



Volume 27

International Society for Environmental Ethics

NEWSLETTER

FALL 2020

Corey Katz, Newsletter Editor
Alex Lee, Secretary



Advancing the field of environmental philosophy since 1990

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For further engagement with the society, the ISEE Listserv offers a chance to communicate news, information of interest, and announcements in the field of environmental ethics. Submissions to the list can be sent to ISEE-L@listserv1.coloradocollege.edu. Anyone wishing to join the list can do so by emailing the secretary at: aplee@alaskapacific.edu

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For submissions to future ISEE Newsletters, please email the editor at: enviroethicsnews@gmail.com

WELCOME

Note from the editor

Corey Katz

Thank you for reading the first issue of ISEE's newly re-established bi-annual newsletter. For many of us, ISEE has become an important vehicle for staying up to date with the field, building connections with colleagues, and discovering opportunities to both gain recognition for our work and receive feedback on work-in-progress. I hope that the newsletter serves as a valuable resource toward these ends. This issue includes important announcements, but also thoughtful reflections on the COVID-19 pandemic and online teaching from some of our Society's members that I hope you will find engaging.

I remember the first ISEE at APA session I attended in graduate school. I nervously presented and then received excellent questions, positive feedback, and genuine warmth from established scholars whose names I knew and whose books I'd read. As I have continued participating in ISEE sessions and summer conferences, I have always found that warm and supportive atmosphere and I appreciate being a member of this community. That is why I decided to do my small part of contributing to ISEE by taking up the reigns of the newsletter.

Please get in touch with any questions, comments, concerns you have by emailing me at enviroethicsnews@gmail.com

From the ISEE President

Allen Thompson

It's been a busy year for the ISEE, despite the global pandemic. As the first professional association for philosophers working on value and normative dimensions of environmental issues, our primary mission is to support our members by providing opportunities to present, promote, discuss, and be recognized for their work. This framework also provides opportunities for people to network and build relations with like-minded professionals. Details about all our work can be found at enviroethics.org.

We are very excited that Alex Lee and Corey Katz have volunteered to re-establish the ISEE Newsletter. This periodical has played a crucial role in the Society since its founding in 1990. Except for a brief hiatus (when the website was established), the history of the Society is well documented in our newsletter. The complete ISEE Newsletter Archive can be found [here](#).

If you are interested in environmental ethics, we encourage you to join us. Membership information can be found on our website. If you're already a member, we thank you! In either case, I will look forward to meeting you, or seeing you again, at a future ISEE event. If you have any questions about the Society, please don't hesitate to write. I can be reached at allen.thompson@oregonstate.edu.

Statement on Systemic Racism and Violence

Allen Thompson, Marion Hourdequin, Megs Gendreau and Alex Lee

The International Society for Environmental Ethics recognizes and condemns systemic racism. We are outraged by the ongoing pattern of racialized police violence in the United States, and we are saddened and angered by the killings of George Floyd, Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and many others. Such cases are only the latest in a long history of unjust violence and dehumanization based on race. We support and encourage protests that demand justice in response to these killings and seek to dismantle systemic racism. We stand with those who fight for justice and so condemn the violent and egregious use of force against protestors who are exercising both political rights as citizens and moral rights as persons.

We recognize Black Lives Matter as a human rights campaign aimed at dismantling the pervasive social norms that support and protect systems of white supremacy. The injustices that such systems generate in the United States are evidenced, for example, by the disproportionate impacts of the novel coronavirus on Black and Brown communities, as well as environmental injustices that include racial disparities in access to healthy foods, safe working conditions, clean air and water, climate adaptation resources, and parks and open spaces.

As officers of the Society, we recognize our privilege and our responsibility to listen to and be led by voices from marginalized and under-represented members of our community. We actively seek to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in our academic discipline and in our professional organization, but we recognize that we must do more to advance the work and career opportunities of Black scholars, as well as scholars from all under-represented groups, and to further support scholarship that addresses the intersections between environmental justice and institutionalized systems of racism and oppression. We must also encourage our members of privilege to make their own work more inclusive and to be actively anti-racist.

In sum, we commit the International Society for Environmental Ethics to much work that still needs to be done in the active pursuit of ending white supremacy, police brutality, and widespread racial and environmental injustices.



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UPDATES AND REPORTS

CFP for the 18th Annual ISEE Summer Meeting

The 18th annual summer meeting of the International Society for Environmental Ethics will convene from Wednesday 30th June to Saturday 3rd July 2021, at Seili island, Finland, situated in Finnish Archipelago, in a historical 17th century leper colony, turned mental asylum, turned research station. More information about the venue can be found [here](#).

We seek 500-word proposals for presentations in any topic in environmental philosophy. However, special attention will be given to proposals for talks concerning the philosophical investigation of the intersection of environmental conditions of space, relations, and populations.

Proposals prepared for blind review should be submitted via email to Mikko M. Puumala at mimapuu@utu.fi no later than December 15th, 2020. Decisions will be announced by February 30th, 2021. Draft papers for pre-read by conference participants will be due May 31st, 2021.

Please note that while the meeting is planned to take place live, we are closely following the COVID-19 situation in Finland and other countries.

ISEE Mentorship Initiative

Marion Hourdequin

The ISEE Mentoring Initiative, which grew out of discussions among attendees at the 2019 ISEE summer meeting at H.J.

Andrews Experimental Forest, aims to provide mentoring and peer networking opportunities for environmental philosophers at all stages of their careers.

Thus far, the mentoring program has focused on developing shared pedagogical resources, and we recently completed substantial updates to ISEE's syllabus and teaching resource collection, which is freely available to all [here](#). We are also developing a webinar/podcast series this year. The first webinar, focused on Engaged and Inclusive Pedagogies, was held Friday, November 6 at 4 pm Pacific Time (via Zoom), and featured Chris Cuomo (University of Georgia), Rebeka Ferreira (Green River College), Ben Hole (Pacific University), and Clair Morrissey (Occidental College).

Future projects include development of a Slack site for peer networking, engagement, and support, and potential mentor pairings focused on particular topics (job market, transitioning into a new job, grant writing, etc.). The initiative depends on the generous efforts of many volunteers, and we invite those who are interested to contribute project ideas or collaborate on existing initiatives. To register for the upcoming webinar, or to join get involved with the Mentoring Initiative, email ISEE Mentoring Director Simona Capisani (scapisani@fas.harvard.edu) or ISEE Vice President Marion Hourdequin (mhourdequin@coloradocollege.edu).

Teaching Resources Project

Marion Hourdequin

As part of the ISEE Mentoring Initiative, ISEE is continuing to expand and update its online teaching resources. We seek syllabi, assignments, community learning projects, and class activities related to environmental philosophy, environmental ethics, environmental justice, and cognate fields. Our goal is to provide resources for stand-alone environmentally-focused classes, as well as for environmentally-related units in broader courses (e.g., a section on climate refugees in a political science class, a case study on the Standing Rock Sioux resistance to the Dakota Access Pipeline in an Indigenous studies course, a discussion of environmental risk assessment in an epistemology class, etc.).

ISEE is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We specifically seek teaching resources that support and foreground engaged and inclusive pedagogies. Selected contributions will add to a [curated collection of materials](#) that is freely available on the ISEE website.



The Spatial Chat program allowed Annual Meeting attendees to speak with each other in small groups, as well move between groups.

Please submit teaching materials via the following Google forms link: <https://forms.gle/oSBuueUweBL5c6tGA>.

If you would like to submit materials and lack a Google account or don't wish to create one, please just email your contribution(s) email Mentoring Director Simona Capisani (scapisani@fas.harvard.edu) or ISEE Vice President Marion Hourdequin (mhourdequin@coloradocollege.edu).

Report on the 17th Annual ISEE Summer Meeting

Alex Lee

Between October 16 and 18, 2020, environmental philosophers from Finland to California logged onto the first ever virtual meeting of the International Society for Environmental Ethics. The 17th Annual Meeting was both a return to the familiar and an exploration into new terrain. The meeting utilized the usual “pre-read format,” but presentations and conversations took place over Zoom and a new platform called Spatial Chat. The virtual format succeeded in bringing together thirty-eight scholars to explore diverse and novel work in environmental ethics against the backdrop of 2020's unprecedented challenges.

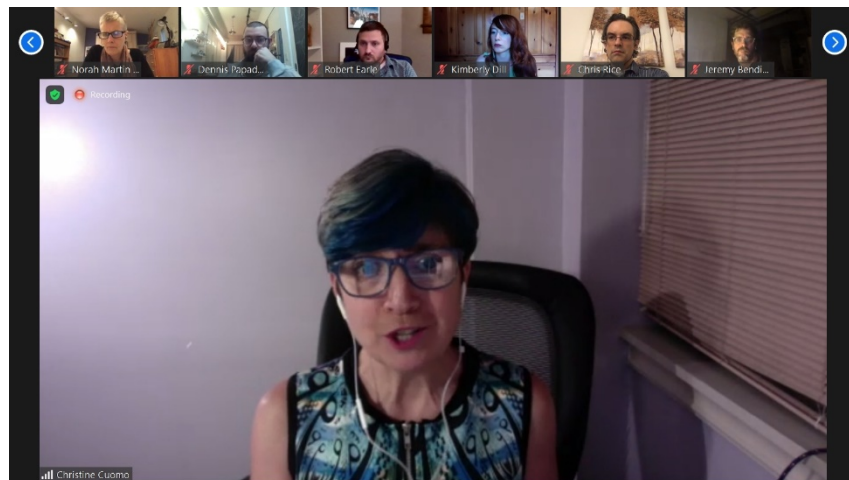
Fourteen papers explored topics of applied and practical ethics, environmental activism, education, and inclusivity. Shifting mental models of environmental problem solving emerged as a theme in this year's program. This was expressed in calls to reimagine effective environmentalism, rethink resistance, expand notions

of environmental virtue, explore new dimensions of wildness and wonder, and activate ethicists in the climate change fight. Papers and discussion highlighted intersectionality and interdisciplinary engagement, a theme also central to this year's keynote speaker, University of Georgia Professor Christine Cuomo. Professor Cuomo received the inaugural Victoria Davion Award for Intersectionality and gave an engaging and activating talk situating environmental ethics within feminist and indigenous scholarship.

Outside of the paper sessions, the society hosted its first ever Mentoring Initiative discussion with ISEE Vice-President, Marion Hourdequin and Mentoring Director, Simona Capisana. The ISEE Mentoring Initiative is getting off the ground this year with hopes to connect scholars at different career stages, offer support, and increase the resources available to society members. The initiative has worked to update the online syllabus and assignment catalogue and is in the process of

planning several virtual events on teaching environmental ethics and careers in the field. Eugene Chislenko also joined the meeting for the second year in a row to discuss the activities of the group Philosophers for Sustainability.

While the 2020 meeting did not involve the shared meals or outdoor excursions that often build ISEE community, philosophers from around the country and world still came together to meet, discuss, and share new ideas. Despite the physical distance of this year's meeting, the environmental ethics community continues to be a welcoming place for scholars working to clarify, understand, and defend normative dimensions of environmental problems and problem solving.



Christine Cuomo, winner of the Victoria Davion Award for Intersectionality, presented the keynote address at this year's Annual Meeting.

ISEE AT THE APA

Please check the [ISEE website](#) and Listserv for information on submitting to the ISEE group sessions at annual APA meetings. Typically, submission for Eastern are due in mid-July, submissions for Central are due in mid-September, and submissions for Pacific are due in early October.

APA EASTERN: PHILADELPHIA, PA January 2020

Session 1: Workshop on Sustainability in Philosophy

This session opened with a special announcement of this year's finalists and winner of ISEE's Andrew Light Award in Public Philosophy. Professor Light presented the award to Professor Paul Thompson of Michigan State University for his distinctive contributions to agricultural and environmental ethics over the course of his career, including extensive collaborative work with farmers to develop industry reforms that benefited both animals and the environment. Finalists for the 2020 award were: Associate Professor Adam Briggie of University of North Texas, Professor Christopher Preston of University of Montana, and Dr. Gwynne Taraska, Climate Program Director at Ocean Conservancy in Washington, D.C.

Following the award presentation, co-founders of Philosophers for Sustainability (PFS), Eugene Chislenko of Temple University and Rebecca Millsop of University of Rhode Island describes several

recent initiatives of Philosophers for Sustainability and led a discussion of effective ways to integrate sustainability into teaching, research, and service. The workshop included a discussion of a proposed set of Guidelines for Sustainable Practices in Philosophy, developed by PFS and under consideration by the APA for inclusion in its Good Practices Guide.

Session 2: Environmental Ethics in Social Context

Chair: Marion Hourdequin

Justin Donhauser (Bowling Green University): "Environmental Robot Virtues?"

Zahra Meghani (University of Rhode Island): "An Approach for Evaluating Arguments for the Environmental Release of Genetically Engineered Animals with Gene Drives"

Gehad Abdelal (University of Georgia): "Water Ethics: The Problem of Uncertainty and Colonial Implication on the Nile River Conflict"

APA CENTRAL: CHICAGO, IL February 2020

Session 1: Climate Justice

Chair: Ben Almassi

William Littlefield (Case Western University): "Utility Gains in Climate Justice"

Marcus Hedahl (US Naval Academy): "Climate Justice & Moral Psychology: Surprising Stoic Solutions"

Kizito Michael George (Kyambogo University): “Linking Climate Change to Human Rights And Social Justice: A Critique Of The Ethics And Epistemologies Of Climate Change Science”

Rachel Fredericks (Ball State University): “Climate Legacy: A New(ish) Concept for the Climate Crisis”

Session 2: Understanding Community

Chair: Megs Gendreau

Connor Kianpour (Georgia State University): “Dolphin Ownership: Nonhuman Persons and Habitative Noninterference”

Sade Hormio (UC Berkeley): “Climate Change and Responsibility as Members of Collective Agents”

Espen Stabell (Norwegian University of Science and Technology): “Existence Value, Preference Satisfaction, and the Ethics of Species Extinction”

Zachary Vereb (University of South Florida): “A Kantian Perspective on Climate Ethics: History and Global Community”

APA PACIFIC: SAN FRANCISCO, CA April 2020 (cancelled)

Note: The 2020 Pacific Division meeting of the APA was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The scheduled program would have occurred as listed here.

Session 1: Engaged and Inclusive Pedagogies

Chairs: Simona Capisani and Marion Hourdequin

Chris Cuomo (University of Georgia)

Rebeka Ferreira (Green River College)

Benjamin Hole (Pacific University)

Clair Morrissey (Occidental College)

Session 2: Ethics for a Changing World

Chair: Alex Lee

Arthur Obst (University of Washington): “Demandingness from Despair”

Daniel Callies (University of California, San Diego) and Yasha Rohwer (Oregon Institute of Technology): “Intentionally Eradicating a Species: Examining the Case against and the Value of *Anopheles Gambiae*”

Blake Francis (University of Maryland Baltimore County): “Middle Emissions: Climate Ethics and the Global Middle Class”

APA EASTERN: VIRTUAL

January 2021

Session 1: Animals and the Environment: Rights, Responsibilities, and Reverence

Adriana Placani (University of Graz) and Stearns Broadhead (University of Graz): “What We Owe Ourselves: On Climate Change, Duty and Responsibility”

Kimberly Dill (Santa Clara University): “A Call to Environmental Reverence”

Corey Katz (Georgian Court University): “Scanlon’s Contractualism and Animal Ethics”

Connor Kianpour (Georgia State University): “Protections without Rights”

Session 2: Perspectives on Anthropocentrism, Agency and Value

Suvielise Nurmi (University of Helsinki): “Environmental Responsibilities as Responsibilities for Relational Moral Agency”

Espen Dyrnes Stabell (Norwegian University of Science and Technology): “Why Environmental Philosophers Should be Buck-Passers about Value”

Akinpelu Oyekunle (Adekunle Ajasin University): “On the Idea of an African Environmental Philosophy: Arguments for Complementary Environmental Ethics”

Filip Maj (University of Fort Hare): “The Issue of Non-anthropocentrism in African Environmental Ethics (and Possible Consequences for Climate Change)”

CENTRAL APA: VIRTUAL**February 2021****Session 1: Climate Change and Responsibility**

Kelly Coble (Baldwin Wallace University): “Welcoming Strangers in a Climate-Disrupted World”

Ludovica Adamo (University of Leeds): “Climate change and human rights: How to include the environment in the sphere of our moral rights”

Adriana Placani (University of Graz) and Stearns Broadhead (University of Graz): “What We Owe Ourselves: On Climate Change, Duty and Responsibility”

Session 2: Environmental Aesthetics

Victor Monnin (University of Strasbourg): “The Ethics of Painting Extinct Non-Human Animals and Environments”

Violeena Deka (Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati): “Perception, Painting and Nature: An Exploration in Merleau Ponty’s Philosophy”

Jordan Daniels (Emory University): “Adorno on the Problem of Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms”



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PACIFIC APA: VIRTUAL

April 2021

Session 1: Environmental Philosophy

Chair: Alex Lee

Charles Starkey (Clemson University):
“Literary Style and the Moral Psychology
of Leopold’s Land Ethic”

Avram Hiller (Portland State University):
“On Land (and Other) Acknowledgments”

Anna Peterson (University of Florida):
“Religion and the Possibility of a Materialist Environmental Ethic”

Session 2: Understanding Environmental Problems

Chair: Corey Katz

Matthew Auer (University of Georgia):
“Environmental Aesthetics in the Age of
Climate Change”

Blake Francis (University of Maryland
Baltimore County): “The Individual Denialists’
Playbook: Climate Ethics and Competing
Conceptions of Harm”

Corey Katz (Georgian Court University):
“Theorizing Negative Environmental
Rights: Addressing the Problem of Risk
and Paralysis”



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ISEE AWARDS

The International Society for Environmental Ethics recognizes scholars in the field annually through three awards. Nominations for these awards are solicited through the ISEE website and listserv. For information on next year's award schedule please contact the ISEE President.

THE VICTORIA DAVION AWARD FOR INTERSECTIONALITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

To help build a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive field of environmental ethics, ISEE seeks to highlight intersectional scholarship in environmental philosophy. This includes, but is not limited to, work that examines linkages between environmental philosophy, feminist and gender studies, critical race theory, Indigenous studies, and disability studies. ISEE aims to support research, teaching, and service that extend the scope of environmental ethics to incorporate perspectives and methods that have been historically marginalized or excluded from environmental philosophy as a discipline, and that address questions of epistemic justice, such as the devaluation of certain forms of knowledge within academic environmental philosophy, barriers to and opportunities for developing more inclusive perspectives, and approaches to respectfully collaborating across perspectives and traditions. We seek to honor and advance work that brings different threads of philosophy and environmental thought together.

The Victoria Davion Award for Intersectionality in Environmental Ethics supports these aims. Victoria Davion was raised in New York City, earned her Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1989 and joined the department of Philosophy at the University of Georgia in 1990. She became the first woman to become a full professor in Philosophy at UGA, and the first woman to be appointed department head in 2005, a position she held until her death in 2017.

She became widely known for her cutting-edge interdisciplinary work in feminist and environmental ethics, where she made truly transformative contributions, and was a beloved teacher and mentor to many who were inspired by her engaging, accessible, and innovative teaching methods. She presented and published on a breadth of philosophical areas including political philosophy, power and privilege, healthcare, nuclear deterrence, artificial intelligence, abortion, whiteness, and technology. She co-edited *The Idea of a Political Liberalism: Essays on Rawls* (2000) and was an associate editor of the *Encyclopedia of Environmental Ethics* (2009).

A lover of nonhuman animals, music, and travel, as well as a witty, engaging, generous, and astute person, Vicky also made a far-reaching impact as the founder and editor of the journal, *Ethics & the Environment*, which she first published in 1995 and which continues as a highly influential journal today. In helping to catalyze

and bring forth intersectional understanding within environmental philosophy, her contribution inspires this Award and all those whose accomplishments it recognizes.

ISEE is pleased to announce that University of Georgia, **Professor Chris Cuomo** is the recipient of the inaugural Victoria Davion Award for Intersectionality in Environmental Ethics. Dr. Cuomo is Professor of Philosophy and Women's at the University of Georgia, where she is an affiliated faculty with the Institute for African American Studies, the Institute for Native American Studies, the Environmental Ethics Certificate Program, and the Initiative on Climate and Society. Cuomo has made substantial contributions in the areas and intersections of feminist theory, environmental philosophy, philosophy of science, philosophy of race, climate justice, postcolonial thought, Indigenous knowledge, and activism.

In addition to many journal articles and book chapters, Cuomo is the author of *Feminism and Ecological Communities: An Ethic of Flourishing* (Routledge 1998) and *The Philosopher Queen: Feminist Essays on War, Love, and Knowledge* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers 2002), co-author of the *Feminist Philosophy Reader* (McGraw Hill 2007), and co-editor of *Whiteness: Feminist Philosophical Reflections* (Rowman & Littlefield 1999).

On October 16, 2020 Prof. Chris Cuomo delivered the keynote presentation at the 17th Annual ISEE Conference.

THE ANDREW LIGHT AWARD FOR PUBLIC PHILOSOPHY

The International Society for Environmental Ethics established an award to promote work in public philosophy and honor contributions to the field by Dr. Andrew Light, who received the inaugural award in his name at our 2017 annual summer meeting. The Light Award recognizes public philosophers working in environmental ethics and philosophy, broadly construed, those who are working to bring unique insights or methods to broaden the reach, interaction, and engagement of public philosophy with the wider public. This may be exemplified in published work or engagement in environmental issues of public importance.

This year's winner is **Professor Paul Thompson** of Michigan State University. Professor Thompson's work in public philosophy spans multiple decades, and he has made distinctive contributions to agricultural and environmental ethics over the course of his career. He began working collaboratively with farmers in the 1980s to develop industry reforms that benefited both animals and the environment. Throughout his career, Professor Thompson's research has informed and been informed by cross-disciplinary collaborations and community engagement. He is the author of numerous books, including books aimed for broad audiences, such as *From Field to Fork: Food Ethics for Everyone* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015). Professor Thompson has served on National Resource Council committees and with the National Academy of Engineering's Center for Engineering Ethics and Society and played a key

role in developing ethical food standards such as American Humane Certified. In addition, he has helped to build the field of public philosophy and has mentored others developing careers in this field. As two of his colleagues wrote in their nomination letter, “Many environmental philosophers have come to value public engagement by observing how Paul Thompson incorporated insights from his public work into his more traditionally philosophical articles and books, and we have come to better understand how to become publicly engaged ourselves through his mentoring. Paul, we believe, is an exemplary public environmental philosopher who has made significant contributions at various levels and with various groups, from policymakers, researchers and academic colleagues, to farmers, consumers and environmentalists.”

This year’s finalists were **Associate Professor Adam Briggie** of University of North Texas, **Professor Christopher Preston** of University of Montana, and **Dr. Gwynne Taraska**, Climate Program Director at Ocean Conservancy in Washington, D.C.

THE HOLMES ROLSTON III EARLY CAREER ESSAY PRIZE

To mark the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day, the ISEE and the Center for Environmental Philosophy re-issued the Holmes Rolston Essay Prize for scholars in the early stages of their career.

The prize is named in honor of Professor Holmes Rolston III, for his pioneering work in the field of environmental philosophy. Papers were invited on all aspects of environmental philosophy or affairs (with

a strong theoretical component). The prize awards \$500 and publishes the winning essay in the journal *Environmental Ethics*.

ISEE is pleased to announce this year’s winner is University of New Orleans **Assistant Professor Dan C. Shahr**, for his paper, “Harm, Responsibility, and the Far-off Impacts of Climate Change.” This paper is now forthcoming in volume 43, issue 1 of *Environmental Ethics*.

Abstract: Climate change will threaten billions in the coming years, but its worst impacts are still decades away. Many who will eventually be affected still have opportunities to mitigate harm. When considering the avoidable burdens of climate change, it seems plausible that victims will share some responsibility for putting themselves into (or failing to get out of) harm’s way. This should drive us to reorient our thinking about the ethical significance of climate-induced harms, particularly by emphasizing the importance of individuals’ differential abilities to get and stay out of harm’s way. Currently, many people face serious obstacles to reducing their vulnerability to climate change, such as poverty, lack of education, and political or legal obstacles to mobility. Climate policy discussions should emphasize the alleviation of these sources of difficulties, thereby empowering people to choose what risks they will bear in a warming world.

NEWS

BOOK PUBLICATIONS

Diehm, Christian. *Connection to Nature, Deep Ecology, and Conservation Social Science: Human-Nature Bonding and Protecting the Natural World*. Lexington Books, 2020.

Emphasizing the foundational importance of ecologically-inclusive identities, this book argues that connection to nature is more important than many environmental advocates realize, and that deep ecology contributes much to the increasingly pressing conversations about it.

Hedberg, Trevor. *The Environmental Impact of Overpopulation: The Ethics of Procreation*. Routledge, 2020.

This book examines the link between population growth and environmental impact and explores the implications of this connection for the ethics of procreation.



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NEW EDITOR-IN-CHIEF AT ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Eugene C. Hargrove is stepping down as the Editor-in-Chief of *Environmental Ethics*. As an “interdisciplinary journal dedicated to the philosophical aspects of environmental problems,” Hargrove founded the journal – the first in the field – in 1979. Allen Thompson, of Oregon State University, has been appointed the new Editor-in-Chief starting with Volume 43 (2021). Thompson will work with a team of Associate Editors including Stephen Gardiner, Marion Hourdequin, Katie McShane, Jay Odenbaugh, Holmes Rolston III, and Kyle Powys Whyte. Simona Capisani and Yasha Rohwer will serve as Book Review Editors.

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

Thom Heyd’s article “Covid-19 and climate change in the times of the Anthropocene” was published online in the *Anthropocene Review* in September 2020.

Simon James’s article “Legal Rights and Nature’s Contributions to People: Is There a Connection?” was published in *Biological Conservation*, Volume 241 in January 2020.

David Seamon, editor of *Environmental and Architectural Phenomenology* shares that the summer/fall 2020 issue is available [here](#).

Suvielise Nurmi completed a dissertation entitled *Ecologically Relational Moral*

Agency: Conceptual Shifts in Environmental Ethics and Their Philosophical Implications at the University of Helsinki. It can be accessed [here](#).

In Memoriam: Martin Schönfeld (1963-2020)

Byron Williston

Environmental philosophy lost one of its boldest and most creative thinkers this year, Martin Schönfeld. Born in Regensburg, Bavaria, in 1963, Schönfeld spent most of his teaching career in the Department of Philosophy at the University of South Florida in Tampa. While cycling in the hills near Meinong, Taiwan, in January 2020, Martin was run off the road by a motorist and thrown into a ditch. Among other injuries, he sustained a fractured skull and a severe concussion. He had been recovering in the ensuing months but collapsed while out running on June 21. He died immediately, evidently from complications arising from the crash. He is survived by his wife, Diane Liu, his parents, Roland and Renata and his siblings, Christiane and Michael.

I first met Martin in 2000 when I was hired as an Assistant Professor at USF. Back then, Martin's research was roughly equally split between environmental philosophy and the pre-Critical Kant. His superb, dissertation-based monograph, *The Philosophy of the Young Kant: The Pre-Critical Project* (Oxford, 2000), was hot off the press and went on to garner significant praise from scholars in the field. He never abandoned his interest in Kant, though his focus shifted over the years to the climate disruption and comparative

philosophy. He became immersed in Chinese Philosophy in particular, always looking for ways to bring this rich trove of philosophical wisdom into dialogue with Western philosophy.

The dominant theme in his thinking and writing over the past 20 years was the crisis brought on by the effects of anthropogenic climate change. When I arrived in Tampa, I knew next to nothing about this, but after innumerable all-night conversations Martin convinced me that it is truly the most important thing for philosophers to be thinking, teaching and writing about. We are, he liked to say, in the midst of the “American Dis-Enlightenment” on this issue, an ignorance and arrogance so profound they are undermining the foundations of civilization. A lot of us talk this way now, but Martin was on it before just about anyone. At bottom, Martin was a lover of nature. He believed the failure to think and act seriously about climate change was symptomatic of a deeper alienation from nature's cycles and wonders, and that unless we repaired this basic maladaptation, we would simply lurch from one civilizational crisis to another. My own professional turn to environmental philosophy and the ethics of climate change is almost wholly attributable to what I learned from Martin in the three years we were colleagues at USF (and beyond).

I will miss those late nights with Martin, drinking and smoking more than we probably should have, our Sunday kayak treks down the gator-dotted Hillsborough River, his ready tee-hee-hee laugh, the kindness and gentleness he displayed toward other people as well as non-human

animals, the way he returned from his frequent travels bursting with stories to tell. Most of all I will miss Martin's eye-popping way of making connections: between early-modern physics and Heidegger, the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Tao Te Ching*, Manga and Thomas Mann, painting and astronomy, rave dancing and solitary contemplation. Though his writing never lacks in rigor or clarity, throughout his philosophical career Martin was critical of analytic philosophy's pinched approach to truth and meaning. I believe this animus grew out of his relentless urge to combine and synthesize rather than pick apart and analyze. In this respect and in spite of all that work on Kant, I think of Martin as the intellectual child of the Romantic polymath Alexander von Humboldt, about whom he always spoke with an admiring twinkle in his eye. The world needs more thinkers like Martin. Even more desperately, it needs more people like him.



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THE REFLECTION POND

COVID-19 and Environmental Ethics

THE PERILS OF DESTINY: AN IMPORTANT LESSON OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Phil Cafaro

The current global pandemic, devastating as it is, has the potential to teach people some useful environmental lessons, if we're willing to pay attention. One is that commercializing wild animals and selling them in unhygienic "wet markets" is an invitation to epidemiological disaster. Another is that the current global economy is toxic: when this novel coronavirus drastically ratcheted back economic activity, fish returned to Venice's canals and New Delhi residents breathed easier and could once again see the Himalayas.

Perhaps the most important environmental lesson COVID-19 can teach environmentalists is that increasing the density of human populations is not the answer to our environmental problems. Even in normal times, excessive density harms people's physical and mental health. During a pandemic, density can quickly turn deadly. Stories from France to India to Brazil have detailed how difficult it is for people in crowded cities to practice safe social distancing. For poor slum dwellers, living packed in one or two rooms and

sharing communal water sources and toilets, it is literally impossible.

In recent years, "smart growth" advocates in the U.S. and Europe have been saying that increased density is the key to creating more ecologically sustainable societies. Fill in those unused city lots with more houses and office buildings. Re-zone detached, single-family housing areas to allow apartments. Re-zone areas designated for three or four-story apartments to allow six or eight-story ones. Build in! Build up! Yes, in my backyard! Smart growth will supposedly allow us to continue to grow, creating environmental efficiencies, while leaving land outside designated growth areas to remain for wild nature.

Such an approach is bound to fail. All those people crammed into cities still need resources from the countryside. So, in fact, more city-dwellers do not translate into more land left to nature, but instead to more land developed to grow food and host energy infrastructure, more wetlands filled in and more forests managed intensively—and more second homes built out in the country for those rich enough to afford them. As our cities, towns and populations grow, we inevitably take more resources from other species and gobble up habitat they need to survive.

Similarly, density's touted environmental "efficiencies" turn out to be less than valuable than advertised. It's true that New

Yorkers have some of the lowest per capita greenhouse gas emissions in the country, due to more mass transit use and apartment living—a function of high density. But the metro area generates the highest total greenhouse gas emissions of any similar area in the country—a function of its excessive population. When YIMBYs urge Americans to get with the program, like NYC and San Francisco, and embrace denser development, they really are urging us to increase our overall greenhouse gas emissions. As a consolation prize, we will get to virtue signal that our per capita emissions have gone down. But it is total emissions that ultimately count when it comes to climate disruption.

In the same way, from an environmental perspective, what matters is overall water consumption, overall demand for food, overall land paved over in concrete, overall air miles flown. More people mean more of all these environmental stressors. Children in New York have higher asthma rates than children in less populous parts of the country, since higher population densities lead to worse air pollution. Year in and year out, that takes a toll on many



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kids’ ability to live a normal, healthy life. It doesn’t matter if per capita particulate emissions are lower in NYC than in smaller cities and towns—NYC children’s lungs are still worse off because of the crowding, with emissions from many persons per unit area.

None of this means that sensible zoning, alternating denser with less dense areas and undeveloped areas, is not necessary for effective environmentalism. But increased density should not become an end in itself, or a substitute for setting limits to human demands on nature. It should not become an excuse for more population growth in places like California that are already groaning under excessive human numbers. Then “smart growth” becomes a way for clever people to continue to do dumb things: a bait and switch tactic to hide the fact that we continue to damage the environment. That’s the path humanity treads today, as climate disruption, ocean acidification, mass species extinction, and other ecological stressors driven by excessive human numbers threaten the entire planet. The evidence is clear that this path is not sustainable.

Phil Cafaro is Professor of Philosophy at Colorado State University and former ISEE President.

COVID-19, CLIMATE CRISIS AND THE SHAPE OF HISTORY

Byron Williston

What does the novel coronavirus teach us about the climate crisis? Superficially, both involve our messing recklessly with nature, whereupon the latter (surprise!) visits us with some nasty blowback. But

there's a deeper connection. In my view, the COVID-19 pandemic pushes us to the same metaphysical reflection on the shape of history that the climate crisis does. Philosophy of history is a little out of fashion these days, but I think the times are crying out for its revival. Its basic distinction is between linear and circular conceptions of historical development; think European Enlightenment versus Malthus. Is the future getting brighter and

planetary boundaries. Even though it is simple, the peg-in-a-hole metaphor helps guard against two errors that can result from one-sided ways of thinking about our historical situation.

The first is to assume that the hole is exactly the right shape for the peg, but the hole will always be larger, so that we can safely expand the peg—industrial civilization—outwards without limit. That's the

Because we have done nothing to avoid or even lessen the impacts of climate change, adaptation to ongoing crisis is now an ineliminable aspect of our collective lives, part of the human condition. Progress-pausing circles are here to stay.

brighter, or is it bound to turn back on itself, eating its own tail as humans respond to system-level crises?

Here's a really simple metaphor to help push our thinking in the direction I think it needs to go. All civilizations exhibit some degree of fit between the built environment—everything from immigration laws to vaccines and sea walls—and the natural one, much like a peg in an appropriately sized and shaped hole. In our case the fit is not perfect, but we would not have survived this long, in such numbers, if the fit were not at least roughly correct. But, given our industrial civilization's headlong economic development and expansion, especially post-WWII, the fit has become very awkward indeed. This is why some ecologists and systems thinkers talk in terms of our reaching or breaching

approach sometimes described as “business as usual.” It's also embedded in the naïve Enlightenment notion that history moves in a straight, and unbroken, line of expansion and progress. No time for pesky historical circles here. But all the evidence compiled over the past 40 or 50 years, from the *Club of Rome's Limits to Growth Report* (1972) to the U.N.'s *Global Warming of 1.5° Celsius* (2018), militates against this view. This lesson is also suggested by the effects COVID-19 has had on our lives over a very short time period. This is exactly the sort of *break* in linear time represented by all significant civilizational crises. COVID-19 is a relatively small-scale revenge of the historical circle: it has *stopped* the line of progress in its tracks, for how long we don't yet know.

The other error is to think that history is all circle and no line. It is the belief that the civilizational peg has outgrown the environmental hole many times in the past, or that no peg has ever been the right shape in the first place. Because of this basic mismatch, as it has over and over again, the hole is primed once again to spit out the peg, casting our vaunted civilizational achievements to the four winds in the process. This view is not without ethical merit. The ancient Greek historian Polybius thought its main counsel to us is that we should not “boast unduly of our achievements.” We could certainly use a little of that humility. Nowadays, The Dark Mountain Project seems to think in a similar way, but the problem with it is that it is really difficult to let go entirely of the idea—or the hope—that we can make things better than they are right now. Embracing the circular view of history can induce a kind of *Weltschmerz* that is very difficult to sustain and is also politically impotent.

The view I advocate gets between these two options. It is that because we have now entered a brand-new epoch—the Anthropocene—whose signature is the effective erasure between nature and culture the peg and the hole are now fused. They are no longer two things, and I mean this quite literally. Still, the fused thing can, and must, evolve, meaning that we cannot altogether abandon the linear conception of history. Progress now is thus largely about improving the design of the nature-culture complex. However, the event of fusion has had negative knock-on effects in the whole structure, the most salient of which is profound climate disruption. Because we have done nothing to avoid or

even lessen the impacts of climate change, adaptation to ongoing crisis is now an ineliminable aspect of our collective lives, part of the human condition. Progress-pausing circles are here to stay.

For this reason, both as philosophers and ordinary folks we can any longer indulge utopian speculation about a world beyond crisis. Naomi Klein did not know how right she was when she declared that climate disruption “changes everything,” because it alters our basic understanding of the meta-narrative of humanity. I hope we come out of the COVID-19 experience with an improved perspective on this question because we are going to need it long after this virus is defeated.

In other words, the fused peg-and-hole represents of a view of history as both linear and circular. It’s the idea that although we need to believe we’re making progress, we must also recognize that it won’t always feel that way. In fact, it will feel like a slog much of the time. That’s our lot: half Condorcet and half Sisyphus. If we can come to terms with this paradox, we will have a fighting chance of making a better future. Whatever else it is, COVID-19 is an early test of our ability to internalize this new species-level self-conception.

Byron Williston is Professor of Philosophy at Wilfrid Laurier University and a member of the Interdisciplinary Centre on Climate Change at the University of Waterloo. His latest book, Philosophy and the Climate Crisis: How the Past Can Save the Future, will be published in October 2020 by Routledge.

WHAT COVID-19 TEACHES ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE AND OURSELVES

Zachary Vereb

Half Full or Half Empty? 2020 has been quite the year, almost like a crash in slow motion. Yet much was predictable. Had we heeded warnings from the scientific community, we would, perhaps, have been more prepared. After all, we've been told that pandemic-like events become more likely in a warmer, globalized world. So, what's going on? Well, take a look at the social mood. It's a gloomy state of things. Just as a glass of water predictably heats up in the muggy Florida summer, we sweat and lose our train of thought. The connections between the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change—connections that should be readily apparent—are hardly acknowledged, at least by non-experts.

A Half Empty Glass. The COVID-19 burn-out we feel in 2020 connects with a widespread climate nihilism, informing the mood of many philosophers and laypersons about the state of the world. If the previous decade, crowned with 2020, could be represented by a philosopher, we might have to choose the pessimist Schopenhauer. From this perspective, both the pandemic and the climate crisis show us that we are in no way capable of thinking collectively and for the long term; we are hopelessly selfish and shortsighted. In short, the glass appears not only half empty, but half full of undrinkable tar. Though the tar does make for good poetry, as Schopenhauer will tell you.

A Half Full Glass. Yet, at the same time, the optimist declares that the pandemic is a blessing in disguise. It is, as it were, the cunning hand of nature working through us. After all, who can deny that quarantines helped environments to recover, reduced smog, and lowered—if only temporarily—carbon footprints. From the optimistic vantage, COVID-19 reveals we can in fact come together, that some jobs can be done more efficiently, and that we are in it for the long haul. Our optimist might also turn into a misanthrope, bitter after seeing humans bungle this opportunity to learn and change. Nature will move on. Humans, perhaps not. For her, the glass is half full—not of tar, but of unpotable water. And for our optimist, it is also half full, but we hardly know for how long.

A Glass and a Boundary. Unfortunately, optimism isn't the way either. It doesn't fit the mood. It's tone deaf. Is there a middle way—a way for mediating pessimism and nihilism with the optimism of some environmentalists? I present here some food for thought, food that might sit nicely next to that glass of water in the hot Florida heat: this pandemic presents an opportunity to teach us about climate change and, more importantly, ourselves.

Looking at the Glass Again. Let us, as environmental philosophers, appropriate the questions Kant returned to again and again. Yes, I mean Immanuel Kant. While Kant is sometimes seen as a bane to environmentalists and animal welfarists, hear me out. It may be fruitful for us to consider Kant's four questions of philosophy as a heuristic for thinking about our predicament. Maybe they can help us think about viewing the glass anew:

*What can we know?
 What should we do?
 What may we hope for?
 What is a human being?*

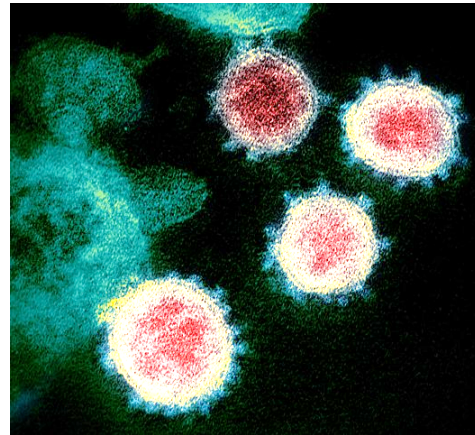
This is no time for a foray into epistemology (or epidemiology). Kant’s first question presses us to rethink how we understand ourselves as embedded in a dynamic earth-system. If this sounds wild, just recall that Kant himself wrote, in his early days, about atmospheres, climates, and earthquakes. The question becomes: what can we learn about the connections between pandemics and climate? This naturally leads us into the question of what we *should do* about it. Kant’s universalism and enlightenment cosmopolitanism seem relevant for mediating the two extreme sides of the glass. We are, first and foremost, citizens of the world—a universal community. Progress for that community is real, but only if we believe in it and make it a reality.

Next: what may we *hope for* regarding our predicament, without succumbing to defeatism or magical thinking? Our hope can only be rationally sustained if we stay grounded and receptive to new information. Lastly, we are pressed to consider who we are and who we want to become. Each question intimates the next, and this final one integrates them all. What does it mean to be human in the Anthropocene? Perhaps the way we answer this will give us a clue for how to move forward.

Philosophy and Humanity. Kant’s questions are timely. If this pandemic is, as some have said, a dress rehearsal for our climate future, then answering questions about how to understand the pandemic

requires us to think deeply about human values. This is a task for which philosophy is, indeed, quite suited. Let’s start there.

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Teaching Environmental Ethics Online

REFLECTIONS ON TEACHING ONLINE

Clare Palmer

Like almost all of us, I was forced abruptly to switch to online teaching in March 2020, halfway through my Environmental Ethics class. Following advice, I shifted to asynchronous teaching, prepared many online videos, and used the discussion board in Blackboard for student interaction. Although I worked hard, the end of semester feedback from students was not great. They said they lacked motivation and felt isolated and abandoned after we went online, and that a class like Environmental Ethics required

more discussion, both with one another and with me.

So, when I was assigned several sections of Environmental Ethics again online this Fall, I decided to overhaul the class to include “live” discussion, more student interaction, and regular carrots and sticks to motivate involvement and engagement.

I switched to one class a week of wholly online materials and one Zoom discussion class (essentially, a flipped course model, but with the discussion class on Zoom). I added in a new software tool, Packback, to form part of the grade, and I introduced two weekly graded quizzes, one on class materials and one on readings.

Happily for me, the university switched this summer from Blackboard to Canvas. For my purposes, Canvas works much better. I designed a weekly module with online pages containing text, embedded photos, cartoons and links, readings, and short videos, as well as the quizzes. I also included a set of PowerPoint slides with the main points so students could pop back for quick review. The goal of the quiz was to (try to) ensure that they had gone through the materials prior to the Zoom class (and it seems to be working!).

I supplemented this module redesign with Packback to help facilitate student discussion, given that students emphasized the importance of discussion opportunities in Environmental Ethics. I have been really pleased with it (though it has a few annoying features). It’s a kind of social-media discussion site that requires students to ask open-ended questions and to respond to other students’ questions (allowing students to develop “supporting

points” and “counter points”). I also put in weekly case studies and classic environmental ethics thought experiments for student discussion (such as the Last Person, the Train to the Future); but they really find plenty to do themselves. Packback is “managed” by advanced software that monitors not only for plagiarism, grammar and abuse, but also gives a “curiosity score.” I can comment, praise, coach, moderate, and there are tools for “sparking” other students’ posts etc. However, it does cost students \$25 a semester. (I don’t use a textbook, so I decided this was acceptable.)

To encourage preparation for the Zoom discussion days, I put questions about the readings on Canvas in advance. I also pull students’ own questions from Packback and ask them about their question (they love having their questions picked) and I send them into breakout groups to discuss case studies. One useful tip: As an icebreaker in an early class, I use a version (developed over time) of Jason Kawall’s fantastic “An Introductory Exercise in Articulating Values,” *Teaching Philosophy APA Newsletters* 99/1, Fall 1999 (a version is online [here](#)). This works great with online breakout groups. After the live class, students have access to the reading quiz (the thought being that it’s an incentive to come to class to discuss the readings, if there’s a quiz coming up).

I have two hopefully engaging open-book writing assignments over the semester, alongside the weekly requirements. Both are based around current cases (e.g. Predator Free New Zealand). I ask the students to imagine they are “ethical consultants”

charged with explaining the relevant ethical issues to an intelligent audience with no ethics background, and to give a balanced policy recommendation based on ethical considerations.

Finally, a note on subject matter: in response to the urgency of current issues and what students might be especially interested in right now, I increased material on environmental justice and racism, linked this to COVID-19, and also linked across from COVID-19 to concerns about wildlife destruction. I also increased material on climate justice, and on conservation responses to climate change (captive breeding, assisted migration, gene drives).

It's relatively early days, but so far, the feedback from students has been very positive – much better than the Spring – and I'm getting a good number of students staying behind on Zoom to chat after class.

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CREATING A SPACE OF REFUGE AND REFLECTION

Rebecca Vidra

The phrase “online learning” is not synonymous with “disconnected learning”, yet we often assume that this is the case. Why? Let's face it – even the slickest recorded videos, pre-recorded in your home studio and edited with fancy software, are viewed “asynchronously” by our students, if at all, and are likely sped up 1.5-2 times so they can get through the material faster. How can they be a substitute for rich in-person lectures with



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pauses for questions? Discussion forums can quickly become crowded with posts like “Great point. I'm so glad you made it.” How can they be a substitute for truly engaged conversation?

I have taught online for over a decade, first for active duty military and veterans at large for-profit university and then for mid-career professionals in the Duke Environmental Leadership program. At a time when my colleagues have had to make a hard pivot to teaching online, I have been fairly non-plussed by the last few months of remote teaching upheaval.

But then I decided to attempt teaching an undergraduate seminar online, during a compressed summer semester. Not only did I need to create a seminar environment on- and offline, but I also had to somehow squeeze the work and, more importantly, the reflection, into a much shorter timeline. My experience is that online learning can be a real opportunity to forge connections between students, and between students and the materials. My seminar, “Ethical Challenges in Envi-

ronmental Conservation,” is a writing-intensive course that relies on a suite of contemplative practices to invite students to deeply consider their own perspectives, beliefs, and motivations related to the environment and its protection. We read from academic and popular literature, watch short and full-length films, listen to podcasts, write essays and poems, and create art. This is my favorite class to teach, and I usually do so in-person, around a large table in a lovely art gallery on campus.

Even with my positive attitude towards online teaching, I set myself up for a huge challenge moving this course online.

Students across the country had to abruptly leave campus in mid-March, leaving most of their belongings behind, and finish the semester online. Most had their summer plans completely altered, and many were managing multiple jobs while taking a class. They worried about their loved ones, their friends, and their future. How could we talk about intrinsic value of ecosystems and endangered species, without acknowledging that loss is inevitable?

A couple weeks into the semester, George Floyd’s death inspired an uprising, and several students were protesting for days. My institution was criticized for not creating an anti-racist space, and our University President called for days of reflection and healing, canceling two precious class days of our short semester. Students were angry, scared, and afraid of saying the wrong things. How could we talk about climate justice without addressing these current events?

Instead of pressing on with my syllabus and carefully crafted assignments, I responded to my students by allowing my class to become a space of refuge and reflection. I noticed that most were eager to engage in small-group discussion, thirsty for the chance to engage with the course materials, perhaps as a way to escape from the daily realities. Yet, importantly, I issued an invitation to students to disengage if they needed to, without explanation, knowing that my BIPOC students were likely experiencing events in deep, painful ways.

The class became a space of refuge and reflection, not by ignoring the basic themes of the class, but by adapting to the times. We were able to take advantage of the real-time learning opportunity and dove into the rich literature on environmental justice that bubbled up in June 2020. We were able to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on wildlife and wild spaces and ask if we could learn something about our relationship to nature as a result.

Intellectual rigor didn’t suffer in order for this to happen, nor did my classroom become a group therapy session. Instead, we co-created a welcoming space to focus, escape, engage, and create, depending on where the students found themselves. Given the incredible challenges of environmental conservation, I believe we will need to continue creating this space, whether online or in-person, on campus and in our communities.

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BASEMENT COMMUNITY

Jeremy Bendik-Keymer

How to get by in a time so bleak for so many that hibernation really does seem like a species capability one might want to have? I go down into my cave, I mean my basement. That's where my desk is, along a wall where I can tape as many pieces of paper, photos, and the like up there to see and think about. Behind me is the fossil-fuel based HVAC system. To the left of me are the industrial washer and dryer. All around is plumbing and ductwork, except for the place where we used to store our canning products from the summer's seconds of peaches, from beans and beets, and homemade apple-butter. Oh yes, and our cat Atlas comes to see me often, especially when it rains or thunders.

It's in this basement that I log online these days. Learning with others online has been odd, but I cannot say that it has been bad. For decades almost (2003-2019), I created and helped run conversation groups – at Colorado College in Wooglin's Café, American University of Sharjah on the steps of the main building at night, and in Cleveland, both at my university and, in parallel fashion, in the basement (!) of a local bookstore called Mac's Back's. These groups were real and engaged. But how could a Zoom meeting live up to them?

The question I came to was different. How can I learn from community discussion groups and then *apply* it to Zoom meetings?

Here's what I found: (1) Make the meeting mostly dialogue. (2) Think about how to

approach the meetings in every way (including what I send out for them) as if coming down into the basement were going to get coffee with a community discussion group. (3) Approach my emails even as if we were part of such a group.

The result has been subtle but real. "Social imaginaries" are effective, as anyone who works on epistemic justice knows. I still get Zoom burnout sometimes, but for the most part I find that the classes and groups to which I belong are energizing, not draining. Now, don't talk to me about committee meetings! Bureaucracy does not like a conversation.

Two specific innovations, if you want to call them that, have been working for me as well. The first is that I built a relational writing assignment into my course design. Here is a highly edited version of the assignment:

Relational writing

(i) *Notes to self.* Every week, sit down, turn off all your distractions, and write for forty minutes to an hour uninterrupted. Focus on what our class is about, including the things we've been reading and what we've been discussing, and write about this: *What is going on for you in this course right now?*

(ii) *Letters to your prof.* On every week except when you write letters to the class, send me a letter responding to the question, *What are you thinking about in relation to our class?* This can include what you're wondering about in the readings, what you found interesting or puzzling in discussion, and how you are thinking about our course content in relation to

life. A sincere, short letter is better than a fake long one. A super long, true letter is awesome and fine.

(iii) *Letters to the class.* For Fridays September 11th and November 11th, write a long letter responding to the question, *How have you related to the course readings and discussions so far, and how can they be used to think about living your life?* Be sincere and thorough. Your classmates are probably going to look forward to reading your letter!

These letters are paying off. I don't read the notes to self (honor system!), but I have a feeling that they are helping students isolated at home create some "self-structure."

The second innovation occurred this summer, when I came up with and then co-created the [Planetary Justice Virtual Community](#) through a Western Political Science Association pilot program. The group is multi-disciplinary and is gaining momentum (it might interest you!). About two dozen folks from around the world are signed onto it currently, with about a dozen showing up for meetings spanning 18 time zones! [Ben Mylius](#) of Columbia University was strong in pushing for an unconventional format, and so the meetings feel like the community groups I mentioned earlier.

So that's my report from the cave. Signing off with the whine of the dehumidifier in the background.

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(Hard to tell which way is up from inside the cave. Lake Clark National Park, Alex Lee, 2020)