

21ST ANNUAL INTERDISCIPLINARY GRADUATE STUDENT
CONFERENCE

HUMAN-ENVIRONMENT INTERACTION: PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

DEPARTMENT OF CLASSICAL, NEAR EASTERN AND RELIGIOUS
STUDIES



PROGRAMME

MAY 7TH & MAY 8TH, 2021

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
X^WMƏƏK^WƏY'ƏM (MUSQUEAM) TERRITORY

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The conference organizers would like to acknowledge that this event is taking place on the unceded territories of the x^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam) people. These traditional territories and their resources were stolen from the x^wməθk^wəyəm nation for use by settlers. The ongoing settler colonialism perpetuated by the university continues to negatively impact members of the x^wməθk^wəyəm nation, and Indigenous peoples who go to school and work on this campus in a multitude of ways. Some examples of the harm experienced by Indigenous peoples on campus are erasure, tokenization, or overt racism. As we discuss the relationship between humans and the environment, we invite everyone to consider how their own positionality has shaped their understanding of this topic.

Many of the ideas expressed in this land acknowledgement draw upon Justin Weibe and K. Ho's excellent series from 2014 on settler colonialism at UBC (<https://thetalon.ca/an-introduction-to-settler-colonialism-at-ubc-part-one/>).

If you are interested in learning more about the practice of land acknowledgements, native-land.ca has compiled a number of resources on the subject.

FRIDAY, MAY 7TH, 2021

9:30-10:00: *Registration/Questions*

10:00-10:20: Opening Remarks

10:20-11:05: Panel 1 - (Art)iculating the Environment

- ❖ Meekyoung Jung (University of British Columbia): *Decolonizing Nature Through Art: Focusing on Gardens*
- ❖ Roopa Kanal (University of Victoria): *Nepal's Contemporary Art Community: Rebuilding Identity After the 2015 Earthquake*

11:05-12:30: Lunch

12:30-1:15: Panel 2 – Traversing Spatial and Temporal Boundaries

- ❖ Jeden O. Tolentino (York University): *The View from Above in the Hollywood Films of Denis Villeneuve*
- ❖ Graham C. Braun (University of British Columbia): *Panhellenic Peripheries: The Role of Panhellenic Sanctuaries in the Development of Greek Inter-State Identity*

1:15-1:30: Break

1:30-2:15: Panel 3 – Environment and Religious Ideology

- ❖ Alyssa Kotva (Ohio State University): *Agricultural Miracles, Agricultural Materials: An Experimental Case Study*
- ❖ Raquel Robbins (University of Toronto): *The Wonders of Water: Understanding the Ideologies of Water in the Political and Religious Institutions of Mesopotamia in the 2nd and 3rd Millenniums*

2:15-3:00: Break

3:00-4:15: Keynote Address: Dr. Charles Redman

School of Sustainability (Founding Director), Arizona State University

Social, Environment, and Technological Perspectives: Lessons From/For Archaeology

4:15-5:15: Social Hour

SATURDAY, MAY 8TH, 2021

9:30-10:00: Registration/Questions

10:00-11:00: Panel 4 – Political Landscapes

- ❖ Lexie White (University of British Columbia): *Children of the Earth: Athenian Autochthony and Plato's Critique of Radical Democracy*
- ❖ Sabrina Sherman (University of Oregon): *Mapping Anti-Racist Activism: The Political Environment That Consumed Black Power*
- ❖ Jen Argan (University of Victoria): *Governing Place: Cowichan refusal of terra nullius to protect Hw'teshutshun*

11:00-11:15: Break

11:15-12:00: Panel 5 – Locational Identities

- ❖ Kim McCullough and Caroline Barnes (University of British Columbia): *Architecture Intervenes: An Integrative Approach to Understanding Social Experiences at the Houses of Volubilis in Roman North Africa*
- ❖ Steve Renette (University of British Columbia): *Archaeological Evidence for the Emergence of a Mountain Identity in the Zagros Region (present-day Iraq and Iran)*

12:00-1:00: Lunch

1:00-2:00: Panel 6 – Dynamics of Power and Ecology

- ❖ Mordechay Benzaquen (University of Toronto): *Palaeoenvironment Revisited: Understanding the Environmental Landscape of the South Levantine Early Bronze Age*
- ❖ Peter Duker (York University): *Ontological Politics and Human-Environment Relations in Northern Thailand: Conservation as the Arena*
- ❖ Helen A. Hayes, Heather Rogers, Kelly Chan, and Edna Wan (McGill University): *Ecological Imperialism, "Green Technology," and the Electric Vehicle Industry in Japan*

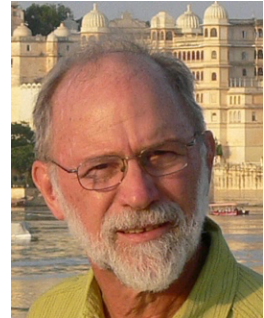
2:00-2:15: Closing Remarks

2:15-3:15: Social Hour

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Keynote Address: Dr. Charles Redman

*Founding Director, School of Sustainability
Virginia M. Ullman Professor, Natural History and the
Environment
Distinguished Sustainability Scientist, Global Institute of
Sustainability
Arizona State University*



“Social, Environment, and Technological Perspectives: Lessons From/For Archaeology”

Charles Redman has been committed to interdisciplinary research since as an archaeology graduate student he worked closely in the field with botanists, zoologists, geologists, art historians, and ethnographers. Redman received his BA from Harvard University, and his MA and PhD in Anthropology from the University of Chicago. He taught at New York University and at SUNY-Binghamton before coming to Arizona State University in 1983. Since then, he served nine years as Chair of the Department of Anthropology, seven years as Director of the Center for Environmental Studies and, in 2004, was chosen to be the Julie Ann Wrigley Director of the newly formed Global Institute of Sustainability. From 2007-2010, Redman was the founding director of ASU's School of Sustainability. Redman's interests include human impacts on the environment, sustainable landscapes, rapidly urbanizing regions, urban ecology, sustainability education, and public outreach. He is the author or co-author of five books including *Explanation in Archaeology*, *The Rise of Civilization*, *People of the Tonto Rim*, *Human Impact on Ancient Environments* and co-edited nine books: *The Archaeology of Global Change*, *Applied Remote Sensing for Urban Planning*, *Governance and Sustainability*, *Agrarian Landscapes in Transition*, and *Politics and Power: Archaeological Perspectives on the Landscapes of Early States*. He has been co-director of the Central Arizona-Phoenix Long Term Ecological Research Project during its inception in 1996, and the Decision Center for a Desert City following 2001. Redman is currently working on building upon the extensive Urban research portfolio of the Global Institute of Sustainability with the new Urban Resilience to Extreme Weather Related Events Network sponsored by the National Science Foundation where Valdivia is a partner city in the Network. He continues to teach in the School of Sustainability, which is educating a new generation of leaders through collaborative learning, transdisciplinary approaches, and problem-oriented training to address the environmental, economic, and social challenges of the 21st Century.

SPEAKER ABSTRACTS

Jen Argan (MA, University of Victoria) – “Governing Place: Cowichan refusal of *terra nullius* to protect Hw’teshutshun”

The struggle to protect places with intangible significance is largely futile for most Indigenous nations across Canada. Yet the government of Canada’s increases from their Target 1 goal aim to protect 25% of land and water by 2025. It is well known that lands governed by Indigenous peoples have higher biodiversity than those managed by state governments. In the race to “conserve” ecosystems, it is imperative that the state work with Indigenous peoples, who continue to assert their rights and title to their territories, including through the continued use of and relationship with places that have cultural significance to them.

In this paper, I ask how different conceptions of and relationships with the environment, or the land, result in different land management strategies. Through an ethnographic case study, I will look at Hw’teshutshun, a Cowichan cultural landscape on Vancouver Island, BC, which was protected by Cowichan Tribes from being turned into a dump and from logging in 2001. The protection of Hw’teshutshun provides the opportunity to think about Cowichan relationships with place and teachings from the land. Relationships with specific places across their traditional territory mean that Cowichan leadership often has different priorities and values in land protection strategies than do state bodies. A discussion of Cowichan relationships with Hw’teshutshun highlights the importance of protecting a sacred and ancestral place which may look, to those who don’t know its stories, like a cutblock reaching maturity, a place to quad and to dump old furniture. Indigenous nations often work outside state frameworks, manifesting their systems of governance to protect places that are important to them and to continue engaging with the land. I argue that centering Indigenous governance and respecting Indigenous relationships with places must be the primary concern in “conservation” strategies.

Mordechay Benzaquen (PhD, University of Toronto) – “Palaeoenvironment Revisited: Understanding the Environmental Landscape of the South Levantine Early Bronze Age”

The Early Bronze Age (EBA) in the southern Levant has been a subject of great debate amongst scholars. Particularly, the question of EBA urbanism has received special scrutiny given its incongruence to the traditional Syro-Mesopotamian models of EBA urban development. On the other hand, the environmental conditions which characterized the period have not received as much attention and their discussions have been mostly restricted to issues of trade and a suspected role in the so called “EBA collapse”. However, recent advances in chronology and archaeology, together with an increasing availability of palaeoenvironmental/climate proxies, have enabled an interdisciplinary approach which allows us to revisit the environment in an attempt to produce a more complete understanding. These new data have further permitted a nuanced analysis of each EBA subphase, as well as the ability to track the environmental dynamics in their particular social, cultural, and economic contexts. Through this approach, the present paper aims to demonstrate that the environment was certainly one of the most salient factors guiding EBA developments. Furthermore, the shift into the Mediterranean agrarian lifestyle, which occurred with the onset of the EBA, was observed to be an environmental transformative process whose repercussions reverberate until our present day. Additionally, the notion of “collapse” is revisited and

criticized while its previous associations to the harsh environmental conditions detected at the end of 3rd millennium BCE (cf. 4.2k BP event) are dismissed altogether. Ultimately, this paper will challenge the traditional notions that regard the EBA southern Levant as some sort of backwater country wedged by the colossal civilizations of Egypt and Mesopotamia. Rather, it is argued that the specific environmental and social conditions experienced throughout the EBA, promoted an incredibly unique landscape which provides an alternate route that redefines old notions of EBA urbanism and culture in the Near East.

Graham C. Braun (MA, University of British Columbia) – “Panhellenic Peripheries: The Role of Panhellenic Sanctuaries in the Development of Greek Inter-State Identity”

Over the last 40 years, scholars of the early Greek city-state (the *polis*) have come to realize the important relationship between the urban centre and extra-urban sanctuaries in the development of the *polis* and the definition of its borders during the Archaic period (c. 750–480 BCE). In placing a sanctuary, to which inhabitants would process or make pilgrimage, over an extended distance, the urban centres effectively laid claim to the territory in between them. These questions, however, have not extended to Panhellenic sanctuaries like Olympia and Delphi, the objects of my archaeological investigation, precisely because they are not only on the peripheries of a *polis*, but of the territory of Greece itself. My first suggestion is that in the same way that extra-urban sanctuaries helped define a single *polis* identity, these Panhellenic sanctuaries helped define an inter-state identity. Located far away from any urban centre, they forced travellers to traverse a vast landscape, leaving their own *polis* and visiting others along the way. In their inherently peripheral status, I argue that Panhellenic sanctuaries removed the Archaic Greeks from their regional identity and situated them within a proto-national Greek identity, a process closely tied to the physical environment.

I then review evidence from two Boeotian sanctuaries, namely the Ismenion at Thebes and the sanctuary at Eleon (dating to the late 6th century BCE), that both emulate Delphi with respect to their votives, architecture, and geographic position. In the *Homeric Hymn to Apollo* (lines 216–295), Apollo traverses a divine route passing by both Eleon and Thebes on his way to Delphi, indicating an ancient pilgrimage route by land. This evidence shows the connection between Delphi and various *poleis* throughout central Greece, placing both the Panhellenic and regional sanctuaries within a growing religious *koine* associated with a collective Greek identity.

Peter Duker (MA, York University) – “Ontological Politics and Human-Environment Relations in Northern Thailand: Conservation as the Arena”

This presentation will draw on the results from my ongoing master’s research into community-based inland fisheries governance in the Ngao river basin of northern Thailand. The Thai state’s environmental governance regime is typically known for its history of marginalization and displacements of local people. However, this is juxtaposed by the unique form of community-based governance in the Ngao river basin created by local Sgaw Karen or Pga K’nyau (referred to as “Karen” hereafter) people. My study seeks to better understand the emergence of a grassroots level river conservation initiative, which has scaled up to more than 50 communities, in this river basin. This case deserves attention due to the apparent successes at restoring ecological health and ensuring food security for local people. For this presentation, I argue that environmental governance results from the coproduction of human-environment relations and ontology. Both Karen people and the Thai state discursively use conservation as a means to justify their control of land and resources. However, both sides mobilize a much different conception of conservation that is founded in their

differing relations with the environment and ontologies. Thus, the struggle for land and resources in the Ngao river basin is also a struggle over the legitimacy of these human-environment relations and ontologies. Through fish and forests, I will demonstrate how conservation has become a site of contestation of the future of environmental governance for Thailand, and that the results of this contestation depend, in part, on the respective agencies of these nonhuman actors.

Helen A. Hayes (PhD, McGill University), Heather Rogers (MA, McGill University) , Kelly Chan (MA, McGill University) , and Edna Wan (MA, McGill) – “Ecological Imperialism, “Green Technology,” and the Electric Vehicle Industry in Japan”

This paper is an examination of cobalt and other rare-earth mineral mining that has allowed Japanese state and corporate actors to channel global flows of technological, environmental, and political control. It specifically traces the conditions that enable and contribute to the growth of the electric vehicle industry in Japan to show how such practices relate to longer histories of Japanese imperialism and capital accumulation. This paper is thusly situated at the intersection of digital environmental humanities, technology studies, infrastructure studies, and elemental media studies. It specifically draws inspiration from Tao Leigh Goffe’s (2019) and Liam Cole Young’s (2020) works on the connections between environment, technology, and power.

In the age of global interconnectivity, mineral supply chains that enable technological manufacturing often function as networks that form – and narrow – the structural/ physical relations between places and spaces. These networks enable global powers to assert dominance over “extraterrestrial commons” (Peters, 2015) through the accumulation of economic and environmental resources. It is within this context that this paper raises important questions about the vexed relationships between supposedly “green” technologies, the environment, and major resource economies. In doing so, it addresses how long-standing processes of dispossession, exploitation, and environmental degradation are replicated in the technological move towards electric vehicle manufacturing. In addition, by focusing on Japan, this paper builds on the existing literature on environmental media by shedding more light on the complicity of a non-Western imperial power in contributing to processes of dispossession and exploitation.

Meekyoung Jung (MA, University of British Columbia) – “Decolonizing Nature Through Art: Focusing on Gardens”

The European-centered colonial power combined with anthropocentrism colonized nature by plundering and degrading the land and its non-human inhabitants (Plumwood, 2003). Colonizing nature carries ramifications for causing massive global environmental destruction, creating room for social injustice, and causing unsustainable human interactions with the environment (Demos, 2016). Using the art of internationally renowned artistic efforts Akhavan, Song, and Buch, I will explore these aspects of colonizing nature by examining the dualism, the exploitation and the discrimination of “Others” in Plumwood’s (2003) and Adams (2003) arguments. These artistic works will also interrogate Plumwood’s (2005) and Demos’ (2012) assertion that a garden is a place where the current environmental crisis and global conflicts, including the commercialization of nature, are condensed.

Subsequently, I will analyze several artworks representing the garden to reveal the intersection of decolonizing nature and art. A series of artworks titled “The study for a garden” by Abbas Akhavan shows how colonization ruined the environment and Indigenous people's lands and culture from the past to the present in an unconventional and resonating way. Song Dong visualizes a decolonized organic space in his artworks,

“Doing Nothing Garden” and “Doing Nothing” series. He emphasizes biodiversity against homogenization and human control, a typical characteristic of colonization over gardens. Kristina Buch creates an open-air live installation “The Lover” for a variety of indigenous butterfly species to restore biological affluence with autochthonous plants. She embodies the decolonization of nature in her work beyond modelling a garden as art.

Witnessing and experiencing these artworks dealing with gardens is presented to open people up to disrupting their worldview and possibly reorient the conception of relationships with nature. It is significant to raise critical awareness of the environmental crisis and imagine tangible actions to contribute to decolonization by interpreting artworks representing the interaction between decolonizing nature and radical gardens.

Roopa Kanal (MA, University of Victoria) – “Nepal’s Contemporary Art Community: Rebuilding Identity After the 2015 Earthquake”

In 2015, a devastating earthquake hit Nepal, damaging many of the nation’s sacred heritage sites central to the country’s history and national identity. The majority of Nepalis have historically practiced a uniquely syncretic mixture of Hinduism and Buddhism. Nepali historical identity is evident in the nation’s religious art and architectural heritage, much of which the earthquake destroyed. Beyond the material loss, the impact of the earthquake destabilized the community’s cultural identity.

Part of moving forward after a disaster are recovery and rebuilding efforts. Since 2015, local community organizations and international heritage groups have mobilized to reconstruct and rebuild devastated religious monuments and artworks. My MA project examines the work of contemporary Nepali visual artists dealing with recovery from the aftermath of the earthquake and how they reconstruct and promote Nepali identity, both at home and internationally to recover from the devastation.

At a local level, the artistic community galvanized to promote street art to raise donations, developed children’s art programs, and created several art collectives, art fairs, street art events, and exhibitions to provide relief from the catastrophe. I explore how by involving the local community, Nepali artists contribute to the narrative of Nepal’s identity post-earthquake, which promotes collective healing. Nepali artist’s work reflecting on the earthquake has reached international audiences. I examine how contemporary Nepali artists draw from their heritage and present socio-cultural messages related to the earthquake in their artwork. I employ art historical and the anthropological theories of relationality which examine the social contexts under which the art is created and the community practices informing that process. My research explores the intersections of cultural heritage, legacy, community, sacrality, historicity as it helps restore the religio-historical relationship to the built environment to recover from the earthquake.

Alyssa Kotva (PhD, Ohio State University) – “Agricultural Miracles, Agricultural Materials: An Experimental Case Study”

The humanities’ increasing engagement with the sciences, as in the so-called climatic, environmental, and material turns, presents both problems and opportunities for new research. This is especially true in the premodern world, when scientific and historical evidence are both rarer, creating opportunities for maximalist arguments, such as ones that have swirled around the idea of the Late Antique Little Ice Age (LALIA), and its causal links to the fall of the Western Roman Empire. In this vein, Pope Gregory I’s *Dialogues* (c. 594 CE) are often understood to illustrate the impoverished, embattled, and pious state of a society transitioning between Antiquity and the Middle Ages, as it vividly foretells and recounts the destruction of Italy through

both political instability and natural disasters in the later sixth century. I will complicate this analysis through a reading of the *Dialogues*' agricultural miracles, which contain often mundane features of rural life. I will then embark upon an experimental integration of this text with paleoscientific and other material evidence. This paper suggests that, when viewed in both their literary and environmental context, the agricultural miracles in the *Dialogues* provide rich insight into early medieval beliefs about divine action in the natural world, and the ways that agricultural knowledge and experience might shape these beliefs.

Kim McCullough (PhD, University of British Columbia) and Caroline Barnes (MA, University of British Columbia) – “Architecture Intervenes: An Integrative Approach to Understanding Social Experiences at the Houses of Volubilis in Roman North Africa”

With “stay at home” at the forefront of so many minds around the world today, people are spending more time in houses than ever. How do individuals experience and interact within the walls of a house? Do we make houses or do houses make us?

Metanarratives concerning architecture continue to dominate studies of households in antiquity, namely Vitruvian concepts of space and their legacy in Roman and modern minds (Hales 2000; Meyers 2005). These approaches actively look for examples of ‘Romanness’ (and therefore ‘non-Romanness’) through the architecture of spaces in Roman provinces. By shifting our attention to the site of Volubilis in Mauretania Tingitana (modern Morocco), with its extensive material resources on domestic structures during the early imperial period, we can decenter Romano-centric models.

In order to methodize a more comprehensive analysis of the relationship between architecture and experience we lend ourselves to alternative methodologies such as architectural theory, anthropology, and sociology. In other words, we realize that architecture and social identity have a reciprocal relationship; architecture guides and sets expectations for behavior, while social identity influences particular facets and creative processes in architecture (Kent 2000). More specifically, the questions at stake are: How does the architecture of domestic spaces in Volubilis intervene in the social experiences of its users during the first to third centuries CE? How do features of the house (re)iterate power dynamics both locally and globally in the Roman Empire?

Using the microcosm of houses at Volubilis as our primary unit of analysis enables us to move beyond the long-established preferential treatment that monuments at urban centers receive. Therefore, studying the domestic world is vital to a comprehensive understanding of the past and can lend specific insight into the lived experiences of where people would have spent most of their time—at home.

Steve Renette (Postdoc, University of British Columbia) – “Archaeological Evidence for the Emergence of a Mountain Identity in the Zagros Region (present-day Iraq and Iran)”

The history of ancient Mesopotamia has been written largely from a perspective of urban societies that developed in vast, agriculturally fertile plains. Peoples who inhabited different landscapes in the region are usually imagined as inhabiting the periphery in both a political and a cultural sense. However, recent scholarship of so-called ‘marginal landscapes’ has emphasized alternative trajectories for the development of diverse forms of social organization outside of dominant theoretical frameworks that are based on concepts of centre-periphery or scales of development. Mountain peoples, especially from the Zagros Mountains that straddle the present-day border between Iraq and Iran, have largely been ignored in this debate, despite

abundant historical and archaeological evidence for their important role in the long history of the region.

In this paper, I will briefly discuss two different case-studies from the perspective of the emergence of a mountain identity. First, I will discuss the prehistoric Dalma painted ceramic tradition of the fifth millennium BCE, which maintained a distinct visual aesthetic despite close interaction with widespread Mesopotamian cultural practices. The second case-study will look at a set of Zagros rock reliefs with cuneiform inscriptions, dated to ca. 2000 BCE, which were carved on mountain faces by local rulers in the aftermath of the collapse of the Mesopotamian Ur III empire. Both case-studies offer clues to visual expressions of an identity that was tied to the mountainous landscape. Yet, I will argue that the relationship between this landscape and identity formation was non-deterministic and instead the result of deliberate choices by indigenous Zagros communities to separate themselves from lowland societies and their increasingly exploitative socioeconomic structures.

Raquel Robbins (PhD, University of Toronto) – “The Wonders of Water: Understanding the Ideologies of Water in the Political and Religious Institutions of Mesopotamia in the 2nd and 3rd Millenniums”

The environment impacted the way that people in the ancient past conceptualized their physical and ideological universe. In various time points in the ancient Near East, Mesopotamians believed in several cosmological realms of existence; these included the Netherworld, Heavens, and Apsû (underground freshwater ocean). Each of these cosmological realms were ideological notions influenced by the physical environment that the Mesopotamians were immersed in. While scholars have grasped the foundations of what these cosmological realms encompassed, there are still aspects yet to be explored. This paper will focus especially on water and seek to understand how it was understood and utilized in the development of the conception of the cosmological realm of the Apsû. This will be achieved by analyzing the significance of water in both the religious and political institutions, showing how it was understood to be the base of life. Water was of extreme importance in the Near East from both the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and the underground water that was accessed by wells. This underground water was considered to be part of the Apsû, which played a significant role in religion and ideology. Sumerian and Akkadian texts show that the mud of the Apsû was used in the creation of humans and that its water had life reviving properties in the form of libations. Archaeological evidence and art such as the Warka Vase and the wall reliefs from the palace of Mari, also support the significance of water in Mesopotamian religion and politics. Imagery of water was used to portray wealth and power of both the kings and the divine which shows that access and control over water was fundamental for the survival of these institutions.

Sabrina Sherman (PhD, University of Oregon) – “Mapping Anti-Racist Activism: The Political Environment That Consumed Black Power”

Black Power activists, scholars, and organizers often structure ground-up critiques of political environments based on prior conceptions of political organizing. For the Black radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s, “Black” became essential to political chants at the same time that their critique of structural power relations expanded beyond single-axis frameworks. The politics of Black Power moved beyond a race-centered movement and took on a coalitional strategy to develop universal political claims. The 1960s and 1970s environments of public political demonstrations offer symbols of solidarity that persist into our contemporary moment. However, these symbols have come to function as political expressions on their own, moving away from the aims of political revolution. In other words, Black Power’s anti-capitalist universalist politics are

often corroded when race-symbols overtake the movement's politics within the framework of antiracist reformism. The political activism of 2020 is reminiscent of the 1990s "popular culture as political action" paradigm that sanitized the radical 1960s and 1970s movements. The popularization of Black Lives Matter through such hashtags such as #blackout, #blackexcellence, and #blackgirlmagic exemplify some of the strategies that "reduce politics to purely affective and symbolic character." Political organization thus becomes an aesthetic, removed from the radical content of its origin. Political "heroes" such as Malcolm X mark the ground upon which radicalism becomes a buzzword for commercialized politics, an anti-capitalist narrative turned mainstream. The communities affected become popular symbols in the national milieu of contemporary political activism. I argue, however, that as symbols these movements lack the content of real organizing power necessary to radically transform the socio-economic environment of Black subordination. In this way, the aesthetic political strategy of race-symbolism subsumes and defangs both historical and contemporary antiracist activism.

Jeden O. Tolentino (MA, York University) – "The View from Above in the Hollywood Films of Denis Villeneuve"

I analyze how the Canadian filmmaker Denis Villeneuve has used the view from above to express the crossing of borders, both geographic and symbolic, into exile, both physical and figurative. I focus on the main character of each of Villeneuve's three Hollywood films that were released over three calendar years, that is, *Sicario* (2015), *Arrival* (2016), and *Blade Runner 2049* (2017). Aside from portraying an apparent spatial dimension, these films follow a certain temporal (meta)pattern. *Sicario*, set in contemporary times, tackles the dynamics of the U.S.-Mexico border and the ethics of the U.S. war on drugs. Both issues still occupy symbolic space in the current North American politico-legal environment. By contrast, the two films that came after *Sicario* are overtly futuristic. *Arrival* shows humankind's first contact with extraterrestrial intelligence in some near-future Earth that is still socially- and ecologically recognizable. *Blade Runner 2049*, however, goes even further into the future to show an Earth that has suffered ecological collapse. Moreover, artificial intelligence threatens humankind's dominion over the planet. This temporal progression, therefore, offers the opportunity to ask how Villeneuve's view from above has evolved as the temporal setting of the films has progressed from contemporary to futuristic.

Lexie White (MA, University of British Columbia) – "Children of the Earth: Athenian Autochthony and Plato's Critique of Radical Democracy"

Autochthony myths, narratives that establish a civic body as being born from their own land, play an important role in both Plato's *Republic* and the myth of King Erechtheus, the legendary founder of Athens. The *Republic* features the infamous 'Noble Lie' (III.414b-417b), which states that every citizen of Socrates' ideal society, Kallipolis, will be told a "noble [γενναϊόν, literally 'true to one's birth or descent'] falsehood" (III.414b)[1] about their origins in which their ancestors are described as being born from the earth, each with one of three types of metals in their soul corresponding to three social classes to which each naturally belongs. Similarly, the autochthonic origin of Erechtheus was reinterpreted by the burgeoning Athenian democracy to foster a sense of equality and kinship between all Athenian citizens in the wake of the aristocratic factionalism in the period prior to the expulsion of the tyrants. In this paper, I argue that Plato's autochthony myth in the *Republic* is an allusion to, and repurposing of, the autochthony myth of King Erechtheus, and is used by Plato as an implicit critique of the Athenian democracy and its imperialist practices exhibited during the Peloponnesian Wars. While the relationship of the Athenian citizens to the land in the Erechtheus myth was repurposed during the early period of Athenian democracy to establish equality and

justify imperialist practices (embodied particularly in Thucydides' report of Pericles' funeral oration), the autochthony myth of Plato's *Republic* serves the opposite function, namely, to legitimize the proper political function of each citizen in Socrates' ideal society. I therefore conclude that the autochthony myth in fact bolsters Socrates' definition of justice as "doing one's own work," in contrast to the radical and purely mythical equality propagandised in the Erechtheus myth.

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The Annual Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference is a volunteer-organized event.

We would like to thank our voluntary chairs and the members of the 2019/20 Organization Committee:

- ❖ Brianne Lynn and Lara-Sophie Boleslawsky – Co-chairs
- ❖ Joseph Burkhart – Logistics Coordinator
- ❖ Jayden Lloyd – Treasurer
- ❖ Graham Braun
- ❖ Bronwyn Langley
- ❖ Lexie White

The Committee also wishes to thank the Department of Classical, Near Eastern, and Religious Studies, and the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for their generous and ongoing support of this conference.

21st Annual Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference
“Human-Environment Interaction: Past, Present, and Future”
May 7th and 8th, 2021

Friday, May 7

9:30-10:00: Questions/Registration

10:00-10:20: Opening Remarks

10:20-11:20: Panel 1 - (Art)iculating the Environment

- 10:20 - 10:35 *Meekyoung Jung* (UBC): Decolonizing nature through art: Focusing on gardens
- 10:35 - 10:50 *Roopa Kanal* (UVic): Nepal's Contemporary Art Community: Rebuilding Identity After the 2015 Earthquake
- 10:50-11:05 Q&A

11:05-12:30: Lunch

12:30-1:15: Panel 2 – Traversing Spatial and Temporal Boundaries

- 12:30 - 12:45 *Jeden O. Tolentino* (York): The View from Above in the Hollywood Films of Denis Villeneuve
- 12:45 - 1:00 *Graham C. Braun* (UBC): Panhellenic Peripheries: The Role of Panhellenic Sanctuaries in the Development of Greek Inter-State Identity
- 1:00 - 1:15 Q&A

1:15-1:30: Break

1:30-2:15: Panel 3 - Environment and Religious Ideology

- 1:30 - 1:45 *Alyssa Kotva* (OSU): Agricultural Miracles, Agricultural Materials: An Experimental Case Study
- 1:45 - 2:00 *Raquel Robbins* (Uof T): The Wonders of Water: Understanding the Ideologies of Water in the Political and Religious Institutions of Mesopotamia in the 2nd and 3rd Millenniums
- 2:00 - 2:15 Q&A

2:15-3:00: Break

3:00-4:15 Keynote Address: Dr. Charles Redman (ASU)

Social, Environment, and Technological Perspectives: Lessons From/For Archaeology

4:15-5:15: Social Hour

Saturday, May 8

9:30-10:00: Questions/Registration

10:00-11:00: Panel 4: Political Landscapes

- 10:00 - 10:15 *Lexie White* (UBC): Children of the Earth: Athenian Autochthony and Plato's Critique of Radical Democracy
- 10:15 - 10:30 *Sabrina Sherman* (U of Oregon): Mapping Antiracist Activism: The Political Environment That Consumed Black Power
- 10:30 - 10:45 *Jen Argan* (UVic): Governing Place: Cowichan refusal of *terra nullius* to protect Hw'teshutshun
- 10:45 - 11:00 Q&A

11:00-11:15: Break

11:15-12:00: Panel 5 - Locational Identities

- 11:15 - 11:30 *Kim McCullough* and *Caroline Barnes* (UBC): Architecture Intervenes: An Integrative Approach to Understanding Social Experiences at the Houses of Volubilis in Roman North Africa
- 11:30-11:45 *Steve Renette* (UBC): Archaeological Evidence for the Emergence of a Mountain Identity in the Zagros Region (present-day Iraq and Iran)
- 11:45 - 12:00 Q&A

12:00-1:00 Lunch/Break

1:00-2:00: Panel 6 - Dynamics of Power and Ecology

- 1:00 - 1:15 *Mordechay Benzaquen* (UofT): Palaeoenvironment Revisited: Understanding the Environmental Landscape of the South Levantine Early Bronze Age
- 1:15 - 1:30 *Peter Duker* (York): Ontological Politics and Human-Environment Relations in Northern Thailand: Conservation as the Arena
- 1:30 - 1:45 *Helen A. Hayes, Heather Rogers, Kelly Chan, and Edna Wan* (McGill): Ecological Imperialism, "Green Technology," and the Electric Vehicle Industry in Japan
- 1:45 - 2:00 Q&A

2:00-2:15: Closing Remarks

2:15-3:15: Social Hour