



UNIVERSITY COLLEGE CORK ECO-HUMANITIES
RESEARCH GROUP
PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES AND PROGRAMME OF EVENTS
AUTUMN 2023



Organised with the support of the UCC Environmental Research Institute

ECO-HUMANITIES RESEARCH GROUP PUBLIC LECTURE SERIES AND SPECIAL
EVENTS 2023-24

All lectures take place online (via Zoom). Please register through Eventbrite to receive the Zoom meeting link. These lectures are open to all and you are warmly invited to attend.

For further details about the lectures listed below, including abstracts, speaker biographical information and Eventbrite registration links for the lectures, please see pages 3-4 below.

Autumn 2023 Public Lectures

Thursday 12th October 2023: 4.00-5.15pm (DST/BST/IST – Irish Standard Time)

Khan Touseef Osman (University of Salerno)

Nation, Nature and Narrative in the Time of the Planetary Crisis: Eco-political Consciousness in Contemporary Bangladeshi Anglophone Novels

Thursday 7th December 2023: 4.00-5.15pm (GMT)

Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner (University of Maryland), and Andrew Frederick Smith (Drexel University)

Climate Crisis as Relational Crisis: Centering Indigenous Feminist Conceptions of Responsibility in Environmental Discourse

Special Event: International Online Conference

Animals and the Environment in ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy

An Online International Conference organised jointly by the Eco-Humanities Research Group, University College Cork, and Birkbeck, University of London

Dates: Wednesday 8 November – Friday 10 November 2023

For full conference programme and registration for the conference, please see p.5 below.

Conference Organisers: Crystal Addey (University College Cork) and Sophia Connell (Birkbeck, University of London).

AUTUMN 2023 PUBLIC LECTURES

Thursday 12th October 2023: 4.00-5.15pm (DST/BST/IST – Irish Standard Time)

Khan Touseef Osman (University of Salerno)

**Nation, Nature and Narrative in the Time of the Planetary Crisis: Eco-political
Consciousness in Contemporary Bangladeshi Anglophone Novels**

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/st887z2z>

Amitav Ghosh in his novel *Gun Island* (2019) and non-fiction work *The Nutmeg's Curse: Parables for a Planet in Crisis* (2021) has written about the increased trend of Bangladeshis taking perilous routes and passages to make it into Europe illegally despite their country being widely celebrated as a neoliberal economic success. The lecture begins by identifying this as the Bangladesh paradox and attempts to explore the maximized precariousness of a large section of Bangladeshi population as a result of the acceleration of capitalist modernity in recent decades. The dispersal of Bangladeshis appears to be a symptom of the planetary crisis – one whose origin Ghosh traces back to settler colonialism and its metaphysic of inertness that imagines a rift between the agentic human subject and the “brute” nature, evolving into a full-blown disaster on a planetary scale due to the unrestrained capitalist acceleration in the age of neoliberalism. In his analysis, the maximized precariousness of Bangladeshis is a consequence of the structures of colonialism being perpetuated, yet masked, by hegemonic neoliberal modernity in a world sharply divided between the Global North and South, wreaking havoc on the human and non-human inhabitants of their nation. It is this politics of invisibility that the eco-politically conscious works of the Bangladeshi-origin, multiply-rooted authors attempt to subvert through novels like Arif Anwar’s *The Storm* (2018), Numair Atif Choudhury’s *Babu Bangladesh!* (2019) and Tahmima Anam’s *The Bones of Grace* (2016). These novels bring to the surface the multidirectionality of violence experienced within the affective order of the everyday in such a location of the Global South as Bangladesh, but, more importantly, they deconstruct the cartesian dualism between subjectivity and objectivity, steering clear of the nature-culture binary, often through their deep ecological awareness. In my reading of these novels, nationhood in the Indian subcontinent has emerged as a consequence of the biopolitical manipulation of identities within a colonial framework and has carried the metaphysic of inertness to impossible extremes in the post-independence context. My lecture will conclude by commenting on the representational aspects of eco-politically conscious literatures rooted, at least partially, in the Global South that gesture towards an understanding of reality where the category of the uncanny is an essential constituent.

Dr. Khan Touseef Osman is a South Asian academic and researcher. He did his PhD in Literary Studies in English at the University of Kashmir. Dr. Osman also worked as a Postdoctoral Researcher in Studies in Historical Trauma and Transformation at Stellenbosch University, South Africa. He is now finishing another PhD in the area of Comparative Literary and Historical Studies at the University of Salerno, Italy. Dr. Osman has received several prestigious scholarships, such as South Asia Foundation scholarship, Andrew Mellon Foundation postdoc fellowship and the University of Salerno scholarship in its XXXV cycle. He has taught and done research at Asian University for Women (AUW) and some other universities at home and abroad.

Thursday 7th December 2023, 4.00-5.15pm (GMT)

Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner (University of Maryland), and Andrew Frederick Smith (Drexel University)

Climate Crisis as Relational Crisis: Centering Indigenous Feminist Conceptions of Responsibility in Environmental Discourse

Register here: <https://tinyurl.com/yf8pppfc>

It is commonly assumed that we currently face a climate crisis insofar as the climatological effects of excessive carbon emissions risk destabilizing advanced civilization and jeopardize cherished modern institutions. The threat posed by climate change is treated as unprecedented, demanding urgent action to avert apocalyptic conditions that will limit or even erase the future of all humankind. In this essay, we argue that this framework—the *default climate crisis motif*—perpetuates a discursive infrastructure that commits its proponents, if unwittingly, to logics that ultimately reinforce the dynamics driving climate change and its attending injustices. By centering Indigenous feminist environmental discourses, which privilege the role of richly interweaving networks of responsibilities composing extended more-than-human kinship arrangements, we contend that climate crisis is instead primarily a manifestation of devastating multidimensional relational disruptions of Indigenous lands and lives. More pointedly, it is a rebound effect of centuries of accumulating colonial injustices against responsible lifeways that are critical for socioecological adaptability and responsiveness. Framing climate crisis as relational crisis hereby creates discursive space for much needed transformational Indigenous feminist visions for justly and effectively addressing climate change.

Shelbi Nahwilet Meissner (Luiseño & Cupeño) is an Indigenous feminist philosopher. Shelbi researches, teaches, and consults on Indigenous research and evaluation methods, cultural and language reclamation, Indigenous epistemologies, Indigenous feminist interventions in critical social work, and land-based feminist coalition-building. Shelbi is fascinated by the intersections of Indigenous knowledge systems, caretaking, power, and trauma. Shelbi is a proud first-generation descendant of the La Jolla Band of Luiseño Indians, and is of both Luiseño (Payómkawichum) and Cupeño (Kúupangaxwichem) descent. She is an assistant professor in the Harriet Tubman Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at University of Maryland College Park and the founding director of the Indigenous Futures Lab, a hub of Indigenous feminist research and evaluation.

Andrew Frederick Smith, kinless (i.e., a settler/colonizer/occupier), is a professor of philosophy and environmental studies at Drexel University in Philadelphia. He also is department chair of the Department of Biodiversity, Earth and Environmental Science. His recent research is inspired by the pursuit of what Kim TallBear calls “settler ontocide,” which has led him to focus on the philosophical dimensions of Indigenous ecological knowledge systems, Indigenous climate/food justice, and Indigenous feminisms. His latest book is *The Threefold Struggle* (SUNY 2022).

Animals and the Environment in Ancient Greek and Roman Philosophy

An Online International Conference organised jointly by the Eco-Humanities Research Group, University College Cork, and Birkbeck, University of London, with the support of the University College Cork Environmental Research Institute

Dates: Wednesday 8 November – Friday 10 November 2023

Time zone: GMT

Keynote Speakers:

Dimitri El Murr and Jean Trinquier (École Normale Supérieure)

M.D. Usher (University of Vermont)

Claudia Zatta (University of Milan)

Coleen P. Zoller (Susquehanna University)

And with an Introduction and Reflections from Melissa Lane (Princeton University)

Register for the conference here: <https://tinyurl.com/4px4vhcr>

In ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, we see a diverse range of perspectives on, and great interest in, animals, nature and the natural world, and in related environmental issues, such as sustainability. Despite this, environmental ethicists and philosophers tend to dismiss the relevance of ancient philosophy to contemporary environmental debates and issues. Environmental philosophers have even claimed that ancient Greek and Roman philosophy – at least in its canonical forms – is part of the problem in environmental terms that has contributed significantly to the subsequent prevalence of anthropocentrism in western philosophy and culture. Plato, who has had a profound influence on the western philosophical tradition, is sometimes seen as epitomising this anthropocentrism because of his emphasis on dualism, championing of reason, and his apparent anti-female and anti-body stance. Consequently, it is thought that he diminished the importance of the natural or ‘sensible’ world primarily because of his theory of Forms which postulates the existence of an ideal, immaterial world beyond the world of the senses and accords a greater value to the former (cf. Mahoney 1997: 45-54). Aristotle’s philosophy has also been characterised as anthropocentric, based on his statement that animals and plants are ‘for the sake of’ humans in the *Politics*. Some consider the way he separates human beings as rational from other living things as perceptive and nutritive to have been influential. Stoic philosophers are often seen as drawing on Aristotle in support of their own anthropocentric philosophical positions.

However, recent scholarship in Classics and Ancient Philosophy has begun to call into question and challenge this characterisation of ancient philosophy and its relevance to environmental concerns. *The Greeks and the Environment*, edited by Laura Westra and Thomas M. Robinson, suggested new ways of relating ancient Greek philosophy to ecology and environmentalism. More recently, Melissa Lane’s *Eco-Republic: What the Ancients can Teach Us about Ethics, Virtue, and Sustainable Living* has re-assessed Plato’s *Republic* as a useful and provocative work for thinking through environmental and related issues, including climate change, and seeks to refashion the political imagination toward a more environmentally sustainable way of living, while Mark Usher’s *Plato’s Pigs and Other Ruminations: Ancient Guides to Living with Nature* suggests that we can find in the lives and

thought of ancient philosophers a close engagement with nature and an understanding of human knowledge and experience that is based on whole systems and, in relation to this, values and practices that are conducive to sustainable living. With regard to Aristotle, on-going research on his zoological writings continues to reveal his focus on the capacities of organisms, living in their natural environments, including much cognitive sophistication (most recently: *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Biology*, edited by Sophia Connell; *Aristotle On How Animals Move*, edited by Andrea Falcon and Stasinós Stavrianeas). Aristotle's focus in these works is on animals' independent goods and values, quite apart from any service they provide to human beings.

This conference seeks to expand on these developments and re-assessments of the relevance of ancient philosophy to contemporary environmental debates.

Conference Schedule

Please note: **the timezone for the conference is GMT. Please check your own timings and timezone if you are in a different timezone.**

Wednesday 8 November 2023

- 10.00-10.15 Introduction and Welcome
- 10.15-11.15 Keynote Lecture: Claudia Zatta (University of Milan, Italy): “Οἱ ἄνθρωποι καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ζῷα”: Life and The Environment in Early Greek Philosophy**
- 11.15-11.30 BREAK
- 11.30-12.15 Harold Tarrant (University of Newcastle, Australia): ‘The World as a Magical Organism: Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*’
- 12.15-1.00 Stefano Mecci (Italian Institute for Historical Studies, Naples, Italy): ‘The Dog-like Philosophers and Nature: The Ancient Cynics, the first environmentalists?’
- 1.00-2.00 LUNCH
- 2.00-2.15 Melissa Lane (Princeton University, USA): Special Introduction and Reflections**
- 2.15-3.00 Hallvard Fossheim (University of Bergen, Norway): ‘A Stoic Perspective on Worth in Nature’
- 3.00-3.45 Matt DuPree (Florida State University, USA): ‘Like Wasps and Flies: Deep Ecology and the Ten Modes of Aenesidemus’
- 3.45-4.00 BREAK
- 4.00-4.45 Michal Bizon (Jagiellonian University, Krakow, Poland): ‘Na ton kynā! The dog in Greek thought from Heraclitus to Plotinus’

Thursday 9 November 2023

- 10.30-11.15 Leo Catana (University of Copenhagen, Denmark): ‘The Concept of Care (Gr. *epimeleia*) as a Nature-Orientated Virtue in Ancient Greek Thought’
- 11.15-12.00 Jorge Torres (University of Bern, Switzerland): ‘Aristotle on Friendship between Human and Non-Human Animals’
- 12.00-1.00 Keynote Lecture - Dimitri El Murr and Jean Trinquier (École Normale Supérieure, France): ‘Soul and the Beasts: A Platonic Reading of Two Newly Discovered Pompeian Polychrome Mosaics’**
- 1.00-2.15 LUNCH
- 2.15-3.00 Douglas Campbell (Alma College, Michigan, USA): ‘Plato on Plants, Humans and Other Living Things’
- 3.00-3.45 Thornton Lockwood (Quinnipiac University, Connecticut, USA): ‘*Politics* I.8: Aristotle’s environmental philosophy?’
- 3.45-4.00 Break
- 4.00-4.45 Enrico Piergiacomini (Technion, Israel Institute of Technology, Israel): ‘*Animal sacer et pius?* Xenocrates, the animals’ notion of god, and the environment’

Friday 10 November 2023

- 10.00-10.45 Miira Tuominen (University of Stockholm, Sweden): ‘Just Life: Porphyry’s argument for abstinence’
- 10.45-11.30 Tonguc Seferoglu (Ardahan University, Turkey): ‘Porphyry’s *On Abstinence* and Its Modern-Day Ramifications for Moral Vegetarianism’
- 11.30-12.00 BREAK
- 12.00-1.00 Keynote Lecture: Coleen P. Zoller (Susquehanna University, USA): ‘The Nature of Pregnant Bodies in Plato’s Dialogues’**
- 1.00-1.30 LUNCH
- 1.30-2.15 Eleanor Oser (Boston University, USA): ‘Justice as Virtue is Justice pros: The twofold concerns of justice in Porphyry’s *On Abstinence from Killing Animals*’
- 2.15-3.00 Wiebke-Marie Stock (University of Notre Dame, USA): ‘*Physis*: Plotinus on Nature and the Soul of the Earth’
- 3.00-3.45 Round-table discussion
- 3.45-4.00 BREAK
- 4.00-5.00 Keynote Lecture: M.D. Usher (University of Vermont, USA): ‘Aristotle and *Umwelt*’**