

*SSSP*  
*Section on*  
**ENVIRONMENT  
& TECHNOLOGY**

FALL 2019  
NEWSLETTER



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FEATURED  
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## MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



**NELS PAULSON**  
*UNIVERSITY OF  
WISCONSIN-STOUT*

Greetings Environment & Technology Members!

Hopefully everyone had an enriching fall. This year there is much to be excited about for our division. We have creative and transformative session topics for next year's conference to announce. Beyond that, there were many initiatives begun in August in NYC that, if they come to fruition, will make for an exciting future for our division.

First, the SSSP annual meeting in San Francisco offers diverse topics from our division. In this newsletter you'll see a session highlight surrounding the Green New Deal, a vision that has caught the attention of youth across the U.S. and many political leaders. I imagine there will be some nods to this topic in another thematic session focused on theorization of what environmental sociology means in the Anthropocene epoch. But, beyond that, we have two opportunities to explore social problems surrounding technology, including one on privacy and one critical dialogue on justice. Climate change takes center stage in two sessions, for good reasons as society continues to be divided and sluggish. on addressing climate change

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This November marks the official U.S. departure from the Paris Climate Treaty, steamrolled through by President Trump, while simultaneously having at least some of that hegemonic power resisted by teenage Greta Thunberg and many more. These sessions address issues of gender and health, and climate change and family. Justice takes further emphasis in sessions on global inequalities, activism, and food. These sessions, along with one on tourism and the environment, lean into a potential opportunity for our division to experience food justice and community activism in the Bay Area in August! More information on this, should it occur, will come in our spring newsletter. But suffice to say, there is much to be inspired by in terms of environmental activism in San Francisco!

Long term, eyeing up 2021, we intend to really explore community based participatory action research in our division further. In the past twenty years this has certainly been a game changer approach to research, especially for those of us who wish to make our scholarship directly impactful in society. Our incoming elected chair, Clare Cannon, and our newsletter editor, Alexis Econie, are taking the lead on this. Keep an eye out for it! [And congrats, Clare!! More coming in the spring on this inspirational academic!]

Next- mission. In 2020 we can consider rewriting the mission statement of the division, and we have a wonderful opportunity to more clearly define what we do that is attractive and empowering to more people in the future. The American Sociological Association recently decided to change their division to specifically focus on the environmental part of their identity.



We do not have a Science, Knowledge, and Technology division in SSSP, so this part of our group's identity is particularly fruitful to emphasize. This is not just regarding technology, but science studies and knowledge as well. Many of our members have a passion for recognizing diverse knowledges, styles of reasoning, and values as essential to a more sustainable and just future. How might we emphasize those as more central to our division? Perhaps we might create more space for indigenous knowledge and justice? Our implied focus on praxis and activism as a society is another way to build an attractive applied identity for current and future members. Please join us in a conversation surrounding this (and other things) leading up to SSSP 2020. We have an incoming social media manager for the E&T division, Marisol Becera, and I hope we can coordinate conversations during the year through virtual spaces like Facebook. Thanks in advance, Marisol!

Along these lines, several members are exploring a compilation of previous E&T scholarship and (perhaps) even an online journal for our division. Please keep an eye out for opportunities to help with these and/or email me directly if you'd like to be involved in them right now.

Being a typical academic with an insalubriously bloated ego, I would like to take credit for any of these initiatives. But, to be honest, these all came from you. At our division's business meeting in NYC we had high attendance, and for every idea I mentioned there were eager hands that shot up and said "Yes, and...", like we were engaged in an academic version of improv. I find so much active engagement very encouraging for our division's future. Certainly, the motivation and talent here is profound.

I look forward to seeing the papers roll in for our sponsored sessions, as well as the (re)launching of our social media presence and the discussion of the above initiatives and more. In the meantime, please enjoy the fantastic work from Alexis Econie in putting together another truly exceptional fall newsletter!

Warmly,  
Nels



# AN EXISTENTIAL TOOLKIT FOR CLIMATE EDUCATORS

Workshop

03/07/2020 –  
05/07/2020

**CONVENERS:** JENNIFER ATKINSON, ELIN KELSEY, SARAH RAY

**LOCATION:** RACHEL CARSON CENTER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND  
SOCIETY, MUNICH, GERMANY

This workshop seeks materials and presentations for an interdisciplinary workshop that will address the following question: how can educators, activists, and community leaders help students navigate the emotional impacts of ecological degradation and social injustice in the age of climate disruption? Our aim is to develop a practical toolkit for educators, students and activists across disciplines and professions, with potential emphasis on pedagogical applications, curricular implications, and even co-curricular connections (counseling and wellness, student life, etc).

As feelings of environmental grief, nihilism, eco-depression and climate anxiety become more common within the Climate Generation (including current college-aged students), educators across disciplines need the knowledge and resources to help those students deal with these emotional impacts. Many educators in the environmental sciences and studies (ESS), however, persist in communicating the scale and urgency of our unfolding crisis without adequately addressing its affective consequences on students' ability to learn, much less address and adapt to climate change. Our challenge today is to ensure that students have the emotional resilience and existential tenacity to stay engaged in climate solutions for the long haul.

This workshop seeks to stage a conversation between activist traditions, environmental humanists and psychologists, ESS educators, and participants from any other discipline engaged in difficult issues like biodiversity loss, climate change, and environmental injustice. Participants will share and develop new resources, practices, pedagogical tools/strategies, and research with the aim of building an interdisciplinary toolkit for effective teaching in the age of climate disruption. As we explore ways to support students grappling with the emotional fallout of the Anthropocene, our questions are:

- What emotional, spiritual, psychological, and existential skills are needed by the Climate Generation as they prepare to take up the difficult work ahead?
- What are the affective implications of our instructional content and methods?
- What are the implicit or explicit affective outcomes of our work with students?
- How might we ethically translate tools of social movements into our pedagogy?
- What might a "climate justice pedagogy" look and feel like, to us and to our students?
- How do we teach the navigation of the "doom-and-gloom" of environmental disaster and injustice?
- As students increasingly experience climate change first-hand, how do we address climate trauma in our teaching?

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The workshop will also be a resource for instructors navigating the affective terrain of teaching about power, privilege, identity, epistemological diversity, climate justice, and environmental grief. We recognize that many of us working in environmental fields have only recently begun to confront emotional impacts that have long been taking a severe toll on historically marginalized and frontline communities, and particularly encourage proposals that center these questions around environmental justice and privilege.

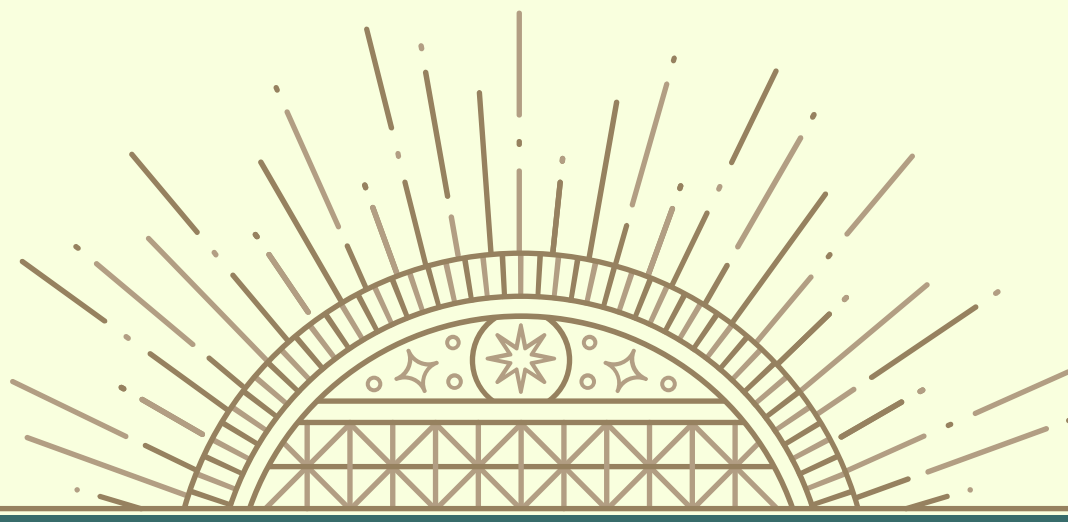
Our gathering seeks to build on the momentum and work begun at RCC's 2017 workshop on Radical Hope: Inspiring Sustainability Transformations through Our Past and "Beyond Doom and Gloom," the RCC Perspectives publication edited by Elin Kelsey. While the collaborations at RCC that led to these resources explored ways to encourage hope for the future and foster human resilience in the face of environmental degradation, our 2020 workshop will explicitly take up problems in teaching.

Participants from diverse fields and professions are encouraged to submit papers or presentations that explore strategies for addressing the questions listed above. We welcome proposals from any region of the world or field where environmental and climate issues are being addressed: educators, scholars, community activists, educational staff (library, counseling, student life), artists, writers, filmmakers, faith communities and beyond. The conference will be global in scope, putting disparate voices and perspectives into conversation.

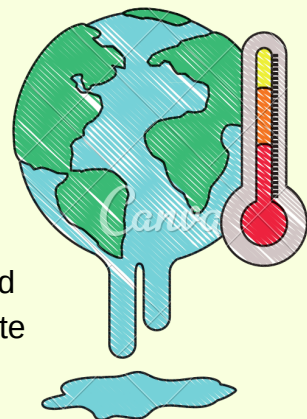
Proposals for scholarly papers, teaching or educational materials, or descriptions of other kinds of student-oriented projects that relate to this topic and showcase the participants' unique contributions are due 18 November 2019, and should be no longer than 750 words in length. Please include a position description that explains how your training experience shapes your knowledge on this topic, and a brief description of your specific contribution to the workshop. Please submit your proposal to Sarah Ray, [sarah.ray@humboldt.edu](mailto:sarah.ray@humboldt.edu).

Participants will be chosen by 20 December 2019. Successful applicants will receive travel support plus accommodation during the workshop from the RCC. Written project descriptions of 4,000–5,000 words, not including footnotes, will be due 15 March 2020 for pre-circulation among the participants. Selected papers will be eligible for inclusion in a collection of essays we aim to publish with a university press and possibly make available through an online resource. This publication will serve as an open-access resource library for educators and others seeking ideas about how to integrate emotion into climate justice programming and teaching.

### *Call for Proposals* *Proposal Deadline: 18 November 2019*



# A CLIMATE CHANGE MODULE FOR INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY CLASSES



From its beginnings, Sociology has always been centrally concerned to understand the problems of Modernity. Today, there is no longer any serious doubt that climate change has become one of the greatest – if not the single greatest-- threats to the future of human society.

In the U.S., hundreds of thousands of undergraduates take an Introduction to Sociology course each year, making Intro courses an ideal site for showing college students how sociological analysis can help them understand

the causes of, the impacts of and societal responses to the climate crisis;

A content analysis of best-selling Intro to Sociology textbooks shows that these books discuss climate change late in the book, typically in the next to last chapter, and then devote only a few paragraphs to it. (Read that analysis [here](#).)

Textbooks do change, but too slowly, given how fast the climate crisis is accelerating. “A Climate Change Module for Introduction to Sociology Classes” offers:

- Videos on the science and sociology of climate change;
- A variety of lesson plans, ranging from “minimal” (one session) to “full” (three sessions);
- Prompts that guide students’ research into various aspects of the sociology of climate change.

Designed primarily for Introduction to Sociology courses, the website may be useful as well in other courses, such as a course in Social Problems. For more information, questions, comments, write [szasz@ucsc.edu](mailto:szasz@ucsc.edu)



## ANDREW SZASZ

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT SANTA CRUZ

Andrew Szasz received his PhD in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison, in 1982. He has taught at the University of California at Santa Cruz since 1986, first as professor of Sociology, then as professor of Environmental Studies. He has published several works on the sociology of climate change, including the co-edited volume, *How the World's Religions are Responding to Climate Change: Social Scientific Investigations*, Routledge, 2013.



# THE GREEN NEW DEAL: ENVISIONING TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE

A PANEL ORGANIZED BY TODD E. VACHON, RUTGERS UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY CO-SPONSORED BY THE LABOR STUDIES AND  
ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY DIVISIONS

On November 13, 2018, more than 200 youth activists flooded House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi's office to demand the U.S. government establish a "select committee to develop legislation for a total economic mobilization to transition our country toward a 100 percent renewable energy economy—as the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] has tasked every nation to do." Joined by Representative-elect Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, the protestors were demanding a "Green New Deal" to address the growing crises of climate change and runaway inequality in America. "I just want to let you all know how proud am of each and every single one of you for putting yourselves and your bodies and everything on the line to make sure that we save our planet, our generation, and our future. It's so incredibly important," Ocasio Cortez told the crowd of activists, 51 of whom were arrested for unlawfully demonstrating at Pelosi's office. Three months after the youth sit-in at Pelosi's office, on February 7, 2019, Ocasio-Cortez and Senator Ed Markey introduced House Resolution 109 "Recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal." The resolution called for a 10-year national mobilization to "achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions through a fair and just transition for all communities and workers." While the resolution is a vision piece rather than actual legislation, it stands out from previous climate mitigation plans brought before Congress because

of its inclusion of broader social concerns including income inequality, racial justice, universal access to healthcare and education, and workers' rights, including the creation of "high-quality union jobs that pay prevailing wages, hire local workers, offer training and advancement opportunities, and guarantee wage and benefit parity for workers affected by the transition." It also calls for the inclusion of workers and communities in the process of developing climate change mitigation plans: "the Green New Deal must be developed through transparent and inclusive consultation, collaboration, and partnership with frontline and vulnerable communities, labor unions, worker cooperatives, civil society groups, academia, and businesses." In the eight months since it was unveiled, the Green New Deal (GND) has reinvigorated discussions about climate change and inequality in America and has inspired a wave of energetic organizing activity by youth groups, progressive labor organizations, and environmentalists alike. By uniting a broad set of social and economic concerns with efforts to address climate change, the GND marks a sharp deviation away from previous neoliberal, market-oriented approaches to the climate crisis. It also corresponds with a resurgence of grand visioning and sweeping proposals for large-scale transformational change by the American left in recent years. How might big ideas such as the Green New Deal inspire real change and help to



**Todd E. Vachon**  
Rutgers University

solve the dual crises of climate change and inequality? Can it reinvigorate democracy and civic participation by a largely apathetic citizenry? What strategies are climate activists pursuing to make the GND a reality? What are the political dynamics within labor organizations and environmental justice organizations concerning the GND? What might concrete GND policies look like? What historical lessons can be learned from the original New Deal? These are the types of questions that will be considered in the panel "The Green New Deal: Envisioning Transformational Change" at the SSSP Annual Meeting in San Francisco, August 2020. If you are a researcher investigating questions related to the Green New Deal, climate change, inequality, or transformational change more broadly, then this is the panel for you! Please consider submitting a paper through the online submission portal at the SSSP website.



# Society for the Study of Social Problems

*In Pursuit of Social Justice*



Join Us For Our  
**70th Annual Meeting**  
at the Park Central Hotel  
San Francisco, CA

**AUGUST 7-9, 2020**

Bringing the Hope Back In: Sociological  
Imagination and Dreaming Transformation

President Heather Dalmage

## NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Hello, E&T Members!

I am in the trenches of my thesis research at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Under the supervision of my adviser, Jane Collins, I am conducting a mixed-methods study of the social construction of skill and socially emergent risk in U.S. waste management and recycling industries. I plan to defend my thesis this spring.

Over the summer, I had the pleasure of attending SSSP in Manhattan, where I co-organized a panel session with Yuki Kato (Georgetown University) and presented a paper in Erin Robinson's (Canisius College) Environmental Health and Labor panel. I am looking forward to co-coordinating another panel session with Todd Vachon (see above) at the 2020 annual meeting in San Francisco.

Wishing you all a strong close to your fall semesters,  
Alexis



*Follow Alexis on Twitter for more updates: @lexis\_eco*



**ALEXIS ECONIE**

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