Environmental Arts and Humanities
Graduate Conference

Program and Abstracts

Thursday, June 1, 2017
Memorial Union 206
Oregon State University

Distinguished keynote speaker:

Lissa Wadewitz
(Associate Professor of History and Environmental Studies, Linfield College)

Partners

OSU Environmental Arts and Humanities Initiative
Spring Creek Project for Nature and the Written Word
OSU School of History, Philosophy, and Religion
OSU School of Writing, Literature, and Film
OSU College of Liberal Arts

Organized by Jacob Darwin Hamblin
Director, Environmental Arts and Humanities
Oregon State University
Contact: jacob.hamblin@oregonstate.edu

Abstracts for all graduate student presentations at the end of this program
Morning schedule

8am: Coffee/morning snacks

Session 1 (830am-945am)

Evan Scruton (Oregon State University)
“Radical Centrism: The Bakatcha Bandit, Emook, and the Hope of the Riparian”
Jessie Heine (Oregon State University)
“Unifying Spaces: A Queer Ecological Reading of Rat Bohemia”
Lisa Fink (University of Oregon)
“The Queer Decolonial Imaginary in Eduardo C. Corral’s Slow Lightning”

10am: Coffee break

Session 2 (1015am-1145am)

Lucas N. N. Burke (University of Oregon)
Carolee Harrison (Portland State University)
“A River runs Through Us’: Community Responsibility for an Urban Wetland after Portland’s Flood of 1964”
Sarah Boege (Oregon State University)
“Beyond Buzzwords: A Case Study of U.S. NGO Implementation of Sustainable and Participatory Development in Rural Guatemala”
Nichelle Frank (University of Oregon)
“To Preserve or Clean Up?“ What Happens When Visual Evidence of the Past Challenges Public Memory and Health”

12pm: Lunch (catered for conference presenters)
Afternoon schedule

Session 3 (130pm-245pm)

Chelsea Couch (University of Oregon)  
“I Carry You with Me: On Representations and the Bodily Event”
Megan Hanley (Portland State University)  
“Eternal Becoming”
Ben Swimm (Oregon State University)  
“Hybrids, Monsters, Mongrels: Ecopoetry for the Anthropocene”

3pm: Coffee break

Session 4 (315pm-445pm)

Emily Foster (Oregon State University)  
“Trails and Tribulations: A New Materialist Approach to Green Lakes Trail Use”
Bjørn Kristensen (Oregon State University)  
“The Moral Problem of Captive Predation”
Paisley Green (Oregon State University)  
“Terroir, Identity, and Oregon Craft Beer: a Rhetorical Examination”
Joey Tuminello (University of North Texas)  
“Food, Medicine, and Environmental Justice”

5pm: Keynote address

Lissa Wadewitz  
(Associate Professor of History and Environmental Studies, Linfield College)

“A Whale of a Story: Sex, Lies, and Testimony in the Nineteenth-century Pacific World”

6pm-ish: Tater Tots Against Fascism

“There are two kinds of people in the world. People who love tater tots; and fascists.” –Aristotle*

Please feel free to unwind with us for an informal, non-catered (except for a few baskets of tots) social hour at McMenamins on Monroe.
*translations vary
Sarah Boege (Oregon State University)


Over the last several decades, the narrative around international development has shifted away from neoclassical models towards an increased focus on sustainability and community-driven participatory approaches. However, there is a lack of research looking at whether these theoretical concepts manifest in practical realities that avoid the imperialistic flaws of previous development approaches. This study asks: Are the broad theoretical shifts in international development toward a more sustainable and participatory paradigm reflected in a practical shift in the operations of NGOs? These dynamics are explored through semi-structured interviews and participant observation in this qualitative case study about a U.S. grassroots sustainable development NGO that works in Guatemala to provide education, employment, and environmental stewardship to a rural indigenous community. This is a most likely case study which hypothesizes that the operations of the NGO studied do in fact reflect the broader theoretical shift. The theory of social constructivism serves as a framework to examine how key concepts such as ‘development’ and ‘sustainability’ are defined across cultures and socially constructed. An analysis of responses from community members and NGO staff shows that the NGO does deviate from the development approaches of the past, yet does not confirm the hypothesis because it does not wholly reflect the theoretical shift toward a sustainable and participatory paradigm. These results can help inform international development policy and other foreign NGOs endeavoring to balance aid and international influence with local community involvement and sustainability.

Lucas N. N. Burke (University of Oregon)

The Nature of Vortex I: Containment and the Antiwar Movement in Oregon, 1970

During the summer of 1970, the State of Oregon, under the leadership of Republican Governor Tom McCall, made the unprecedented and unrepeated decision to use state-owned public lands at Milo McIver State Park southeast of Portland, Oregon, to host America’s only state-sponsored hippie music festival: Vortex I. In order to prevent a major confrontation between the American Legion’s pro-war national convention (which was scheduled for Portland) and the masses of antiwar protesters who threatened to descend on the city, McCall and a small group of advisors and antiwar activists sympathetic to maintaining peace gambled their reputations on this counterculture music festival. Although the actual need to use the park as both a safety valve and a space of containment has been a matter of debate among the few scholars who have taken the time to study the bizarre history of Vortex I, no scholar has ever considered and appreciated the complete social, political, and environmental context of the event. While Vortex was clearly not a typical event in the history of the United States or the American West, this paper contends that it does reflect a long and continuing tradition of the state in the using the West’s expansive natural environment and publicly-owned lands to enact
policies (sometimes illegal or unconstitutional) of social and political control. Although the quirky and humorous story of Vortex I has led scholars to treat it as a historical footnote, this paper further underscores that—far from being an historical aberration—the event actually holds a relevant place in the complex history of the state, the people, and nature in the American West.

**Chelsea Crouch (University of Oregon)**

I Carry You with Me: On Representation and the Bodily Event

This paper explores the complexities of presenting an image of the body as well as a representation of the bodily event. Central to this inquiry is an examination of the subject/object relationship (the perception of self as rooted in the thingness of the body) as well as present ways in which bodies occupy space. Further, this paper investigates the radicality of the object, examining its material thingness as a condition filled with subversive potential; advocating for a body's thingness or observed objectness points to the subject's origin from object and transforms cultural attempts at normalizing practices of identification. Through a means of disidentification, or a de-/recoding to include disempowered identities, this misrecognition allows me the opportunity within my studio practice to subvert images and objects, approaching the self as a hybrid and fragmentary subject. I operate within a mode of representation that continually to reflect my image back to me—one of seeming completeness, reconciliation; of seeming stasis, fixity. Through the creation and duplication of both objects and images, my becoming is made visible and tangible however mutable it may be. I want to question with my creative work what happens when we insert ourselves into an image, further queering (exploring, transcending, transforming) the image. This paper is an examination of how my studio practice fits into this contemporary artistic, historical, and theoretical dialogue.

**Lisa Fink (University of Oregon)**

The Queer Decolonial Imaginary in Eduardo C. Corral’s *Slow Lightning*

Drawing on the work of scholars such as Priscilla Solis Ybarra, Anna Pérez, Walter Mignolo, Nicole Seymour, and Gloria Anzaldúa, this paper explores the ways in which Eduardo C. Corral’s book of poems *Slow Lightning* produces a queer decolonial imaginary. It borrows critical theories of queer ecology and decoloniality to uncover how Corral’s text unsettles stable identities, epistemologies, and ontologies, especially those related to the category of the human, to sexuality, race, nationhood, and nature. It observes the ways in which the Corral’s poems are defiant of the logic of dualisms, delegitimizing binary constructions of sexuality, animality, and citizenship. The paper unearths the text’s ecological knowledge and its mixture of Mexican Spanish, Spanish, English, Nahuatl, and other Aztec languages, revealing a place-based mestizo identity and highlighting the indigenous images and practices in the text as a testament to the culture that has survived despite colonization’s continues attempts to erase it. Furthermore, it shows how the text works to delink its mestizo and Mexican American characters from systems of oppression and colonization by asserting a unique sense of being with a soul. The paper
illustrates the ways in which the poems offer a material, embodied view of the environment, rather than a transcendental one, toward producing a queer decolonial imaginary. It argues that the text revises colonial and hegemonic representations of non-normative and non-normatively desiring bodies. Lastly, the paper explores the text as a borderland as well as the borderlands portrayed in the text as transformational spaces of rupture, fragmentation, recombination, and renewal.

**Emily Foster (Oregon State University)**

**Trails and Tribulations: A New Materialist Approach to Green Lakes Trail Use**

The Green Lakes Trail in Oregon’s Three Sisters Wilderness is a hike at once embedded in my family as a tradition and advertised as one of the most popular trails in Central Oregon. The complex identity of this trail and its relations to and with humans makes it ideal for exploring its material-rhetorical agency within those relations. Such an exploration fits into the growing body of scholarship on new materialist readings of place and space, including those of the natural environment. Drawing on new materialism, particularly as used and explained in the work of Nathaniel Rivers (2015) and Jodie Nicotra (2016), this paper explores the assemblage of personal, public, human, and nonhuman relations surrounding and creating the experience that is the Green Lakes Trail. By approaching the issue of trail use from a new materialist perspective, I argue that increased use of the Green Lakes Trail ultimately benefits environmentalism in and beyond Oregon because it creates more relations between humans and nature. These relations, in turn, work towards dissolving the nature/culture binary that produces “irresponsible behavior” (Rivers, 2015, p. 422) and allow us to better come to terms with our response-ability to the natural environment.

**Nichelle Frank (University of Oregon)**

**To Preserve or Clean Up?: What Happens When Visual Evidence of the Past Challenges Public Memory and Health**

I will be presenting on a portion of my dissertation, which is tentatively titled, “Sanitizing the Environment, Sanitizing History: Historic Preservation and Environmentalism in U.S. West Mining Communities.” For the Environmental Arts and Humanities Graduate Conference, I will explain how late nineteenth century US West mining town residents imprinted their social attitudes onto built and natural environments in such a way that twentieth century preservation and environmental activists now butt heads over which resources to preserve or clean up. It appears to be an either/or decision: either preserve the town’s historical resources as evidence of the mining town’s past or clean up evidence of the mining past. But the decision becomes more complex when important resources do not fit the typical narrative or when they pose health threats. To illustrate, I trace how certain structures (like Chinese laundries) and landscape features (like mine waste) would have been apparent parts of the visual landscape for late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century residents, and thus can be significant pieces of visual evidence for the past. Structures and landscapes like these often are not preserved, however, so visitors do not gain a sense of the town’s more complex past. As such, my talk seeks to explore
why some resources get preserved while others do not, who controls those decisions, and how visual evidence influences public understandings of the past as well as community health.

Paisley Green (Oregon State University)

Terroir, Identity, and Oregon Craft Beer: a Rhetorical Examination

In 1516, the Bavarian government issued a Reinheitsgebot, or Purity Law, that restricted the ingredients that could be used in beer to only four: malt, barley, hops, and water. (This law, which spread throughout Germany after reunification, expanded to include yeast over 400 years later.) Though the Reinheitsgebot is no longer a binding law—rather, more of a relic and marketing tool for “pure” beer in Germany—it represents the importance of “pure” beer to German identity, land, jurisprudence, and other areas. Similarly, with the astronomic rise of the US craft beer movement from the mid-1990s onwards, the term “craft,” along with locally sourced ingredients, has changed consumer purchasing habits and has become part of an Oregon identity. But “identity” can be expanded beyond the human to the land itself: Oregon’s agricultural apparatus around beer production has also embraced the local, often sourcing wild yeasts or adjuncts like hazelnuts and berries from the state’s farms and demanding more hop production, changing the agricultural landscape itself.

Indeed, it is hard to talk about Oregon in the 21st century without dealing with craft beer precisely because the beverage is integral to adults’ sense of good taste, of social responsibility, and of belonging to Oregon-ness as an identity. Despite the centrality of craft beer to Oregon, there has been very little scholarship analyzing the rhetoric of craft beer or its impacts on people and agricultural landscapes. The only major scholar on craft beer and rhetoric, Jeff Rice, has previously examined the proliferation of craft breweries and fan culture through social media and has discussed the term “craft” as a hybrid narrative, directly challenging notions of purity associated with the term (Rice 2016, 2015).

This paper builds on Rice’s work and theories of assemblage and affect to examine the multitude of ways that “craft”—specifically with regard to Oregon craft beer—is rhetorically constructed and how the ethos of “craft” functions as a key affective component of many people’s identities and ties to place. By unfolding the discursive and material assemblages that constitute craft beer in Oregon, we can more fully understand how taste—in a literal and figurative sense—is bound up with powerful economic, ecological, and identity practices and senses of belonging. I use the lens of terroir, or specific place-bound land characteristics, to examine the mutual impacts of land, product, and rhetoric. The approach to craft through assemblages will explicate how “craft”—as-concept is bound up in discursive and material relations, crafting not just human identities but entire ecologies of production and cultivation.
Megan Hanley (Portland State University)

Eternal Becoming

Megan Hanley will speak about her exhibition of life-size drawings of ancient graves in which plants have reclaimed the tombs post-exavation. The works she will discuss are based on her experience working on an archaeological dig and research in posthumanist theory as it relates to our body’s material relationship with the environment.

Carolee Harrison (Portland State University)

“A River Runs Through Us”: Community Responsibility for an Urban Wetland after Portland’s Flood of 1964

Part of Lents, a suburb six miles east of Portland, Oregon, is located on the floodplain of Johnson Creek, a tributary of the Willamette River. For over a century, the neighborhood’s twin problems of property damage caused by floods and environmental damage wrought by urbanization have been addressed by changing organizations, policies, and philosophies. Before federal legislation restricted development on floodplains and set water quality standards, Lents experienced two mid-century milestones. Population and housing on the floodplain nearly doubled between 1950 and 1960, and Johnson Creek’s worst flood to date inundated the neighborhood in December 1964. Awakened to the urgency of disaster, creekside residents organized to engage public interest in protecting natural wetlands as well as private property. Their proposals did not receive taxpayer funding, leading municipal agencies to conclude that residents could not be counted on to support local environmental measures. However, the community-based ideas put forward by vanguard suburban environmentalists in the 1960s were successfully carried forward in the City of Portland’s watershed projects decades later, indicating the ongoing necessity of participation, agreement, and buy-in from Lents’ working-class residents to the efficacy of environmental planning.

Jessie Heine (Oregon State University)

Unifying Spaces: A Queer Ecological Reading of Rat Bohemia

Critics in the field of queer ecology seek to overturn the dominant worldview that privileges heteronormative conceptions of sexuality as being ‘natural.’ In her piece, “Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture, and Pleasure of ‘Queer’ Animals” Stacy Alaimo calls for an examination of these heteronormative discourses that pervade the anthropological and scientific communities. This discourse, she says, produces a conception of nature in which queer relations are anomalous and unnatural, which in turn allows cultural assumptions to cloud the intended objectivity of scientific observation. This discourse extends into a rhetoric of purity, and privileges representations of pristine wilderness as ‘natural,’ thereby aligning urban spaces and queer bodies with the ‘unnatural.’ This dichotomy creates a problematic division amongst all of the material spaces that make up our environment. The problem of urbanity is
acknowledged, but theorists rely too heavily upon spaces that exhibit the trappings of the traditional pristine wilderness; spaces that either conform to the wilderness-as-pure paradigm, or display a hybrid of innocuous, vaguely urban landscape alongside untouched, traditional wild spaces. The novel *Rat Bohemia* by Sarah Schulman is set in 1980s New York City and follows the lives of three queer characters. The urban instances of naturecultures that proliferate in this novel provide a fertile ground for a true queering of ecocriticism. Through a queer ecological reading of *Rat Bohemia* more radical strategies for incorporating the urban in the environmental, and for queering ecology, will become apparent.

**Bjørn Kristensen (Oregon State University)**

The Moral Problem of Captive Predation

In this paper, I consider what I deem to be a major oversight in contemporary animal ethics discussions, the moral problem of captive predation. This is the predation perpetuated or enabled by humans in order to sustain captive carnivorous animals. Several papers within the last ten years have addressed the moral problem of predation in the wild, convincingly arguing that humans have an obligation to reduce suffering and therefore step in to the aid of prey animals in various capacities when doing so is possible. I present the arguments that Jeff McMahon and Tyler Cowen have given in favor of interfering with predation in the wild, as well as arguments against such obligations by those such as Tom Regan and Lori Gruen. In response, I develop a case in which I maintain we have even more of an obligation to interfere, indeed we already have interfered. That case considers the various carnivorous animals we keep in captivity, including those kept as companion animals, those captive in zoos and aquariums, and those who are patients in rehabilitation centers. I argue that these examples present clear cases in which both proponents of interference as well as those of non-interference with wild animal predation can agree upon. Further, I argue that in vitro meat is an ideal candidate for supplementing the meat that is currently being fed to these animals. Developing and feeding in vitro meat to captive carnivorous animals could greatly alleviate the suffering and death of prey animals that are currently being killed to feed them.

**Evan Scruton (Oregon State University)**

Radical Centrism: The Bakatcha Bandit, Emook, and the Hope of the Riparian

In 1965 Malcolm X said that "we are living in a time of extremism. People in power have misused it now there has to be a change, and a better world has to be built, and the only way it’s going to be built is with extreme methods. And I, for one, will join in with anyone--don’t care what color you are--as long as you want to change this miserable condition." In 2016 Naomi Klein published *This Changes Everything* which claimed that the only way to avoid imminent climate destruction was the end of global capitalism. What these two radical, potentially extremist, thinkers show is the connection between systemic liberal oppression and climate exploitation. These are, in essence, the two forces which the
protagonists of *The Sea Lion* and *Sailor Song* are fighting against: gendered oppression by a monstrous invader and the capitalist commodification of unsettled lands. Emook and Ike, in *The Sea Lion* and *Sailor Song*, subvert the systematized logics that the colonizer manipulates for exploitation and in doing so save their communities from destruction. I connect this pattern to the natural example of riparian zones, one of the earth’s 15 unique biomes. The riparian is unique in that it exists at the confluence of two diametrically opposed forces: land and water. At this juncture, it ameliorates the effects of things like flooding and pollution that could be destructive to both ecosystems. In this way and others, Emook and Ike can be seen as deploying a natural metaphor for anti-colonialization in a way that challenges how we read nature in literature.

**Ben Swimm (Oregon State University)**

Hybrids, Monsters, Mongrels: Ecopoetry for the Anthropocene

Human-induced global warming, along with a host of other global-scale human impacts on the planet, has prompted the naming of a new geological era: the Anthropocene. After long imagining human history as distinct from an external “Nature,” we now must recognize ourselves as a crucially influential part of the environment, as well as seeing the environmental factors that have influence our social, political, and economic organizations. Doing so will help us understand the hierarchical and binary thinking that contribute to the environmental crisis, as well as to imagine new ways forward. While much of ecopoetry (also environmental poetry, nature poetry) seeks to address environmental destruction, it generally does so by representing “Nature” as a place exterior to humans that we should preserve. It thus maintains the human/nature binary and limits the emergence of new narratives that might generate a more integrated environmental ethic. In the Anthropocene, we should include as ecopoetry those texts that act to blur or complicate the boundary between humans and “Nature.” In this paper I will discuss this type of writing through the work of three contemporary poets not generally considered environmental writers.

**Joey Tuminello (University of North Texas)**

Food, Medicine, and Environmental Justice

In my dissertation (entitled *Food and Drug Ontologies: A Hermeneutics of Edible Things*), I argue that our experience and understanding of the relationship between the categories of ‘food’ and ‘medicine’ involves and requires interpretation. How do we determine whether a particular edible thing should appropriately count as a food or medicine, and should these categories be interpreted as existing in a dichotomous or continuum-based relationship with one another? Granting the interpretive nature of our worldly encounters, it is important to examine and evaluate multiple possible interpretations, as well as the role of history and context in shaping them. Thus, my dissertation project largely consists of laying out and considering the conceptual terrain of interpretive modes regarding the food-drug relationship, employing 'drug' in both the medicinal and
illicit senses. While some of these modes interpret 'food' and 'medicine' as existing in a dichotomous relationship with one another, others call this distinction into question. Here, I explore the Indigenous concept of 'medicine food' as a continuum-based approach to the food-drug relationship with important implications for environmental justice. As discussed by Joni Adamson and Winona LaDuke, this concept simultaneously calls for the interpretation of at least some culturally appropriate foods as medicine, and also entails a broader notion of healing as more than something which is relegated to the individual. On this view, cultural healing can also take place when communities have or regain sovereignty over, and access to, particular foods in accord with their respective cultural identities. Bringing attention to the historical and current environmental injustices experienced by the Klamath River Basin tribes, the repercussions of these injustices in terms of food sovereignty, as well as their grassroots efforts and successes in achieving participatory justice, I illustrate the vital role of food-medicine interpretations for theories, policies, and practices of environmental justice.