Descartes and Watts on Nature."

Abstract: I propose to examine two criticisms of Descartes' mind-body dualism in contemporary environmental humanities in relation to planetary health. First, in "Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go on a European World Tour!)," Vanessa Watts challenges the separation of human agency and thought from nature as the colonial imposition of an "epistemological-ontological divide." Watts argues that Descartes sediments the

ontological division whereby thought and ideas are reserved for humans, as opposed to Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe cosmologies wherein ecosystems are rather “ethical structures.” Watts’ account of Indigenous ontology disputes the separation of what is natural and what is human while also giving a history of how this alternate conception of agency, land, and the human has been and continues to be deprived of its truth status. I next turn to Jason Moore and Raj Patel’s claim that a Cartesian conception of nature underwrites the logic of the “Capitalocene.” With the “Capitalocene,” they suggest it is not a homogenized “humanity” that instigated a new geological epoch (the “Anthropocene”) but capitalist actors and systems of production, consumption, and exploitation. Both these accounts, I conclude, help us envision planetary health in relation to colonial history.

Jordan Daniels defended her dissertation, Figurations of Nature in Kant and Adorno, in October 2021 at Emory University. Her research and teaching interests include environmental philosophy, continental philosophy (especially critical theory), aesthetics, and feminist philosophy.

Priya Dave, MBE Candidate, Harvard Medical School and Mount Sinai

“Green Space Ethics”

Abstract: Urban greenspaces include parks and gardens that provide access points to nature for those living in urban areas. Given the projected increase in the U.S. and global population inhabiting cities, green spaces will be the major access points to nature for many. Greenspaces have been associated with mental health benefits, ranging from increased social cohesion to reduced stress levels. The physical health benefits of greenspaces include increased fitness levels and cardiovascular health. Despite the numerous benefits, there are justice considerations that arise with greenspaces. First, socioeconomically disadvantaged populations and people of color within cities do not possess as ready access. For instance, parks in major cities such as Atlanta and Los Angeles have been shown to be disproportionately distributed. Factors contributing to these disparities include higher retail prices near parks and lower safety levels. Secondly, many greenspaces have inadvertently incorporated allergenic tree species for aesthetic reasons, which can exacerbate certain chronic illnesses such as asthma. Further, as new green spaces are created, the land ethic and solidarity with the surrounding native species prompts consideration. This paper explores the principles of urban green spaces, along with an exploration of justice shortcomings in major urban parks within the U.S.

Priya Dave, BA, is a medical student at Mount Sinai and a master's of bioethics student at Harvard Medical School. Her interests in bioethics include climate justice, global health ethics, and artificial intelligence ethics. She is a part of the Harvard Climate Leaders Program for professional students and serves on the leadership team for Radiologists for a Sustainable Future. Priya is recipient of the Health Care Without Harm Emerging Physician Leader Award. She will spend the upcoming year creating climate justice curriculum for healthcare professionals as a Sadler Fellow. In her free time, Priya enjoys hiking and exploring the Boston area.

Jamie Draper, Postdoctoral Prize Research Fellow in Politics, Nuffield College, University of Oxford

“Climate Change and Displacement: Towards a Pluralist Approach”

Abstract: Climate change is reshaping patterns of displacement across the world. In this paper, I set out a research agenda for a political theory of climate displacement. Against existing approaches that focus on an idealized "climate refugee", I argue that a political theory of climate displacement must take seriously the empirical complexity and heterogeneity of climate displacement, by focusing on the practical and institutional contexts in which climate change and displacement interact. I give a preliminary typology that distinguishes five such contexts - community relocation, territorial sovereignty, labor migration, refugee movement, and internal displacement - and raise some preliminary normative questions that arise in relation to each.

Jamie Draper is a Postdoctoral Prize Research Fellow in Politics at Nuffield College, University of Oxford. His research develops a political theory of climate displacement. His work has been published in journals such as American Political Science Review and Political Studies, and he is currently working on a monograph on climate displacement.

Mayarí Hengstermann, PhD, Anthropologist & Co-Investigator, Centre of Health Studies (CES), Universidad del Valle de Guatemala (UVG)

“Dumped: Impacts of Plastic Pollution among rural Indigenous communities in Santa María Xalapán, Jalapa Guatemala”

Abstract: Santa María Xalapán, home to the Xinca Indigenous community in Guatemala, has been flanked by several licenses assigned to international industries for mining explorations, seeking a variety of metals. This territory enjoys an autonomy

organised by ancestral traditions for which the land is sacred. However, when visiting these communities, we find that these are some of the most vulnerable populations in the region, suffering from significant plastic pollution. The scarcity of natural resources, especially water, has created a dry, deforested, and polluted landscape that exhibits a high plastic-related toxicity risk due to a lack of waste management, engaging in practices like burning trash. This marginalization has also limited peoples' capacity to protect themselves and their environment, increasing the risk of pollution-related health issues. We will discuss how a more inclusive educational approach can raise peoples' awareness to engage in environmental action, taking for example our interdisciplinary research project that underscores the interconnectedness of many of the major issues the Xalapán area faces today. Socioeconomic inequality, Indigenous discrimination, lack of environmental justice and plastic pollution, are not separate issues, but manifestations of abuses of power that result in the poor and vulnerable suffering disproportionate impacts of pollution and lacking opportunities to benefit from their natural resources.

Mayarí has worked on a variety of research projects that range from popular health culture and domestic health-care practices, local interpretations of illnesses (and their processes), to perceptions of risk and vulnerability, cultural norms for healthcare, disease distribution, and health disparity in resource-poor settings. She is ECOLECTIVOS' local-PI, engaged to provide a unique insight into the understanding of how cultural, social, economic and political factors influence peoples' perceptions, awareness and practices that are sensitive and relevant to developing the community intervention that will be implemented across participating communities. ECOLECTIVOS is a randomized cluster trial in rural Jalapa, Guatemala, concerning combustion of plastic waste and human health effect. The objective of this study is to evaluate the uptake, environmental health impact, and sustainability of intervention strategies to reduce use, recycle, and repurpose plastic aimed at reducing household-level plastic burning in rural Indigenous communities.

Rosemary Jolly, PhD, Weiss Chair of Literature and Human Rights; Professor, Department of Comparative Literature, English, WGSS and African Studies and Bioethics Programs; Director of Graduate Studies, Comparative Literature

“Decolonizing ‘Man’, Resituating Pandemic: An Intervention in the Pathogenesis of Colonial Capitalism.”

Abstract: This paper brings together fifth-wave public health theory and a decolonized approach to the human informed by the Caribbean thinker Sylvia Wynter and the

primary exponent of African Humanism, Es'kia Mpahlele. The paper poses sub-Saharan Africa as a locus of knowledge pertinent to decolonizing major health challenges. Sub-Saharan indigenous ways of thinking the human as co-constitutive in a subject we might call human-animal-'environment', in conjunction with the subcontinent's experiences of colonial damage in disease 'prevention' and 'treatment', demonstrate the overdue need for two-way exchanges of knowledge between Global South and Western medicine in Global Health spheres. The paper offers a decolonial reading of pandemic history, focused primarily on SARS, HIV, and COVID 19, to demonstrate the importance of the co-constitutive subject in understanding the genesis of these pandemics as driven by colonial-capitalism. I emphasize that prevention will indeed take the kinds of massive changes proposed by fifth-wave public health theory. However, I differ from the proponents of that theory in an insistence that the new kind of thinking of the human Hanlon et al call for has already been conceived: just not within the confines of the normative human of Western culture. I illustrate that Western Global Health approaches remain constitutionally 'deaf' to approaches that, although the West may not understand this to be the case, arise from fundamentally different – and extra-anthropocentric -- notions of the human. In this context, Man as Wynter names Him is a subject ripe for decolonization, rather than a premier site of capitalist development, including that of healthcare provision. Recognizing that most of us are not individually able to change the structural violence of the colonial capitalist system in which Global Health practices are embedded, I conclude with implications drawn from my argument for quotidian practices that enable healthcare providers see their actions within a harm reduction paradigm, in the context of communities experiencing intergenerational impoverishment consequent upon colonial violence.

*Rosemary Jolly works at the nexus of the Health Humanities, Global Health and Prevention/Care continuums. She has a PhD in Literature and became the first humanist to be Principal Investigator on a Canadian Institutes of Health (Institute of Gender and Health) research grant in 2010 (Principal Investigator, Gender-Based Violence and HIV/AIDS in rural KZN, South Africa: An RCT Dual Intervention). She specializes in working to determine the health needs of highly vulnerable populations from their perspectives through community-based activities. Professor Jolly is currently the Weiss Chair of the Humanities in Literature at the Penn State University and works across the Departments of Comparative Literature, English and Bioethics. She also builds links between PGME and graduate education with the Health Humanities department at Medical School at Hershey, Penn State, which is the oldest Health Humanities department in the country. Her third monograph, *The Effluent Eye: Narrative, Health and Decolonial Right-Making in the Wake of Human Rights*, is forthcoming from the University of Minnesota Press.*

Daniel Mahoney, MD, Baylor College of Medicine; Texas Children's Hospital

“Examining Proposed Solutions to Address Human and Planetary Health in the Face of Climate Change”

Abstract: Human health and culture are built upon our consumption of other species, inextricably tying us to the complex system of planetary biosphere health. Health, culture and food consumption also function within the complex global economic system. Human food insecurity, unequal access to nutrition, ecosystem collapse, mass extinction, and refugee displacement of humans and other species are only a few concerns resulting from conflicts between these two complex systems. Systems theorists teach that there are multiple leverage points for complex systems, such as buffers, feedback loop delays, and system rules. Decisions about which leverage point to utilize when addressing two conflicting systems depend on the perspective and role of the individual who is trying to exert a change. For humans who exist within and depend upon both planetary biosphere and global economic systems for survival, such decisions are incredibly complex and perspectives vary widely based on individual goals and values. This paper will examine proposed solutions to address human and planetary health in the face of climate change through the context of systemic leverage points. The strengths and limitations of several proposed solutions will be explored using insights from ecology, history, philosophy, psychology, and decision science.

Dr. Daniel Mahoney is a pediatric palliative care physician at Texas Children's Hospital in Houston, TX. As the Director of the Texas Children's Medical Humanities Program, he facilitates workshops and activities to promote empathic care, clinician wellness, and professional identity formation for pediatric trainees and faculty. Dr. Mahoney is passionate about exploring the relationships between food, health, stories and caring.

Michelle Meyer, Director, Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center; Associate Professor, Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning, College of Architecture, Texas A&M University

“Irregular Disaster to Continually Crisis: The Altruistic Community Under Climate Change”

Abstract: Disasters are occurring more frequently, with climate change increasing the likelihood and magnitude of impacts for every community. The nonprofit sector's role, from providing volunteers to sending food and water to providing large amounts of

funding, will become a more important aspect of adapting to a changing climate. How will this “altruistic community” manage this rise in need for services? How will our local communities manage continual crises, or a pandemic while still recovering from a hurricane, or a fire while still rebuilding from last year’s fire? Whether rescuing individuals from flood waters or rebuilding homes, volunteers and the financial aid that supports their efforts for the most vulnerable and marginalized among us will be central during the Anthropocene. Understanding these efforts intersects with theories of environmental justice and social equity as additional need for social services rests in the hands of nongovernmental actors. In this presentation, I discuss the challenges and opportunities facing our altruistic efforts to support each other during crises.

Michelle Meyer, Director of the Hazard Reduction and Recovery Center and Associate Professor in the Department of Landscape Architecture and Urban Planning at Texas A&M, researches the intersection of hazards and stratification using the lens of social capital to understand how relationships between individuals, governmental, and nongovernmental organizations affect risk and recovery for marginalized populations.

Nicole Redvers, ND, MPH, Assistant Professor, Department of Indigenous Health, Department of Family & Community Medicine, University of North Dakota

“The determinants of planetary health: Indigenous community reflections”

Abstract: In 2021, a group of Indigenous scholars, practitioners, land and water defenders, respected Elders, and knowledge-holders came together to define the determinants of planetary health from an Indigenous perspective. Three overarching levels of interconnected determinants, in addition to ten individual-level determinants, were identified as being integral to the health and sustainability of the planet, Mother Earth. Reflections on this collective work and the identified determinants will be discussed.

Dr. Nicole Redvers, ND, MPH, is a member of the Deninu K’ue First Nation and has worked with Indigenous patients, scholars, and communities around the globe her entire career. She is an assistant professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine and the Department of Indigenous Health at the University of North Dakota where she helped developed and launch the first Indigenous health PhD program. Dr. Redvers is co-founder and current board chair of the Canadian charity the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation and has been actively involved at regional, national, and international levels promoting the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in both human and planetary health research and practice.

Omar Rivera, Associate Professor, Texas A&M University

“Reflections on Reciprocity”

Abstract: I approach the question of "planetary health" as the possibility of establishing relations of reciprocity within habitats that are not organized based on the dichotomies human/ nature, human/non-human, and human/animal. How are relations established among living beings beyond the centrality of these dichotomies? What modalities of relation are possible in this respect? I center on "reciprocity" as a specific modality of relation and explore it in view of non-Western cosmologies (of the Andean notion of *ayni* in particular). I end by exploring *ayni* as a decolonial critical concept.

Omar Rivera is Associate Professor of Philosophy, Texas A&M University. He specializes in Latin American Philosophy, Aesthetics and Decolonial Theory. He is the author of two books: Delimitations of Latin American Philosophy (Indiana University Press, 2019) and Andean Aesthetics and Anticolonial Resistance (Bloomsbury, 2021).

Krithika Srinivasan, Senior Lecturer, School of Geosciences, University of Edinburgh

“Re-animalising Wellbeing: Multispecies Justice After Development”

Abstract: Long-standing critiques of the socio-ecological and other adverse impacts of development have not made much headway in effecting meaningful change. Engaging with this impasse, I argue that specific zoöpolitical notions of human wellbeing that are co-constitutive with developmentality are at the foundation of today’s socio-ecological troubles and multispecies justice concerns. Bringing together post-development and animal studies scholarship, I discuss the twinned logics of protection-sacrifice that underlie the pursuit of human wellbeing at societal scales, and that have come to characterise more-than-human responses as well. In conversation with environmental philosopher Val Plumwood and degrowth scholar Giorgos Kallis, I offer thought experiments on re-visioning wellbeing via an approach of ‘re-animalisation’ to provoke reflection on crafting new foundations for equitable multispecies presents and futures.

Krithika Srinivasan is Senior Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Edinburgh. Her research and teaching interests lie at the intersection of political ecology, post-development politics, animal studies, and nature geographies. Her work draws on research in South Asia to rethink globally established concepts and practices about nature-society relations and reconfigure approaches to multispecies justice.

Robin Chen-Hsing Tsai, English Department, Tamkang University, Taiwan

“Climate Change, Zoonosis and Narratives of Disease in Lawrence Wright’s *The End of October*”

Abstract: The term “Anthropocene” was first put forth by Eugene F. Stoermer in the 1980s, and later was promulgated by Paul J. Crutzen with the intention of reflecting on the Industrial Revolution and how mankind in the past three hundred years has utilized the earth’s resources in such a way as to induce global warming, environmental change and other disease related problems. This article aspires to dissect how organisms, environments and diseases (including plagues, influenzas and emergent virus infections) are subject to the influences of the anthropocene; and especially how global warming phenomena in geological deep time overlap the historical time of humans and creates cross-species infections in Lawrence Wright’s *The End of October*. The first part of this article re-examines the definition of the anthropocene, its time anchor and discontents. Next, this article in its discussion points out that narratives of disease fall into three types: (1) contagion as a moral allegory (Geraldine Brooks), (2) narratives of illness as metaphor (Susan Sontag), and (3) narratives of outbreak (Pricilla Wald). This article regards Lawrence Wright’s *The End of October* as a narrative of outbreak in the Anthropocene since Henry Parsons, as a virologist and virus hunter, is capable of charting a zoonotic diagram of the spread of the Kongoli virus that affects humans and nonhumans worldwide. This opens the possibility of a new type of anthropocene disease writing. Lastly, this article takes the viewpoint of a virus to re-imagine a literary space of the co-constitution of environmental and health humanities.

Robin Chen-Hsing Tsai received his Ph.D. in comparative literature from the Department of Foreign Languages & Literatures at National Taiwan University. Presently, he is a professor in the English Department at Tamkang University, where he also served as department chair. He is president of the Association of Comparative Literature, English and American Literature of the Republic of China, Taiwan, president of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment of the Republic of China (ASLE-Taiwan), and the editor of Tamkang Review and Anglo-American Literary Review. He has edited Introduction to Ecological Literature, Key Readings in Ecocriticism, and co-edited Language, Culture and Information Technology. His published articles appear in Comparative Literature Studies, Neohelicon and Chung Wai Literary Quarterly. His Chinese monologue, entitled Ecological Crisis and Literary Studies, won the 2019 Academia Sinica Humanities and Social Sciences Book Prize.

Kathryn Whitlock, PhD student in The School of Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication at The University of Texas at Dallas

“Caring in the Anthro-Capitalocene: The Entanglement of Butterflies, Citizen Science, and Surveillance”

Abstract: This thesis examines the citizen science project and real-time online database eButterfly to investigate the limits and potential of digital citizen science as participatory media, and in particular, eButterfly’s relation to issues of diversifying participation and epistemologies of knowledge. I bridge critiques of eButterfly’s position in a participatory culture to feminist approaches to data and visual culture of data to examine how eButterfly reifies modes of science that favor reason over emotion and reinscribes anthropocentric hierarchies. I critically examine eButterfly’s data map and use data feminists’ proposal of elevating emotion in data visualization to draw out the ways in which eButterfly’s data map fails to affectively relay the importance of butterfly conservation. Finally, I elaborate on the ways in which eButterfly encourages harmful forms of surveillance that compromise the safety of butterflies. I connect eButterfly to a speculative ethics of care in order to understand how butterflies can be better cared for in a world that needs to conserve them. I argue that eButterfly remains entangled in a system that seeks to exploit animal bodies and hinders this citizen scientific project’s ability to engage in ethical treatment and care of butterflies and the environment.

Kathryn Whitlock is a PhD student in Arts, Technology, and Emerging Communication at The University of Texas at Dallas. Her research explores the spaces where feminist science and technology studies, media studies, surveillance studies, and animal studies meet. Whitlock participates in the Public Interactives Research Lab (PIRL), which pursues speculative design practice to investigate how technologies take place in public spaces, and the Fashioning Circuits Lab, which addresses the social and cultural implications of the intersection between fashion and technology. She previously earned a Bachelor of Science in entomology from Texas A&M University.