

Affective Ecocriticism Pre-Conference Workshop

ASLE 2019, University of California-Davis

Workshop coordinators: Jennifer Ladino and Kyle Bladow

Theme

Environmental humanities scholars are faced with the increasingly difficult, but no less urgent, task of reaching across ideological, political, and disciplinary boundaries to collectively address complex environmental problems. Problems as large and complicated as climate change, species extinction, ocean acidification, and plastic pollution demand interdisciplinary solutions. In particular, they require a more sophisticated understanding of the emotions that circulate around these and other environmental issues today, how that circulation works, and what role physical environments play in shaping affective experience. This pre-conference workshop will focus on how affect theory—in a range of forms, including cognitive science, narrative theory, history of emotions, and cultural theory—can help with these tasks.

The workshop coordinators recently completed a collection of essays, *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*, which shares these premises. But there remains much work to be done. With this workshop, we hope to highlight and expand on key themes and issues that emerged in the essay collection and to invite new scholars to continue shaping the conversation at the affect-environment confluence. *Affective Ecocriticism* helped distill several emotions emerging in our contemporary moment—and so, particularly salient to conversations about the Anthropocene—including anxiety, hope, resilience, disappointment, homesickness, and solastalgia. We especially welcome scholars who are working on these (or related) feeling states as well as any of the following:

- Indigenous environmental affects
- queer environmental affects
- emotions about racism / racism as emotion
- the politics / uses of environmental anger
- affect circulation on social media
- affective economies
- narrative affects
- aesthetic affects
- pedagogical approaches to emotion
- emotional recognition software and its implications
- psychic numbing, compassion fatigue, and other barriers to compassion
- environmental grief, including climate grief
- cross-species empathy
- empathy versus compassion

Structure

Participants will be invited to submit brief position papers (1000-1500 words) addressing any of the above topics. Receiving the papers in advance, the coordinators will trace common themes and interests in order to further organize the workshop. The workshop will begin with introductions and opening remarks from the coordinators. Participants will briefly reiterate the main points of their position papers, after which breakout sessions will offer more extensive exchanges on particular themes. The final hour will be devoted to synthesizing the position papers.

Coordinators

Kyle Bladow is Assistant Professor of Native American Studies at Northland College. His current work seeks to place material ecocriticism into better dialogue with Indigenous studies. Earlier work appears in *Studies in American Indian Literatures*, *New International Voices in Ecocriticism*, and *A Bioregional Imagination*; he has also served as Managing Editor for *ISLE*.

Jennifer Ladino is Associate Professor of English and Director of Undergraduate Studies at the University of Idaho. She is the author of *Reclaiming Nostalgia: Longing for Nature in American Literature* (2012). Her second monograph, *Memorials Matter: Emotion, Environment, and Public Memory at American Historical Sites*, is forthcoming with the University of Nevada Press (2019).

Workshop Recommended Reading

Bladow, Kyle and Jennifer Ladino. *Affective Ecocriticism: Emotion, Embodiment, Environment*. U of Nebraska Press, 2018.

Bloom, Paul. *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion*. Ecco P, 2016.

Cunsolo, Ashlee and Karen Landman. *Mourning Nature: Hope at the Heart of Ecological Loss and Grief*. McGill-Queen's Press, 2017.

Head, Lesley. *Hope and Grief in the Anthropocene: Re-conceptualising Human–Nature Relations*. Routledge, 2016.

Houser, Heather. *Ecosickness: Environment and Affect in Contemporary U.S. Fiction*. Columbia UP, 2014.

Leys, Ruth. *The Ascent of Affect: Genealogy and Critique*. U of Chicago P, 2017.

Seymour, Nicole. *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age*. U of Minnesota Press, 2018.

Siperstein, Stephen, Shane Hall, and Stephanie LeMenager. *Teaching Climate Change in the Humanities*. Routledge UP, 2017 (especially chapters by Wilson and Fiskio).

Slovic, Scott and Paul Slovic. *Numbers and Nerves: Information, Emotion, and Meaning in a World of Data*. Oregon State U Press, 2015.