



The Anthropocene: Views From the Humanities

Anthropocene: from the Greek anthropo- meaning "human" and -cene meaning "new."



Scientists have declared that we are living in the Anthropocene, an age in which human behavior and actions are massively affecting the ecosystems of the earth. Nobel laureate Paul Crutzen claims that humans once saw themselves as "rebels against a superpower we call 'Nature,'" but no they longer do. Moving mountains and unmaking rain forests, infusing the atmosphere with CO₂ and thereby resetting the global thermostat, manipulating the genomes of plants and animals — these are only some of the ways that humans exercise sovereignty over nature.

Anthropocene is not the official name of the present geological epoch (technically, we are in the Holocene era), but Crutzen, who has popularized the term Anthropocene, believes it should be adopted because there is much to be learned through the lens of this new concept. "Anthropocene" acknowledges the reality that humans hold the power to "decide what nature is and what it will be." Most importantly, Crutzen believes that with recognition of this power comes opportunity and, above all, responsibility. To become aware that "we are living in the Anthropocene, the Age of Men, could be of great help. Rather than representing yet another sign of human hubris, this name change would stress the enormity of humanity's responsibility as stewards of the Earth."

The Anthropocene raises as many questions about the future of the biosphere as it does about the ways in which humans respond to the knowledge that this future is ours to determine. Paleoclimatologist Curt Stager has remarked about sea level rise that "coastal cities . . . and wild places like the Everglades . . . are now living on borrowed time, even if we could switch to non-fossil fuels fairly soon. The inundation may take centuries, but hearing that it may be un-stoppable makes it harder to ignore." Does our knowledge of the consequences of pillaging the planet in fact make it harder to ignore those consequences? Does it compel us to abandon the current path we are on, as Stager suggests? Or does the human mind respond to distant apocalyptic dangers with disavowal?

These are only some of the questions that speakers and events in Anthropocene series will explore. Clearly the questions raised by this geological epoch require answers from scientists as well as from humanistic fields of inquiry such visual arts, literature, ethical philosophy, psychology, architecture and anthropology. We cannot grasp the meaning and implications of the age of the Anthropocene, and the prospects that lie before us, if we do not consider how human consciousness understands and envisions the known and unknown world, and what pressures come to play — political, economic, and existential — in forming the views and visions of the future necessary to spur us into responsible action.

This fall, UCSB Professor of English and Environmental Studies Ken Hiltner will inaugurate Anthropocene: Views From The Humanities with a lecture entitled "Should We Welcome the Anthropocene?". Andrew Revkin, whose *New York Times* blog Dot Earth was named one of the top 25 blogs in 2013 by *Time* magazine, will speak on "Charting a 'Good' Path in a Turbulent Age." Thereafter the IHC will hold events throughout the year in the Anthropocene series. All events are free and open to the public, and we hope to see you in attendance.

If you are not already on our mailing list, please visit the IHC website (www.ihc.ucsb.edu) and click "Join the IHC Mailing List," so that we may notify you of Anthropocene and other IHC events.

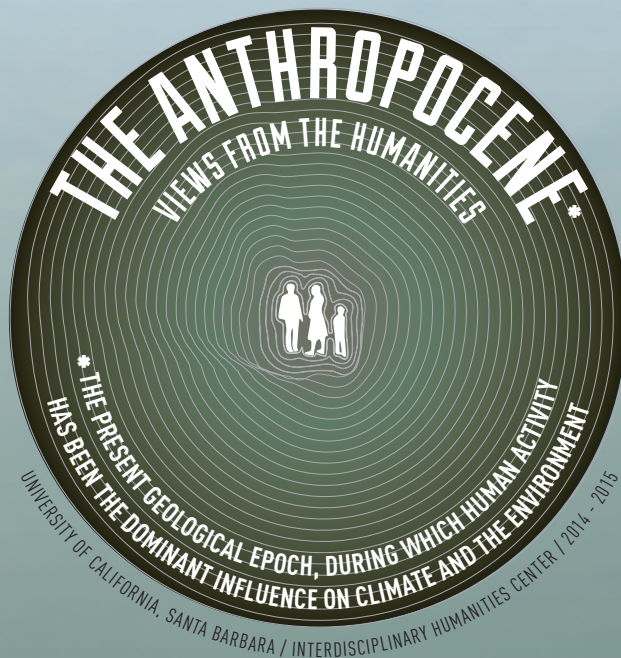
Susan Derwin

Director, Interdisciplinary Humanities Center, UC Santa Barbara

ABOUT THE SERIES:

The Anthropocene, a newly-coined geologic term, designates the age during which human activity has been the dominant influence on climate and the environment. While subject to the forces of nature, the human species is itself a force that acts upon the natural world. We have altered the sea levels, the composition of the atmosphere and the surfaces and depths of the earth. But unlike nature's agents of change, our species has now become fully cognizant of our impact. As Andrew Revkin has observed, "Two billion years ago, cyanobacteria oxygenated the atmosphere and powerfully disrupted life on earth, but they didn't know it. We're the first species that's become a planet-scale influence and is aware of that reality. That's what distinguishes us."

The UCSB Interdisciplinary Humanities Center's 2014-2015 public events series, *The Anthropocene: Views from the Humanities*, will explore this time of significant biospheric human influence, with the aim of bringing into focus the challenges that now confront the planet and its inhabitants through the unique, critical perspectives afforded by the humanities and fine arts.



SELECTED EVENTS FOR 2014-15:

INAUGURAL LECTURE: *Should We Welcome the Anthropocene?*

Ken Hiltner (English, UCSB)
Thursday, October 30 / 4:00 PM
Cosponsored by the Environmental Humanities Center.

TALK: *The Anthropocene: A New Epoch of Thought?*

Kathryn Yusoff (School of Geography, Queen Mary University of London)
Tuesday, November 4 / 4:00 PM

TALK: *Charting a 'Good' Path in a Turbulent Age*

Andrew Revkin (*The New York Times*)
Thursday, November 13 / 4:00 PM

TALK: *Balancing on a Planet: Can Local Food Improve Health, Increase Equity, and Slow Global Warming?*

David A. Cleveland (Environmental Studies, UCSB)
Tuesday, November 18 / 4:00 PM
Pacific View Room, UCSB Library
Cosponsored by the UCSB Library's Pacific Views Speaker Series and the Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor.

TALK: *Fixing Capitalism's Deepest Flaws*

Peter Barnes (entrepreneur, journalist, author)
Tuesday, November 18 / 8:00 PM
UCSB Corwin Pavilion
Cosponsored by the Walter H. Capps Center for the Study of Ethics, Religion, and Public Life at UCSB.

TALK: *Into the Bowels of the Anthropocene: Excrement and the Current Ecological Crisis*

Nicholas C. Kawa (Anthropology, Ball State University)
Thursday, November 20 / 4:00 PM

TALK: *Problems with the Anthropocene: A View from Rural Amazonia*

Nicholas C. Kawa (Anthropology, Ball State University)
Friday, November 21 / 1:00 PM
Cosponsored by the Department of Anthropology.

TALK: *High and Dry: On Deserts and Crisis*

Dick Hebdige (Art, Film & Media Studies, UCSB)
Thursday, December 4 / 4:00 PM

TALK: *On Streaming*

Allison Adelle Hedge Coke (poet, winner of the American Book Award)
Thursday, January 29, 2015 / 4:00 PM

TALK: *Drawing the End of our World: Comics, Climate Change and Pizzly Bears*

Andy Warner (comic artist)
Thursday, February 5, 2015 / 4:00 PM

TALK: *Eric Conway* (historian at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and co-author of "The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future")

Thursday, February 12, 2015 / 4:00 PM

TALK: *Paul Edwards* (History and School of Information, University of Michigan, author of *A Vast Machine: Computer Models, Climate Data, and the Politics of Global Warming*)

Thursday, February 19, 2015 / 4:00 PM
Cosponsored by the IHC's Machines, Politics and People RFG.

TALK: *Ursula Heise* (English/Institute of the Environment & Sustainability Humanities, UCLA)

Thursday, April 23, 2015 / 4:00 PM

ALL EVENTS WILL TAKE PLACE IN THE MCCUNE CONFERENCE ROOM, 6020 HSSB, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.

RESEARCH FOCUS GROUPS

The IHC is sponsoring the twelve Research Focus Groups for the 2014-15 academic year. The IHC Research Focus Groups bring together faculty and graduate students with shared research interests from different fields and departments to foster the development of interdisciplinary research agendas. The RFGs meet to present work in progress, read and discuss texts and current scholarship, and plan and implement common research projects. For more information, and to find contact information for the following groups, visit <http://www.ihc.ucsb.edu/research/rfg.html>.

FOR THIS YEAR, THE IHC WELCOMES TWO NEW RESEARCH FOCUS GROUPS:

ENERGY CHALLENGES IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

Conveners:

Javiera Barandiaran, Global Studies

Stephan Miescher, History

As climate change threatens communities worldwide, how to transition to cleaner sources of energy remains a global challenge. For developing countries, the stakes are high: they must simultaneously respond to climate change impacts and strive to develop using more expensive, fossil fuel-free energy sources. In this context, what have been developing countries' approaches to energy policy and fuels? How are these challenged by the current pressure to switch to cleaner energies, and with what effects? What have developing countries been doing to participate in new markets for fuels and energy technologies, and respond to new energy challenges, like for mobile technologies that are increasingly important not just in cities but also in rural areas across Africa and Latin America? Can developing countries benefit from new energy sources, like lithium used in electric cars? Or are fossil fuels still black gold, as Brazil's and Ghana's recent oil discoveries suggest?

PAGANS: INTERDISCIPLINARY ENCOUNTERS WITH IDOLATRY

Conveners:

Christine M. Thomas, Religious Studies

Fabio Rambelli, East Asian Languages & Cultural Studies and Religious Studies

The modern study of religion developed largely out of German Protestant scholarship in the nineteenth century. Though these early scholars did important work in religions that were not monotheist, the implicit comparison of this "comparative" work was typically with the monotheist European traditions as the "neutral" point of comparison for the "exotic." It is surprising, for example, that in our department of Religious Studies, on a strictly numerical basis, the monotheist or non-theist traditions have nearly twice as many colleagues as those working in polytheist traditions. Correspondingly, the study of polytheism is usually fragmented among a number of disciplinary homes in the modern university in addition to Religious Studies, such as area studies departments, and departments of History and Anthropology. Another important component of the field of polytheism should be, but usually has not been, Classics departments, which house experts in a large and influential tradition, the ancient Mediterranean religions of classical antiquity. Because of this fragmentation and balkanization, important conversations about the nature of polytheism have been taking place on parallel planes and without the engagement of a truly comparative community of scholars.

THE FOLLOWING RESEARCH FOCUS GROUPS ARE RETURNING TO THE IHC THIS YEAR:

4HUMANITIES RFG:

Conveners:

Alan Liu, English

Claudio Fogu, French and Italian

Linda Adler-Kassner, Writing Program

AMERICAN INDIAN AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES RFG:

Conveners:

Margaret McMurtrey, Religious Studies

ann-elise lewallen, East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies

ANCIENT BORDERLANDS RFG:

Conveners:

Christine Thomas, Religious Studies

John W.I. Lee, History

ARCHAEOLOGY RFG:

Conveners:

Stuart Tyson Smith, Anthropology

Brice Erickson, Classics

IDENTITY RFG:

Conveners:

Cynthia Kaplan, Political Science

Adrienne Edgar, History

LANGUAGE, INTERACTION AND SOCIAL ORGANIZATION (LISO) RFG:

Conveners:

Melissa Curtin, Linguistics

Gene Lerner, Sociology

Mary Bucholtz, Linguistics

MACHINES, PEOPLE, AND POLITICS RFG:

Conveners:

W. Patrick McCray, History

Lisa Parks, Film and Media Studies

PERFORMANCE AND POLITICS RFG:

Conveners:

Stephanie Batiste, English/Black Studies

Ninotchka Bennahum, Theater & Dance

Ruth Hellier-Tinoco, Music

REINVENTING JAPAN RFG:

Conveners:

Kate McDonald, History

Sabine Frühstück, East Asian Languages & Cultural Studies

SOUTH ASIAN RELIGIONS AND CULTURES RFG:

Conveners:

Barbara Holdrege, Religious Studies

Bhaskar Sarkar, Film and Media Studies

NEW SERIES AT THE IHC:

THE DIANA AND SIMON RAAB WRITER-IN-RESIDENCE SERIES

Thanks to the generous support of Diana and Simon Raab, the UC Santa Barbara community has the opportunity to engage with some of today's most dynamic authors. Through The Diana and Simon Raab Writer-in-Residence Series, creative writers, humanities scholars, journalists, and filmmakers explore the craft of writing with UCSB students in an intimate classroom setting. While in residence, the writers also deliver a public lecture or reading for the Santa Barbara community. The series is copresented by the IHC and the UCSB Writing Program.

On April 10, 2014, UCSB welcomed the inaugural Diana and Simon Raab Writer-in-Residence, novelist and memoirist Gary Shteyngart, to Campbell Hall. Shteyngart, whose latest book is *Little Failure: A Memoir*, was born in Leningrad in 1972 and came to the United States seven years later. His novel *Super Sad True Love Story* won the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize and was selected as one of the best books of the year by more than forty news journals and magazines around the world.

This year's Writer-in-Residence will be Booker International Prize winner Lydia Davis. Davis is a fiction writer, essayist and translator of literature. Her short story collections include *Can't and Won't* (2014) and *Varieties of Disturbance* (2007). Davis' translations include Proust's *Swann's Way* and Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. Davis will give a public reading at UCSB on Wednesday, March 4, 2015.

THE IHC GRADUATE AFFILIATES PROGRAM

The IHC's GAP program, now in its second year, seeks to foster a community of graduate student scholars to engage in dialogue around the events of the 2014-15 IHC series *The Anthropocene: Views from the Humanities*. In the course of the academic year, graduate students will exercise their skills in communicating with scholars from diverse fields about points of intellectual convergence and difference.

This year's GAP scholars are:

Chloe Diamond-Lenow, Feminist Studies
Corrie J. Ellis, Sociology
Andrew Esch, History
Yanjun Liu, Political Science
Alexandra Magearu, Comparative Literature
Brian Tyrrell, History
Christopher Walker, English

IHC AWARD DEADLINES

NOVEMBER 17:

Faculty Release Time Award
Faculty Collaborative Award

JANUARY 15:

Graduate Collaborative Award
Visual, Performing
and Media Arts Award

APRIL 15:

Faculty Release Time Award
Faculty Collaborative Award
Predoctoral Fellowships

MAY 15:

Research Focus Groups
Research Fellowships

IHC FACULTY AND GRADUATE FELLOWS

The following individuals and groups were granted IHC awards during the 2013-2014 academic year:

Faculty Release Time Award

This award releases faculty from teaching during one quarter in order to concentrate on research projects.

Enda Duffy, English, *High Energy Modernism*

James Kearney, English, *Original Debt: Economies of Ethical Obligation in the Literature of Early Modern England*

Ross Melnick, Film and Media Studies: *Screening the World: Hollywood's Global Exhibition Empires, 1925-1982*

Faculty Collaborative Awards

These awards support conferences at UCSB or in the Santa Barbara area, collaborative research or instructional projects by faculty in one or more departments, and initiatives to bring visiting scholars and arts practitioners to campus for collaborative research or teaching.

Dwight Reynolds, Religious Studies; Scott Marcus, Music; *The Musical Heritage of "Moorish Spain"*

Aranye Fradenburg, English, *On the Beach: Precariousness, Risk, Forms of Life, Affinity, and Play at the Edge of the World*

Sabine Fruhstuck, East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies, *Child's Play: Multisensory Histories of Children and Childhoods in Japan and Beyond*

Eileen Boris, Feminist Studies; Diane Fujino, Asian American Studies: *Re-reading the Feminist Sixties*

Jennifer Holt, Constance Penley, Film and Media Studies: *Dirty, Sexy Policy Conference*

Dominique Jullien, Catherine Nesci, Jon Snyder, French and Italian Studies: *American Mysteries: Urban Crime Fiction from Sue's Mysteries of Paris to the American Noir and Steampunk*

Suzanne Jill Levine, Spanish and Portuguese; John Nathan, East Asian Languages and Cultural Studies: *Translation Studies Conference: Language, Literature and Culture as the Novel Goes Global*

Visual, Performing and Media Arts Awards

These awards support innovative projects in the visual, performing and media arts that engage creatively with issues of interdisciplinary concern.

Jeff Mills, Theater and Dance, *La La LaStrada*

Pablo Colapinto, Media Art and Technology, *Motion Structures: 3D Printed Studies in Bioconstructivism*

Predoctoral Fellowships

Pre-doctoral fellowships support doctoral candidates and advanced MFA students whose research facilitates dialogue across the traditional disciplinary boundaries within the arts and humanities, and/or between the arts & humanities, sciences, and social sciences.

Thomas Doran, English, *Vulgar Ethology: A Prehistory of Animal Protection in Atlantic Natural History*

Christopher Kegerreis, History, *Alexander of Macedon's Imperial Exploration and its Impact on Hellenistic Geography*

Philip J. Murphy, Music, *Annihilation in God & Remaining in the World: Sufi Devotional Song in Fez, Morocco*

John Soboslai, Religious Studies, *Performing One's Own Death: Martyrdom, Self-Sacrifice and Truth-Telling*

Zamira Yusufjonova, History, *The Bolshevik Emancipation of the Muslim Women of Tajikistan, 1924-1982: What Went Wrong*

Graduate Collaborative Awards

These awards support graduate students in organizing conferences, symposia, exhibitions, and performances.

Peninah Wolpo, History; Ryan Abrecht, History; Brianna Bricker, Art History, Christopher Kegerreis, History; James Conrad, History; Greg Goalwin, Sociology; Vicky Ballmes, Religious Studies; Nathan Fredrickson, Religious Studies; Christopher Nofziger, History; Lisa Meyers, History; Sean Harrington, History; Ryan Minor, History, *Innovation in Premodern Borderlands*

Jonathan Forbes, English; Anneliese Pollock, French and Italian, *Modernizing the Medieval: Current Trends in Medieval Studies and the Humanities*

Kenneth Hough, History; Kristy Slominski, Religious Studies; Steven Hu, Religious Studies; David Gray, Film and Media Studies, *2014 International Graduate Student Conference on the Cold War*

Research Fellows

The IHC Research Fellowship is awarded to recent UCSB Ph.D.s in the humanities and the humanistic social sciences. The Fellows are affiliated with the IHC and will have opportunities to participate in the Center's classes, activities and research groups.

Ryan Abrecht, History

Ayla Applebaum, Linguistics

Claire Burke, Spanish & Portuguese

Paul Hirsch, History

Rachel Johnson, Art History

Mira Rai Waits, Art History

Sarah Watkins, History

UC INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN THE ARTS NEWS

The University of California Institute for Research in the Arts (UCIRA) is a statewide program dedicated to supporting and promoting arts practice and research across the University of California system. Through our grants program we offer support for individual and collaborative projects in all disciplines. You can find us online at www.ucira.ucsb.edu.

UCIRA
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE FOR RESEARCH IN THE ARTS



IV ARTS NEWS

Now in its eleventh year, IV Arts is a grassroots arm of the IHC, actively exploring the relationship between campus and community, culture and civil society, particularly in the neighborhood closest to the university: Isla Vista. While Magic Lantern Films fills Friday and Monday nights with a wide variety of cinematic pleasures, IV Live holds down the historic Embarcadero Hall with weekly improvisational theater shows. *Word: Isla Vista Arts & Culture Magazine* is soon to publish its twenty-third issue, reflecting journalistic concerns from lifestyle features to politically-engaged reporting. Beyond the UCSB student community, Nuestra Voz summer theater camp annually reaches into the heart of the IV youth community with made-to-order summer theater. All of these endeavors have academic links to courses in the university in Film & Media, Theater and Dance and the IHC, with UCSB students who care as much about improving their minds as bettering the places where they live. Director Ellen Anderson is available for consultation with campus organizations producing or planning new cultural events in Isla Vista: eanderson@ihc.ucsb.edu.

PLATFORM

The IHC is pleased to host PLATFORM exhibition space. Originating from the French word *plateforme*, meaning "ground plan" or "flat shape," PLATFORM is an exhibition space and journal designed to bolster the careers of young international artists through the submission and display of two-dimensional media, time-based artwork and creative writing. With a current portfolio of five exhibitions, PLATFORM has displayed the work of more than seventy artists from over 16 nationalities. The subject matter of the exhibitions are aligned with the academic yearly series of the IHC, providing a great space to bridge the artwork and writings of the participants, individuals, communities, and cultures. For more information, visit www.ihc.ucsb.edu/platform.

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F O R M

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