“Laughter, Grief, and Everything in Between: Mobilizing Climate Change Emotions”

Nicole Seymour, CSUF
September 3, 2019
CLEAN Network Presentation
Seymour, “Mobilizing Climate Change Emotions”

• Research specializations:
  – #1 Queer Ecologies (intersection of LGBTQ+ theory & politics and environmental theory & politics)
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• Research specializations:
  – #1 Queer Ecologies (intersection of LGBTQ+ theory & politics and environmental theory & politics)
  – #2 Affect Studies (whereas affect = emotion, feelings, sensibility, attitude, tone, etc.)
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• My presentation today:
  – Part I: Research
  – Part II: Pedagogy/Service
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• Part I: Research
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Study: Everyone hates environmentalists and feminists

New research suggests people tend to hold negative views of political and social activists

TOM JACOBS, PACIFIC STANDARD

STOP KEYSTONE Climate Change
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Societies 2014, 4, 623-639; doi:10.3390/soc4040623

Article

Vegan Killjoys at the Table—Contesting Happiness and Negotiating Relationships with Food Practices

Richard Twine

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External Editors: Chloe Taylor, Kelly Struthers-Montford and Bryan Hogeveen

Received: 4 September 2014; in revised form: 31 October 2014 / Accepted: 3 November 2014 / Published: 5 November 2014

Abstract: This article reports upon research on vegan transition, which I bring into dialogue with Sara Ahmed’s figure of the killjoy. Ahmed’s work on affect and the feminist killjoy is found to be apt for considering contemporary vegans and their transgression of normative scripts of happiness and commensality in a dominant meat and dairy consuming culture. The decentring of joy and happiness is also found to be integral to the critical deconstructive work of the vegan killjoy. Ahmed’s ideas further complement the frame of
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- Environmental
- Restraint
- Austerity
- Responsibility
- Asceticism
- Self-Denial
- Awe
- Sincerity
- Guilt
- Policing Behavior
- Disapproval
- Moralism
- Anxiety
- Seriousness

- Queer
- Indulgence
- Excess
- Frivolity
- Pleasure
- Self-Celebration
- Boredom
- Irony
- Pride
- Acting Out
- Validation
- Anti-Moralism
- Glee
- Camp
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Above: memes by Peterson Toscano,
Right: poet/novelist Percival Everett
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Left: Lesbian National Parks and Services,
Right: 1491s,
Bottom right: Wendy Red Star.
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• Potential functions for environmental art beyond “educating” or “changing the world”:
  – enacting catharsis
  – raising activist morale
  – expressing dissatisfaction or disaffectation with the environmentalist status quo
  – refusing what sociologist Gisele Kuipers calls “obligatory response[s] to disaster”
  – mitigating the bitter partisan divide over environmental issues
  – inspiring what geographer Shiloh Krupar calls “artful endurance”
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• “Dark ecology”: “the contingent and necessarily queer idea that we want to stay with a dying world.” – Timothy Morton, *Ecology without Nature*
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- Part II: Pedagogy/Service
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What is the KAN?
The UC-CSU Knowledge Action Network is a collaborative effort of UC and CSU educators to scale and intensify California students’ literacy in climate change, climate justice, carbon neutrality/greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and sustainability in ways that are culturally contextualized, responsive and sustaining, actionable, and transformative.

2016-17 Desired Outcomes
By Fall 2017, members of the KAN will have:
- A shared understanding of best practices and intersecting goals
- Begun to create mechanisms, systems, and relationships to leverage each other’s resources, knowledge, and networks as needed to achieve shared goals.
- Assessed what elements of shared goals need coordinated state-level policy advocacy or funding.

2016-17 Key Activities
In the KAN’s first year members:
- Participated in one of four 1.5-day workshops at CSU campuses across the state (executive summary forthcoming)
- Participated in a virtual conference
- Had the opportunity to present at and attend CA Higher Education Sustainability Conference.

Area Teams
The UC-CSU Knowledge Action Network is comprised of 33 faculty from 18 UC and CSU campuses and a range of academic disciplines.

Campuses
Cal Poly San Luis Obispo
CSU Chico
CSU East Bay
CSU Fullerton
CSU Long Beach
CSU Los Angeles
CSU Monterey Bay
CSU Northridge
CSU San Marcos
Humboldt State University
San Jose State University
UC Berkeley
UC Davis (including School of Medicine)
UC Irvine
UC Merced
UC Riverside
UC Santa Barbara
UC Santa Cruz

Disciplines
Chicano/a Studies
English Studies
Environmental Studies
Human Ecology
Natural Science
Geography

The UC-CSU KAN is a project of the Faculty Education and Engagement Work Group of the UC President’s Global Climate Leadership Council.

Carbon Neutrality Initiative
https://tinyurl.com/uccsukan
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- http://eicj.orfaleacenter.ucsb.edu/nxterra-project-page/ (images on next two slides)
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The range of possible results includes widely divergent "next Earths" and any number of paths forward.

As University of California and California State University-based educators focused on climate change, critical sustainability, and climate justice studies, our responsibility could not be greater to our students—the generation that will forge the ideas that will determine which "next Earth" will be our home.

To that end, NXTerra produces, curates, and delivers climate change, critical sustainability, and climate justice education resources for educators of every discipline—from the arts and humanities to the human and social sciences and the natural sciences—with a vision of sharing resources to accelerate climate education and action in California and beyond.

College-level educators in all fields who wish to enable their students to apply their knowledge in innovative ways to real-world problems will find here many resources to support them in teaching and collaborating with their students in an ambitious and wide-ranging project—imagining and creating "a just transition to the next Earth"—by reshaping our relationships with each other and the systems and institutions that determine the quality of life today for our own communities and communities around the world.

By foregrounding the work of University of California and California State University educators, NXTerra seeks to further the goals of the Carbon Neutrality Initiative (CNI) of the University of California Office of the President (UCOP).

This is an attitude of "putting our heads together" and getting to work.

Our combined efforts are aimed at driving the deep culture shift both inside our two university systems, as well as outside, in our common broader global civil society.

NXTerra will launch publicly in the Fall of 2019.
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COMING OF AGE AT THE END OF THE WORLD

ECO-GRIEF AND THE CLIMATE GENERATION

Sarah Jaquette Ray
Professor of Environmental Studies
Humboldt State University

Thursday
May 31, 12pm
Girvetz 2320
UCSB
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Motivated by a range of issues from social injustice to ecological degradation, students come to college classrooms ready to gain skills and credentials that will enable them to “be the change they want to see in the world.”

In recent years, however, educators in environmental studies and science (ESS), the disciplines that emphasize topics of biodiversity loss, climate change, and environmental injustice, find themselves ill-equipped to deal with students’ emotional responses to the depressing material.

Moreover, as students learn more about the connections between our current problems—climate change, the rise of xenophobic nationalism, growing inequality—and learn that their green lifestyle choices will not solve the problems, they become despondent, guilty, and nihilistic.

>> READ MORE

Are you a UC or CSU educator that addresses emotion in your class or in your work? Send us an email! — and consider sharing your teaching resources with us.
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• NXTerra Resource Examples:
  – #1 Eulogy assignment (Joshua Barnett, Communication, U of Minnesota Duluth)
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th># of the Day</th>
<th>Presenter(s)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sigmund Freud, “Mourning and Melancholia”</td>
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<td>Jacques Derrida, “By Force of Mourning”</td>
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<td>Ashlee Cunsolo and Karen Landman, “To Mourn Beyond the Human”</td>
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<td>April 2</td>
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<td>Helen Macdonald, <em>H is for Hawk</em></td>
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<td>April 9</td>
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<td>Edward Abbey, “Down the River”</td>
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<td>Edward Abbey, “The Damnation of a Canyon”</td>
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<td>Glenn Albrecht, “Solastalgia: A New Concept in Health and Identity”</td>
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<td>April 16</td>
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<td>Thom van Dooren, “Mourning Crows”</td>
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<td>Judith Butler, “Precarious Life, Grievable Life”</td>
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<td>April 23</td>
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<td>“Eulogy” presentations and course wrap-up</td>
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<td>May 7</td>
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<td>Final examination: 6-7:55 p.m.</td>
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• “How can we attend to the deaths of more-than-human beings and the degradation of places in a way that communicates to others how these losses matter? ... For your final writing assignment, you will prepare a eulogy for a creature (not a pet), species, or place that either has already been lost or that is threatened or otherwise at [risk]. ...
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• In keeping with the form of the eulogy, your essay should ‘commend’ the object of your lamentation. … [Y]our essay should [also] develop an argument about the loss of more-than-human beings and places: why does it matter? … how do such losses shape our sense of who we are? how do we account for our own culpability in such losses? etc.” – Joshua Barnett, eulogy assignment
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- NXTerra Resource Examples:
  - #1 Eulogy assignment (Joshua Barnett, Communication, U of Minnesota Duluth)
  - #2 “Change Agent Manifesto” assignment (Sarah Jaquette Ray, Environmental Studies, Humboldt State U)
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• “What courses, assignments, readings, professors, experiences, or other influences have occurred in the past few years that have powerfully shaped your thinking?

• What is the utmost priority you want to commit your time and energy toward?

• What is not a priority for you, even as it may be important for others? (For example, I love art, and I’ll leave policy-making for others. Or, I am a control-freak and love clear direction and stability, so I’ll need to effect change from within established systems. Be honest with yourself, not just aspirational.) ...
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• … Consider your strengths, weaknesses, passions, opportunities, and threats (e.g. ‘SWOT’).
• What qualities do you hope to manifest in your work?
• What is the nature of the work, not just the product of that work, that you most care about?
• Putting aside what you think are important ‘measurable impacts,’ how do you want to spend your time?” – Sarah Jaquette Ray, “Change Agent Manifesto” assignment
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- Thank you! Questions?
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- Twitter: @nseymourPHD