

Keywords for Climate Imaginaries

ANTH 3703 CLIMATE CHANGE AND COLONIALISM

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Land Acknowledgement and Action

Columbia University is located on the unceded and occupied lands of the Wappinger, Munsee Lenape, and Lenni-Lenape people in Lenapehoking. The university, like many universities in settler colonial contexts, has been an agent of displacement, land dispossession, and gentrification since its founding in 1754 as King's College. Even the name "Columbia" suggests colonial conquest and violence. This zine seeks to critically explore the historical legacies and present-day realities of colonialism as they relate to contemporary inequalities, taken-for-granted social, political, and economic norms, and the climate crisis. The reflections in this zine also offer other ways of imagining what transformation, being in relation, and solidarity with one another can look like. To this end, it is important that a land acknowledgement go beyond a simple statement to incorporate sustained commitment and action.

Please explore the work of the Lenape Center, which enacts its mission of "continuing Lenapehoking, the Lenape homeland, through community, culture, and the arts." The Center has been based in Manhattan since 2009 and is led by Lenape elders. You can learn more about The Lenape Center's ongoing leadership, organizing, and advocacy, and contribute resources or other forms of support here: <https://thelenapecenter.com/>.

Further resources for taking action:

- Media related to the first Lenape-curated exhibition of the Lenape peoples' culture and arts, entitled Lenapehoking [2022], is archived here: <https://artsandculture.google.com/story/gwWxsh46HWllsQ>.
- You can learn more about how to support the Lenape Center's seed repatriation program [in collaboration with the Hudson Valley Farm Hub] here: <https://hvfarmhub.org/seed-growing/>.
- The NDN Collective's [<https://ndncollective.org/>] perspective on LandBack, or the decolonizing strategy of returning land to Indigenous stewardship, can be explored here: <https://landback.org/>.
- For a deeper discussion on going "Beyond Land Acknowledgement in Settler Institutions," please access Theresa Stewart-Ambo and K. Wayne Yang's 2021 article here: <https://doi.org/10.1215/01642472-8750076>.
- You can engage with <https://native-land.ca/> to learn more about the histories of the land where you study, live, work, research, and travel.

Foreword

Keywords for Climate Imaginaries is a collaboration among students in the Spring 2023 Anthropology course, “Climate Change and Colonialism.” This zine includes 25 short essays focused around keywords that make the case for why understanding colonial ruptures and continuities is essential for analyzing climate change and inequality today. In 2022, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC] recognized colonialism’s contributions to the climate crisis, citing its “historical and ongoing patterns of inequity.” This was the first time that this group of climate experts had ever formally acknowledged colonialism, despite activists, writers, artists, and scholars from around the world emphasizing the devastations of colonial extractions. A sole focus on the present and future of the climate crisis obscures a deeper understanding of how the crisis came to be.

The contributors to this collection ask: How has colonialism, namely, colonial processes of domination, extraction, control, dispossession, knowledge-making, and violence, produced the climate crisis as well as enduring inequalities? How does the past intimately structure the possibilities of the present? How can an understanding of colonialism’s “historical and ongoing” effects deepen calls for climate justice? The essays analyze how climate change is intensified through unequal social, political, and economic distributions of harm and advantage, and how climate vulnerability is created and maintained. We historicize climate change and critically engage the consequences of colonial relations of power, while recognizing our own positions within these institutions.



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NOUNS



Kinship

Gitanjali Eva Sadana

Kinship relations are the care connections of land and people that colonialism and climate change have reformulated, ruptured, and provided new possibilities for. Native American scholar Vine Deloria Jr. argues that although it's impossible to generalize a Native view of the environment—for there is infinite diversity in the kin relations to nature that different Indigenous tribes have, as Native American populations are not a monolith—some central ideas about kinship are fundamental and shared [Deloria 1999, 224]. According to Deloria, manifesting a relationship to nature is how one lives in the universe; Indigenous people see themselves as part of completing a life cycle of a particular area home to their tribe alongside other life forms in a “cooperative enterprise” [Deloria 1999, 224; 227]. A specific connection exists between the lifestyle, religion, politics, and social organization of a tribe to the natural features of the region inhabited, not only because of the continuous generations of people living in those lands but due to the intimate relationship with the lands lived in or traveled through that are honored through ceremonies, rituals, and stories [Deloria 1999, 226]. There is a marked importance of kin relationships; one cannot violate or mix relationships between humans, plants, animals, and so on, as it would cause “disharmony” [Deloria 1999, 226].



If kinship is the way that Indigenous people know and relate to nature and the land, this is exemplified by Kyle Whyte's "coordination epistemology" and Janae Davis et al.'s theory of the "plot" [Whyte 2021, 53; Davis et al. 2019, 8]. Whyte sees coordination as emphasizing the importance of such kinship "moral bonds" as "mutual responsibilities" [Whyte 2021, 53]. Referring to the "capacity to renew important kin relations in ways that support coordination in response to change" is crucial to kinship and coordination rather than crisis or disaster thinking. Whyte elevates kinship as predicated on "relationships of care, consent, and reciprocity", communicating how necessary this worldview is in addressing climate change [Whyte 2021, 58; 59]. Davis et al.'s concept of the "plot" demonstrates coordination epistemologies, as the "plot" is a space that can be understood as encompassing kinship relations that were prohibited in other parts of a plantation for enslaved Africans and indentured workers; "it is within the plot that we find relational modes of being, multiple forms of kinship, and nonbinary ways of engaging the world that foster ethics of care, equity, resilience, creativity, and sustainability" [Davis et al. 2019, 8]. The plot can hence be seen as an imaginative and discursive space where kin relations are attended to, according to the principles of kinship and respect for nature and nonhumans that Deloria affirms.

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Anthropocene

Alexandra Kaminski

The Trouble With the Anthropocene: The Orbus Spike and “We”

The Anthropocene is a concept put forward first by Crutzen and Stoermer in 2000, and is propagated throughout climate discourse as the defining term of the era of climate change. The proposition of the Anthropocene is that of a current geologic age in which humans are affecting the Earth’s systems more than or equal to natural systems. The usefulness of this term, and more so the idea of the term, is its literality, where human beings have engraved themselves onto Earth—our presence is imprinted on the atmosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere, and biosphere. The idea of the term can act to highlight what is at stake—multispecies genocides, war, petrocapiatalism, overproduction and consumption, etc. Climate change is one of the many symptoms of human interactions on and with the Earth.

The western scientific canon expects a linear timeline, and as the anthropocene is proposed as a geologic era, it needs a start date: the first problem with the Anthropocene. Brought into conversation in *On the Importance of Date, or Decolonizing the Anthropocene*, a start date has implications beyond geology, and the Anthropocene Working Group’s start date of the mid-20th century and the ‘great acceleration’ is rooted in Western ideology [Davis and Todd 2017, 762]. This proposed start is poised to include all of the 20th century horrors—WWI and WWII, nuclear weaponry and testing, petrochemicals, Chernobyl— and the late-20th century proclamation that fossil fuels could cause climate change. Davis and Todd, “draw[ing] upon multiple Indigenous scholars who argue that the Anthropocene is not a new event, but is rather the continuation of practices of dispossession and genocide” propose a start date of 1610 coinciding with the colonization of the Americas [2017, 761]. This proposition seeks to make the relationship between the Anthropocene and colonialism explicit,

“assert[ing] it as a critical project that understands that the ecocidal logics that now govern our world are not inevitable or ‘human nature’,” but a continuation and symptom of a colonial legacy [Davis and Todd 2017, 763]. 1610 also aligns with the Columbian Exchange and the Orbus Spike, a climatologically significant dip in CO₂ and subsequent spike in reforestation— turning the “New World” into a carbon sink— occurring as a result of Native American genocide [Davis and Todd 2017, 764; Patel and Moore 2017, 162]. 1610 implicates colonialism, whereas the working group’s start date is centered on homogenization and a Eurocentric global narrative of sudden environmental impact, reproducing the “We” that is implied by and implies anthropos [Liboiron 2021, 23].

The second trouble with the Anthropocene is this “We”— anthropos points to the entirety of humanity as the cause and subject of a mass destruction which “We” have brought our planet to. Anthropos does not take into account the necessarily specific extraction networks, exploitative practices, and colonial legacies and present(s) or the actors that sustain capitalist and colonial ideology. The Anthropocene misses the protectors and benefactors of war, fracking, mining, land dispossession, ecocide, land exploitation, and cheap energy. More to the point, those targeted by these manifestations of colonialism are wrongfully included in anthropos or the “We”. Human domination over nature and our current ecological state is reflective of colonial ideology as a “set of contemporary and evolving land relations” that relies on genocide and access via ownership and dispossession [Liboiron 2021, 6; Callison 2020]. Access is necessitated by an idea of being able to “own” land, and thus dominate and control it. This idea fuels manifest destiny, indigenous genocide and forced removal, border-making, property law and theft, and property inheritance— all makings of colonialism. The anthropos or the “We” obscures this specificity, demanding a global ambiguous responsibility for exploitation, extraction, and petro capitalism. In response, capitalocene, chthulucene, and plantationocene [among others] have been proposed as alternate titles for the geologic era [Davis et al. 2018].

Capitalocene implicates the extractive nature of capitalism, including oil, pro-corporate lobbying, climate injustices, and ecocide for capital benefit in the climate crisis. While unburdening humanity in totality, this term simultaneously anthropomorphizes a human system, disengaging the human actors who brought capitalist ideology to its scale, and fails to track capitalism as a descendant of colonialism. Chthulucene, Donna Haraway's term originating from H.P. Lovecraft's Cthulhu— a mythical anthropoid-octopus creature— seeks to reveal multispecies stories and disengage the boundaries drawn between humans and nonhumans. Plantationocene presents the plantation, where a severance between human and land, racialized labor violence, genocide, and global ecocide calls to the beginning of a centuries-long colonial violence onto the Earth.

The creation and dating of the Anthropocene has immense implications for how we understand climate change and the current state of our being on Earth. The implications that accompany the 20th century dating erase human impact with environments that have been occurring for and known by indigenous communities for far longer than 100 years. Colonial legacy leads to a belief that “we” humans have suddenly landed in an eco-apocalyptic Anthropocene, obscuring that colonial violence, imperialism, and ongoing exploitations “have been ending worlds for as long as they have been in existence” [Yusoff 2022, Preface]. The idea of the Anthropocene— a geologic era in which human domination of the Earth is outweighing natural systems— is useful in understanding human impact on our planet. However, it can only be truthful and accountable when indigenous knowledge, colonialism in all its forms, multispecies relations, the problems with universality, and specified obligation are taken into account.

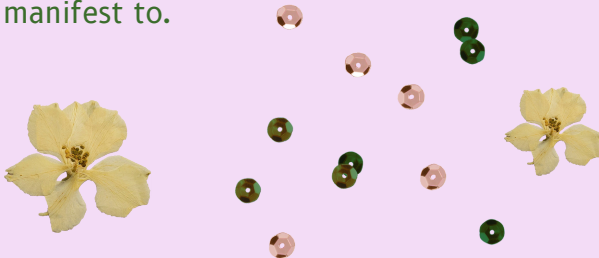
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Plantation

Julianna Lozada

The **plantation** is a plot of agricultural land in which enslaved people were purposely exploited for labor to generate capital, which formed the foundation of the global economy. In *Plantation Futures*, Katherine McKittrick expounds on George Beckford's thesis that the global economy that thrived on this plantation system relied on the "persistent underdevelopment" and "persistent poverty" of black life [McKittrick, 2013, p. 3]. McKittrick explains further, drawing on Beckford's thesis, that the plantation culminates in "long-standing, uneven racial geographies" also centering around the idea of the plantation system as "migratory", meaning certain characteristics of the plantation system move beyond the historical denotation of the plantation during slavery namely present in "the prison, the city, the resort" and in "agriculture, banking, and mining, in trade and tourism" [2013, pg. 3]. Despite the abolition of slavery in the United States in 1865 with the passage of the 13th amendment, and thus the abolition of the historical plantation; yet the migratory feature of the plantation, which McKittrick expounds upon, manifests in ongoing extractivist mode of development, which has resulted in the exploitation of the environment and present climate change crisis, which ultimately continues the "ongoing locus" of antiblack violence, whose communities suffer the full front of the climate crisis' effects. The persistence of plantation logics in its contemporary forms reveal important facts of the climate crisis; including where climate effects manifest and who they manifest to.



The plantation thrived on a set of norms that allowed for modern-day [migratory] manifestations of the plantation idea to exist. The exponential generation of capital in a plantation-based economy built up and allowed for colonial settlements to thrive. The plantation operated on a colonial-based logic that mapped a “normal way of life”, which was rooted in “racial condemnation” through “measuring different degrees of humanness and attaching different versions of the human to different places” [McKittrick, 2013, pg. 7]. The ‘migratory’ aspect of the plantation, or its manifestations in modern life, is “spatially evident” in the presence of and sites of “toxicity, environmental decay, pollution, and militarized action that are inhabited by impoverished communities” [McKittrick, 2013, pg.7]. Some of the ways in which the plantation dynamics manifests in contemporary sites are in prisons that operate on the same dynamics of racial surveillance and antiblack violence. Davis et al. argue that the prison and the disproportionate representation of black communities imprisoned embody “the plantation as an institution and modality of racial oppression” in service of “the colonial-racial, capitalist project” [2019, pg. 7]. The “degrees of humanness” [or lack thereof] that justified the labor & land exploitation for a plantation-based economy to thrive are manifested in present sites of environmental exploitation for the purpose of capital accumulation. The disposability of these communities, living in these sites of toxicity, are measured by the logic of “degrees of humanness”, drawing back to colonial logics that justified the plantation. The plantation, thus can be viewed as a larger system that created a set of norms that ultimately served as “the model and motor for the carbon-greedy machine-based factory system that is often cited as an inflection point for the Anthropocene” [Haraway, 2015, p. 162]. Several of the plantations that dominated St. Charles’ landscape alongside the Mississippi River in Louisiana have become the sites for petrochemical facilities, yet maintaining the exploitation of its environment and surrounding communities.

Coupled with the dehumanization of Black communities that allowed for their enslavement on the plantation; these remaining, migratory dynamics of the plantation maintain through persistent exploitation of the environment and continued anti-Black violence at the sites of environmental decay, toxicity, and pollution, all which have culminated in the climate crisis. The lack of attaching humanness to Black communities served as the logic for the construction of the plantation and exploitation of their people and environments. The migratory nature of the plantation and its manifestations in modern institutions, such as prisons and petrochemical facilities, have served to continually degrade the environment for similar purposes of extraction and capitalist gain at the expense of Black communities.

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Plantation(ocene)

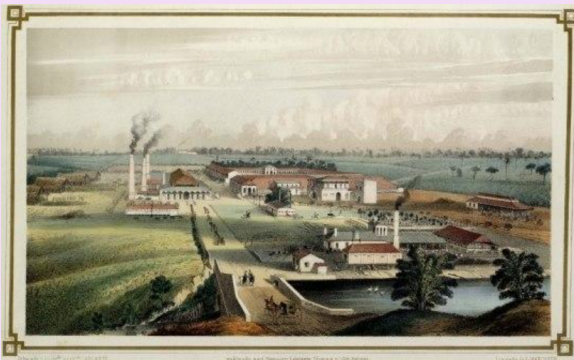
Victor Jandres Rivera

How the Plantationocene Can Teach Us About Climate Change & Colonization. The term was collectively generated by participants of a conversation on the Anthropocene at the University of Aarhus in 2014. The term was born from disagreement over the usage of the term Anthropocene when referring to the current geological epoch. Part of the discourse surrounds how it characterizes the current state of the world solely by its relationship with one species: *Homo sapiens*. The impact that humans have had on the current conditions of the planet is undeniable, but the homogenization of humanity into a singular culpable actor obscures the nuanced economic and racial systems inextricable from what we have dubbed the “Anthropocene.” In “Plantation Legacies,” Sophie Moore et al. illustrate how the phrase Plantationocene arose from a desire to center the role of racial oppression and wealth inequality in galvanizing climate change [Moore et al. 2]. Using the plantation as a locus for climate change illuminates the role of colonization and imperialism in erecting systems of dispossession, extraction, exploitation, and subjugation that continue to catalyze climate change. The relationship between climate change and colonization is elucidated by considering how the plantation economy depended on the subordination of enslaved persons and the transformation of land. Colonizers relied on racialized forced labor to sustain large-scale monoculture agrarian systems that devastated biodiversity and environmental integrity.

In “Plantation Futures,” Katherine McKittrick describes the existence of a plantation logic that maintains the ideological and material characteristics of plantation economies normally sequestered to the past [McKittrick 3]. This is a call to consider the “interlocking workings of human worth, race, space” [McKittrick 6] on plantations as a framework observable in other systems marginalizing Black communities. The intertwining of anti-blackness, racialized economies, segregated spaces, and dispossession didn’t conclude with emancipation.

Ideological and material underpinnings of the plantation economy are observable in contemporary “agriculture, banking, and mining, in trade, tourism, and across other colonial and postcolonial spaces—the prison, the city, the resort” [McKittrick 3]. The term Plantationocene attempts to demonstrate how this logic of racial oppression and environmental transformation is central to the exacerbation of climate change. From its conception, the term Plantationocene has highlighted multi-species entanglement and the relatedness of all organisms. The decentralization of humans within the multi-species network of life forms on the plantation is a pushback against the human exceptionalism plaguing characterizations of the Anthropocene label. However, in “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, ... Plantationocene?: A Manifesto for Ecological Justice in an Age of Global Crisis,” Janae Davis et al. take issue with the extent to which some proponents of the Plantationocene framework have decentralized human relations. Davis et al. caution against certain conceptualizations of the Plantationocene that contribute to a phenomenon they call “flattened multispecies ontology” [Davis et al. 5]. Davis et al. contend that certain framings of the Plantationocene overemphasize the relatedness between all life forms, which has the same effect of ignoring racial logic in discussions on climate change. Instead of homogenizing all of humanity into one oversimplified category, the term Plantationocene can overshoot the mark and result in a color-blind conception of human and non-human lifeforms as fellow “cogs in the wheels of capitalist destruction” [Davis et al. 5]. Furthermore, it is vital to note that Davis et al.’s critique of the Plantationocene is not an objection to considering the plantation as a conceptual framework. They explicitly stress the limitations in emerging scholarship on the Plantationocene because it fails to consider conversations on racial-sexual oppression and the implications of racial violence within colonial logic [Davis et al. 5]. A focus on racial politics in plantation life is imperative to understanding, “plantation presents” and “the conception and practice of socio-ecological justice and multispecies kinship” [Davis et al. 10].

In “Plantation Legacies,” Moore et al. explain the Plantationocene’s challenge to invoke “the species-level thinking of the Anthropocene ” [Moore et al. 6] to discuss how racialized power relations have sustained climate change over time. They contend that “racialized violence, land alienation, and species loss, are recurrent themes of the Plantationocene” [Moore et al. 8]. At first, Davis et al. ’s and Moore et al.’s conversations on the Plantationocene may seem contradictory due to how they characterize the role of multi-species kinship in discussions on racial logic. However, they both illuminate one of the most important tenets of the Plantationocene: a disallowance of the Anthropocene’s refusal to acknowledge the role of colonialism in climate change. The interrogation of the Plantationocene is demonstrative of the Black, Caribbean, and Indigenous scholarship available to place in conversation with the original conceptualization of the Plantationocene. It fosters conversations scrutinizing relationships of accountability and culpability. The Plantationocene offers a site of burgeoning theorization in which we can think about what “we” and “us” truly mean in a world built on racial and economic power relations.



Laplante, Eduardo. Ingenio Flor de Cuba. Lithography, 1857.

I chose this artwork because it encapsulates the industrial aspects of the plantation while also demonstrating how the land was transformed by monoculture. I know this lithography is from Cuba, but the photos and paintings by U.S. artists included vivid depictions of enslaved persons. I don’t want to incorporate graphic depictions into this project in case the art is distributed to a larger audience.

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Plot

Ruth Meschery-McCormack

To understand **climate change as the culmination of racial violence**, Janae Davis and various co-collaborators published the article “Anthropocene, Capitalocene, ... Plantationocene?: A Manifesto for Ecological Justice in an Age of Global Crises” to describe a new anthropological epoch called the “Plantationocene,” where the culmination of plantation systems due to western colonial expansion projects is the most tangible human impact on global climate. By placing the plantation as the structural center of climate change, we actively acknowledge the racial violence that developed through colonial systems. Davis et al work from within the Plantationocene and propose that the plots where enslaved people cultivated their own food and culture apart from the horror of the plantation can act as physical/spiritual space for internal cultural growth and a vision of future possibility.

In the essay “Plantation Futures,” Katherine McKittrick provides an example of the plot as a literary actor to advance creative action. McKittrick believes that it is not possible to leave behind the violence found in plantation systems, and as a result, progress is facilitated by creating a new definition of “humanness” that essentially understands the pain of the plantation, and reintegrates the plot as a mode of kinship and community growth. [McKittrick 2013, 9]. Plot as a literary mode exhibits a constant space of spiritual and physical nature that determines the way that climate justice grows within Black and Indigenous communities, both rural and urban.



The plot [literary] of novels, which rose in popularity in tangent with the growth of colonialism exist within and beyond the plantation where the colonial past/plantation and present/anti-colonial futures are integrated into the literary narrative to empower the plot as a system of future.

Historically, the plot was the space where enslaved people were able to grow and cultivate the crops that truly sustained the enslaved community, physically and culturally outside of the death in the mono-crop plantation system. In “Plantation Futures”, McKittrick pulls from an essay by Sylvia Wynter titled “Novel and History, Plot and Plantation,” to show that the plot “... spatialized what would be considered impossible under slavery; the actual growth of narratives, food, and cultural practices that materialize the deep connections between blackness and the earth and foster values that challenge systematic violence” [Ibid.,10]. McKittrick does not propose the plot to imagine an easy solution to the racial violence predicated on the plantation, but rather offers a system where the plot identifies the normalizing and violent maneuvers of the plantation and acknowledges our collective participation in and rhetorical commitment to reproducing this system as a natural, inevitable, and normal way of life. Above all, the plot [literary] imagines the plot-and-plantation as a new analytical ground that puts forth a new knowledge system which is, “Produced outside the realms of normalcy, thus rejecting the very rules of the system that profits from racial violence, and in this envisions not a purely oppositional narrative, but rather a future where a correlated human species perspective is honored”[Ibid., 11]. When the plot exists as a simultaneous action, as a physical agricultural area and a literary process, it becomes a creative space that allows narrative nuance and expression to be shared within Black communities and expand as a new mode of growth required to disassemble plantation logics.

The plot represents the physical sites of resistance to plantation logics, and describes a process where “Plotting within and against the plantation is a practice of cultivating life and kin that challenges the intertwined death-dealing logics of racism and ecocide,” [Davis, et al., 3]. In order to move forward with anti-colonial actions, the definition of plot as a literary is an expression of creative resistance centered around the narratives of Black and Indigenous people of color.

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Border Imperialism

Madeline Fields

Border imperialism is a phrase used to describe a confluence of systems - political, economic, spatial, temporal, geographical, social - that are used to control and manage the movement of people in ways that maintain “global asymmetries of power” [Walia, 2022]. Specifically, these systems include but are not limited to, racial-capitalism and colonialism, in which states are politically, economically, culturally subjugated to serve the interests of larger global powers and transnational corporations. Border imperialism is, as Walia defines, the output of four mechanisms.

[1] Enforced or Coerced “extractions of capitalism and colonialism” [consider the agricultural or petrol industries], alongside “fortification of the border” [Walia, 2013]

[2] “The criminalization of migration” and sociocultural ossification of migrants within society [Walia, 2013]

[3] “racialized hierarchy of national and imperial identity” which further cements [2], as citizenship and allegiance to the state become intertwined with colonial concepts of race and social difference [Walia, 2013]

[4] “legalized, state-mediated exploitation of the labor of migrants by capitalist interests” [Consider Western foreign policy that consistently returns to the Global South for exportation of goods and services to a global elite] [Walia, 2013]

It is important to reflect on why we may choose to use this word, as opposed to other terms that are conceptually adjacent but employ different epistemologies, or modes of thought. Using the term border imperialism shifts the narrative surrounding migration, movement and its related struggles towards its causes and structural components [Walia, 2013]. Neel Ahuja elaborates on this concept in their book *Planetary Specters*, which focuses specifically on narratives of the “climate migrant” [Ahuja, 2021].

Ahuja puts forth that these “stories of personal tragedy linked to images of dark-skinned migrants—mainly women and children from the Global South—struggling to maintain adequate shelter and food in settings of ecological crisis homogenize different situations of social conflict and vulnerability into a narrative in which geological and atmospheric processes are positioned as the true roots of displacement” [Ahuja, 2021]. These characterizations of the “other” invoke many epistemologies that shield colonial structures from criticism and obfuscate the responsibility of global hegemonic centers, such as universalism and white saviorism.

To locate these narratives in commonplace Western media, one does not have to look very far. In the article, “Where Will Everyone Go”, ProPublica and the New York Times present a data project which produces a migration forecast of sorts, speculating on where people experiencing mass displacements may end up. Their paper uses photography and vivid storytelling to paint South American migrants as constituents of a crisis, beholden to the reckoning of a climatological force that seems dislocated from an intentional or systemic cause.

The discussion of the climate migrant, then, is pivoted towards modes of securitization or labor agendas - as predicted by Walia’s four structures of border imperialism. Propublica and NYT’s social analysis of this data is then framed under the contexts of political instability and guarantees of a Western labor force: “As the United States and other parts of the global North face a demographic decline, for instance, an injection of new people into an aging workforce could be to everyone’s benefit” [Abrahm Lustgarten, ProPublica, 2020].

One element of border imperialism, as it connects to capitalism, is that product and labor are allowed to move more freely across borders than people. This is pertinent to the conversation of climate change and colonialism. This is in contrast to the migrant, who is excluded from the legal protections and freedom of movement afforded to the Global North’s imported luxuries.

That is, unless they are willing to provide labor as a member of a working class non citizenry where they are extremely vulnerable to abuse and wage theft. Thus, we see that a labor force is generated intentionally by Western migrant policy - as policy makers turn their attention to migration policy and border securitization, they continually turning a blind eye to the continuation of Western imperialism and extractivism, which fuel the climate crisis and create vulnerabilities particularly in the Global South that will perpetuate a cycle that generates guaranteed labor.

This is reflected in narratives of the “climate migrant”. The NYT frames their discussion of climate migrants such that this importation of labor is viewed positively and uncritically, as economically beneficial to the Global North. Hailing a neoliberal model as the pathway forward, the NYT forces a foreclose on other liberatory futures that do not envision a perpetual adherence to capitalism as a solution to the very problems it creates. As we move forward in conversations of Climate Change and Colonialism, it is important to bear in mind how a term like border imperialism can provide us alternative frameworks of thought to dominant Western narrative that stunt our understanding of human movement, especially in the context of climate change.

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Making Kin

Megan Yang



Kinship relations are the moral bonds that are defined by “care, consent, and reciprocity” and take time to nurture and develop [Whyte 2020, 59]. Indigenous communities have used kinship relationships to achieve coordination in times of displacement [Whyte 2020, 58]. Coordination was achieved by kinship networks which enabled “extended housing and food for many people, health and healing practices and advice, a location for ceremony, emotional and spiritual support, entertainment and transportation and communication resources” [Whyte 2020, 59-60]. Making kin thus is the “everyday practice of [e.g., reflexivity, self-discovery, creativity, solidarity work etc.]” that centers belonging and involves cooperation in the “breeches of power as norms” [Davis 2019, 10].

Within plantations, kinship relations took a role of resistance in a place defined by a foundation of an “uneven colonial racial economy” and slavery [Davis 2019, 7]. The violent racial geography of plantations were resisted through the hidden history of plots. Plots were a space within the plantation where slaves would grow their own foods and thus sustain an alternative way of living. Plots brought forward black spatial and ecological thought and practice as plot ecology was defined by the ways in which “the enslaved cultivated alternative ways of being while resisting” [Davis 2019, 7].

The liberatory acts of cultivating multi species networks while self making off of the sustenance derived, created a new social order in plots amidst the context of plantations. This sustenance articulated through the networked kinship relations redefined the land as a unifying source, and reconceptualized black narratives.

The history of these plots enable an imagining for a better life, a re-contextualization of the current framework, [i.e. long distance capital investments, ghettos and gated communities, free trade and export zones] that is an extension of plantations [Davis 2019, 6]. The embodiment of self within the plot in relation to differentiated biodiverse species removes black urban presence from being presented as solely victimized and dispossessed. So by envisioning the plot, alterable geographic practices are made imaginable and possible. The embodied ecologies of kinship relations generate responses to the constant moving and changing of the world, combating the constraints and immobility of plantation dynamics. The redefining of self on the plot through kin relation practices brings ‘spiritual and material nourishment connecting families to past, present, future’ and resists the systemic oppressive structures of displacement, and dispossession [Davis 2019, 8].

Kinship’s geographic spatialization relations entails nurture, care, and inherent valued geographies, resisting the conception of wastelands.

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Wastelands

Megan Yang

Colonial western forces labeled **places inconceivable to their environmental imagination** as Wastelands. Wastelands are characterized as barren, uncultivated lands that are uninhabitable. Sacrificial land that is “unproductive, unappealing, and undesirable” [Voyle 2015, 7]. The colonial western characterization of land in this way detaches the fostering of kinship relationships, instead establishing an entitlement of the land by allowing the extraction of raw materials and dumping of waste [Voyle 2015, 9]. For example, mangroves in the U.S. Virgin Islands were labeled “cesspools of disease” to justify mangrove eradication programs and make room for Northern oil refineries and petrochemical plants [Bond 2022, 158].

To prescribe worthlessness to a place and therefore label it pollutable and disposable extends to the racialization of these marked places [Voyles 2015, 9]. What rendered a landscape disposable was only an extension of the conceptualization of people as inferior and thus disposable. Plantation extractions were justified from the portrayal of spaces as wastelands and marginalized communities were rendered dead due to their supposed lifeless geographies [McKittrick 2013, 7].

The waste-landing colonial project of extractive relationships with the land focuses on profitability and measures value of the land on the monetary gain attainable. This extractive relationship erases the finite-ility of resources and kinship relationships perpetuating lifeless geographies [Ahuja 2001].



Within the colonial extractive relationship, identity is striped ideologically as the body is rendered exploitable and marginal. The social construction and materiality of spaces are redefined by wasteland practices, but the meanings we apply to the space and our identity within them also defines the spaces we are in [Voyles 2015, 17].

Our applications to space ensures that we can't be alienated from the land. To connect back to kinship ties, Whyte explains that "Indigenous realism, ...entails that we, members of humankind, accept our inalienable responsibilities as members of the planets complex life system, as well as our inalienable rights" [Whyte 2020, 60]. To reshape our land relations we have to undo the systematically maintained processes of land dispossession and how it coincides with who acts entitled to the land and who uses it [Liboiron 2021, 9]. It is our right and responsibility to maintain kinship relationships to deconstruct colonial entitlement and thus wastelanding processes.

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Capitalocene

Amiziah Vaughn

The Capitalocene is defined as an “**alternative conception** of [the catalyst for our current socio-ecological era] that highlights the destructive and accelerating logics of resource depletion and petrochemical dependency within capitalism as a world system” [Davis 2]. The theory of the Capitalocene is a response to the very popular terminology of the ‘Anthropocene’ as the descriptor for our current era of rapid, industry driven climate degradation. The Anthropocene essentially purports that humanity as a species has exploited and destroyed many of the planet’s natural regulatory systems and ecosystem services, such that we are now living in an age of climate disasters and dwindling resources that threaten our current way of life and potentially humanity at large.

However, critics of the Anthropocene theory argue that it ignores the nuances of socioeconomic oppression that have created an unequal distribution of the benefits from industrial exploitation and the consequences of climate change. The principles of capitalism value economic prosperity and growth over everything else, including long term sustainability and short term equity.



Thus, the term Capitalocene is an acknowledgement that the current state of the climate is not the responsibility of all humanity, but rather of the people and corporations who maintain and promote industrial expansion and capitalist values without regard for consequences that do not directly affect them. As we discussed in class, the United States is a prime example of how industrialization and capitalism can function to produce wealth and power. However, in order to achieve this, many of the polluting industries and the subsequent waste produced are exported to other, less affluent countries who are in pursuit of the capitalist dream. This reroutes more extreme environmental effects to those regions, while the US continues to enjoy the benefits of their labor and products. In the long term, every part of the world has and will continue to see the disastrous consequences of climate change. However, the organized exploitation of less economically powerful countries is compounded by a lack of funding to create preserving infrastructure, leaving large groups of people at an extreme disadvantage in the face of climate change at the hands of the capitalist system.

Environmental Justice is the concept of producing equitable and safe places to live, work and play for all people regardless of socioeconomic status. In the context of anthropogenic climate change, environmental justice is a critical factor when considering the location and regulations around coastal infrastructure, green space accessibility, and industrially produced Superfund sites among other conditions. The most harsh impacts and consequences of global warming, pollution and sea level rise often affect lower income, communities of color, who are underrepresented in the socio-political decision making that dictates how the consequences of climate degradation are decided.

Beyond the surface level negotiations of space and funding that inform the decisions behind who is most heavily exposed to unfavorable conditions, there is also an underlying systematic predisposition toward the subjugation of specific groups to the areas and fields of work that are undesirable to those with more privilege. Oftentimes whiteness, affluence, and land ownership are critically beneficial for determining one's exposure to climate disasters and unsafe conditions. In Davis' *Manifesto for Ecological Justice*, he explains that this privilege is the function of centuries of plantation logics that undergird many of our current political and economical institutions and are predisposed to oppress and sacrifice the well being of poor people of color for the gain and comfort of the ruling class [Davis 10].

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VERBS



Land

Gitanjali Eva Sadana

Land is key to conceptualizing both colonialism and climate change; it is the basis for which colonialism operates and is the location of ecological impacts of the climate crisis.

Understanding Land in this way is in sharp contrast to how land has been conceptualized by settler colonialists, as described by Amitav Ghosh, Nick Estes, and Ruth Wilson Gilmore. Land is a resource framed by colonists in its potentiality for extraction; and as such, the “pillage of our planet’s land, water, and mineral resources” can be attributed to settler colonialism and racial capitalism that are premised on the “sacrifice” of land [Estes et al. 2021, 256; 258]. The current global systems of free market capitalism, incarceration, and enforced poverty are reliant on the extraction and exploitation of land [Estes et al. 2021, 256]. This is true in the present and historically—Ghosh demonstrates how precisely the Dutch colonists view of land in the Bandanese islands in the rendered “The Earth [as] exhausted, but not only of its resources, but of its meaning” through tactics of omnicide wherein land is to be conquered and depleted [Ghosh 2021, 77]. Land is the site where violent logics of colonialism are enacted; the Dutch settlers are ready to stop at nothing in order to obtain land and resources that do not belong to them and hence they engage in genocide and burning, ultimately with “the desire to destroy everything” [Ghosh 2021, 14; 75].



Indigenous scholars Max Liboiron and Mishuana Goeman emphasize the many land relations of soil, air, water, animals, plants, that include the memories, responsibilities, and obligations of humans [Liboiron 2021, 43]. Liboiron interestingly makes a distinction between land and Land with a capital ‘L’, explaining that Land, capitalized, is the shorthand for land relations in a specific, unique Land, and not the universal or common land [Liboiron 2021, 42]. In this sense, Land is the “action” of Indigenous kin relations to nature, it’s a verb, it “never settles” [Liboiron 2021, 43]. Land invokes responsibility, rights, sovereignty, and belonging; it goes beyond the physical homelands and forms the basis of social, economical, and political relationships [Goeman 2015, 71]. Maintaining relationships with land is central to Native identity, and the process of making land meaningful is through “personal interactions” and “communal memories” because “land is a mnemonic device”, a site of stories [Goeman 2015, 73; 75]. Experiences of land are experiences of the self–Goeman refers to “topophilia”, the affective bond between people and place, as best describing this relationship [Goeman 2015, 72; 76]. As such, this conceptualization of land resists settler colonialism’s dominant framework of conquest and extraction.

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Settler Colonialism/Containment

Julián Pérez

I encountered the concept of **settler colonialism** a few years ago in one of my first anthropology classes. However, I found the best definition for it to be in Kyle Whyte's *Is it Colonial Deja Vu: Indigenous Peoples and Climate Injustice*. He explains that "Settler colonialism refers specifically to a system [or structure] of oppression by which one society settles the territories of another society." [Whyte 2017, 5] Understanding the systemic reach of settler colonialism is important because it allows us to address larger problems like climate change from the root. Whyte furthers his definition by stating that "the structure[s] of oppression [caused by settler colonialism] involve the settler society seeking to fully establish itself in that territory according to its own cultural and political systems which requires erasing the Indigenous population." [Whyte 2017, 5] Settler colonialism specifically positions itself in opposition to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), remaining centered on the sociopolitical capital of whiteness that it was founded on. As Patrick Wolfe explains in Amitav Ghosh's *The Nutmeg Curse*, "invasion was not an event but a structure." [Ghosh 2021, 69] Settler colonialism demonstrates a continued investment into the colonial powers of eurocentricity and racism that displace ancestral knowledge of land-stewardship that is characteristic to Indigenous populations. Instead of promoting a unifying relationship between humans and the environment, the capitalist nature of settler-colonialism prioritizes its goals of domination over the preservation of life on Earth.



Understanding that settler colonialism is a living structure of oppression, it is important to pay attention to the specific ways in which it employs said oppression—*containment* is one such way. Whyte expands on this term as well, defining containment as a “settler colonial strategy [that] engenders cultural and political institutions designed to inhibit or ‘box in’ Indigenous capacities to adapt to environmental change.” [Whyte 2017, 5] The idea of “boxing in” Indigenous people from the possibility of continuing the protection of their ancestral homelands is crucial to eliminating any hope for a future outside the reach of settler colonialism, thus discouraging a push towards change. Settler colonialism is basically one big mind game manifested into real-world factors that affect our day-to-day. Containment manifests as an industrial approach to colonialism, encouraging the continued abuse of land for economic benefits. Whyte specifically outlines the fact that “strategic institutions of containment were used by the U.S to facilitate the proliferation of extractive industries, such as coal mining and oil drilling, large-scale agriculture, deforestation, and the creation of large urban areas—in short, the drivers of today’s ordeal with anthropogenic climate change.” [Whyte 2017, 5] When reading about this term, I couldn’t help but notice the actively malicious intent of containment. What was even more disheartening was understanding that it is perpetuated—socially, politically, and economically—as a means of retaining power. As a result, it is extremely difficult to work towards a comprehensive addressing of climate change without first dismantling socially mitigating factors like containment and, ultimately, settler colonialism at large.

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Cognitive Colonization

Renata Happle

Cognitive coloniality perniciously permeates our culture – dominant narratives, Western epistemologies, hierarchies of value, and norms – as value-sets that empowered and enforced empires now live in systems of knowledge, ways of knowing, and structures of power. Introduced to us by Farhana Sultana, it enacts and enforces colonial ideology through the individual as it dictates what is knowable and what has value, co-constituted with epistemic violence in both knowledge production and valuation of expertise [Sultana 2022, 6]. It is visible within “Western hegemonization of climate narratives, financing, and solution” and inextricably linked to the standardization of Eurocentric knowledge production, white supremacy, and ‘methodological whiteness’ being baselines for education, training, policy-making, and public discourse on climate [Sultana 6]. In action, cognitive colonization looks like internalization of white supremacist ideology, with the desire to ‘fix’ the ‘third world’ or engaging with white saviorism [Sultana 6].

Cognitive coloniality is counteracted with engaging in ‘ontological disobedience,’ which attempts to overcome the harmful implications of othering and predominant colonial discourse [Sultana 6]. Challenging this epistemology requires confronting intersections of violence that feed off of each other, as the colonial matrix of power is reinforcing, but can be unwound through pluriversality, or recognizing the co-existence of alternative ways of knowing and being [Sultana 6].

By decolonizing your mind, you must confront ideologies and ingrained power hierarchies that are evident in policies, events, media, and everyday life – reworking it in different ways to encompass the diversity of thought and knowledge needed to overcome the anthropocene.

Disempowering internalized coloniality can look like radical self love, joy, and community expression, coalition building and allyship, recentring your own narrative, relishing in what you've been taught to hate.

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Terraforming

Maddy Liberman

Dominant conservation movements have often taken it for granted that in order to protect the environment from harm and destruction, it must be locked away from people—in particular, Indigenous people. For example, when colonial and neo-colonial regimes created national parks across Africa in the 20th century, they displaced thousands of Indigenous people who hunted and grew food in the proposed park areas in the name of conservation. These people were accused of destroying or mismanaging the “natural” landscape [Blanc 2020]. In this way the conservation movement embodies Greg Barton and Max Liboiron’s characterization of “‘environmentalism [as] police action,” which suppresses Indigenous and non-dominant ways of using and shaping land [Liboiron 2021, 12].

On the other hand, Western narratives often valorize white people who shape their environment. The concept of terraforming, literally “land-making” or “land-molding,” was coined by American science fiction writer Jack Williamson in a 1942 novella, but it was already a theme in many Western science fiction texts [Ghosh 2021, 53]. Terraforming is officially defined as a way of engineering the landscape of other planets in order to make them habitable and cultivable [Oxford English Dictionary]; it is the maximum possible amount of human interference in an environment. In his 2021 book *The Nutmeg’s Curse*, Ghosh historicizes terraforming on our own planet and situates it in Western history, rather than envisioning a distant imagined future. North American settlers, he argues, terraformed the landscape from the 1600s on by taking Indigenous land, clearing its forests, and attempting to discipline it with farms and settlements, all in the hope of creating “neo-Europes” [55].

Terraforming is incredibly violent. It is a way of waging total war on an environment and people by destroying the existing natural resources in order to create a new landscape.

For example, Anglo-American settlers decimated those who did not fit the European model by purposely spreading deadly diseases, in addition to clear-cutting forests and overhunting game, which gradually made many Native American populations' way of life impossible and harmed vast ecosystems. Although dominant conservation movements are often silent about colonialism, they use the devastating implications of Western colonial terraforming to justify conserving lands from Indigenous people who "mismanage" them and from human pollution more broadly [Liboiron 2021, 11]. This was a popular discourse during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, when reports showed that emissions had drastically declined and some wildlife populations became more active during the "anthropause," or the interruption in human activities during the lockdowns [Rasmussen 2021; Rutz et. al 2020, 1156]. Many conservationists continue to speak of universally withdrawing from the natural environment, allowing nature to heal from this "human" [but in reality, capitalist and colonialist] damage.

But as Potawatomi writer, philosopher, and environmentalist Kyle Whyte explains, environmental modification is not unique to Anglo-American settlers or to industrialized, capitalist Western countries. Whyte explains that in the "seasonal round," the Potawatomi adapt their social organization to environmental changes throughout the year. He writes, "'Anthropogenic' environmental change is not new as an idea nor does it date to the invention of Western machines or technologies. Potawatomi and other Anishnaabe/Neshnabé societies directly attempt to cultivate ecosystems, using the institutions and 'technologies' of the seasonal round [...] so that there would be ecological conditions characterized by sufficient abundance of plants and animals" [Whyte 2017, 4].

Indigenous people such as the Potawatomi controlled their environments long before the arrival of European settlers through practices such as tree girdling (intentionally killing certain trees) and controlled burning in order to increase the proportion of fruit- and nut-bearing trees [Maenza-Gmelch 2023]. Native Americans modified their environment in a collaborative process, rather than trying to raze and rebuild it.

Is this not an example of “land-making” or “land-molding”? In discussions about good land relationships, we can expand the definition of terraforming beyond the creation of “neo-Europes” that Ghosh describes. In doing so, settlers can recognize and practice terraforming that aligns with Indigenous principles of the seasonal round and cooperates with our local environments. Whyte writes, “In the seasonal round, we have an example of anthropogenic activities that are not in themselves ignorant of the tight coupling of human cultural and political systems with ecological conditions” [Whyte 2017, 3]. This “tight coupling” of humans and nature directly opposes the European modern era’s philosophical nature-culture divide [see entry on “kinship”]. What would a future look like where dominant environmental movements encouraged a relationship of kinship, not containment, in terraforming our home on Earth?

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Moves to Innocence

Charlotte Slovin

Coined by Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang in their 2012 essay ***Decolonization is not a metaphor***, moves to innocence can be understood as “strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all” [Tuck & Yang 2012, 10]. Moves to innocence are ways of absolving settler culpability and guilt in the face of decolonial critique by attempting to reorient relations with the colonized.

These moves to innocence are categorized into six different forms: settler nativism, settler adoption fantasies, colonial equivocation, the “free your mind, the rest will follow” logic, asterisk/at risk people framing, and reoccupation and urban homesteading [Tuck & Yang 2012, 10-28]. Settler nativism is the claim of the long-lost Indigenous ancestor that gives the settler a claim to native identity [Tuck & Yang 2012, 10]. Settlers use settler nativism to claim that they are not part of the issue but rather blameless given their native roots. These claims are usually made through blood quantum tests, the argument that native identity is only racial and can be traced by blood rather than through tradition and connection in conjunction with some form of familial relation [Tuck & Yang 2012, 12]. Second, settler adoption fantasies are the idea that a settler can become native by being “taken in by” or adopting “native practices” of some sort [Tuck & Yang 2012, 13-14]. Historically, they are tied to a fantasy of replacing native populations by becoming them. The third move to innocence is colonial equivocation, the move that tries to remove settler guilt by claiming that other forms of injustice are acts of colonialism, and as such other groups that face injustice or oppression cannot be at fault for colonialism [Tuck & Yang 2012, 17].

Fourth is the “free your mind, the rest will follow” logic, the ways in which intellectualizing has substituted for material action. Although thinking is important, if no action is attached to it colonial practices will continue [Tuck & Yang 2012, 20]. The fifth move to innocence is the asterisk/at risk people framing. This framing tends to arise when counting and accounting for native populations. Indigenous people are deemed as both an afterthought and at risk of disappearance. These characterizations set native populations up on a path to inevitable disappearance, as they are not factored into demographic studies and counts and when they are, they are seen as in need of saving since there are “so few of them.” The final move to innocence articulated by Tuck and Yang is reoccupation and urban homesteading, movements [like Occupy] that try to absolve guilt by “reclaiming” land without considering decolonialism and “practice [the act] of re-settling urban land in the fashion of self-styled pioneers in a mythical frontier” [Tuck & Yang 2012, 23-28].

Given the interconnected nature of climate change and colonialism, we must look at instances where moves to innocence allow for colonialism to continue and perpetuate climate change. Innocence has also been explored by Max Liboiron and Amitav Ghosh. Liboiron’s explores innocence in the context of action, how even good intentions can become moves to innocence when action is deferred. Liboiron presents an alternative of non-deferral, the “commitment to act now,” to ensure responsibility and good intentions set out do not become moves to innocence [Liboiron 2021, 22]. In the same vein as Tuck and Yang’s concept of colonial equivocation, Amitav Ghosh explores innocence in the context of British colonialism.

By claiming victimhood to Dutch violence, the British argued that this absolved any violence they enacted upon others [Ghosh 2021, 43]. In spaces where conversations around decolonial methods to addressing climate change are being had, it is important to ask who has power, who has agency, and what structures persist through moves to innocence.

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A purple flower with a green stem and leaves, set against a light purple background. The flower is in the foreground, and the background is a solid light purple color.

CONDITIONS AND QUALITIES

Terminality

Charlotte Slovin

The psychological understanding and idea that an end to all humanity is coming, looming over humanity in some near future, prompting the need for a saving of the human species.

Terminality follows assumptions and logics of linear timescales that deprioritize the past and consistently view the present as new and novel [Whyte 2021, 53-55, see: presentism]. In turn, terminality creates a problem where humanity does not utilize past experiences to demystify the novelty of each event or crisis it is faced with. Viewing each crisis as “the end” and novel makes each instance an exception to the rule. Terminality is used as a justification to act rashly, and unjustly, in the name of a crisis that may or may not even exist.

Additionally, while terminality might be rhetorically powerful, no universal “end” to humanity exists. Anthropologist Farman Abou writes: “When people invoke or imagine the end of the world, they are generally imagining the end of their world as the end of the world” [Farman 2020]. With conflict and crisis ever-present in the world, logics of terminality are brought into question in terms of representation; end of the world for who, and who decides when?

In the context of climate change, terminality arises in the way climate is presented. “The climate crisis” and apocalyptic narratives around climate are common ways climate change is framed to garner attention and action. When climate change is looked at through the lens of terminality, mitigation of crisis is prioritized rather than the longer-timescale relations and practices of engaging with the natural world. By focusing on terminality, these short-term moments of crisis, we fail to work towards environmental justice and harm reduction, reifying practices that lead to the supposed crisis in the first place.

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Universality

Shailee Sran

When discussing and defining the climate crisis, a common critique among scholars and scientists involves the **dangers of universality**. Framing modern climate change as a universal human experience not only assumes that the Western experience of climate change is hegemonic, but implies environmental pollution is inherent to human society. This erases the disproportionate effects of climate change on minorities and the Global South, and obfuscates historical and contemporary power imbalances and responsibilities [Sultana 2022, 5].

For Indigenous people, for example, harmful anthropogenic changes to the environment began when settler colonialism did. Land practices practiced by Indigenous people involved careful stewardship of land and maintained kinship relations with animals and plants [Whyte 2017, 2]. Environmental destruction and the disruption of land relations were products of colonialism. When the colonists established plantations, they built an industrial agricultural landscape that decimated local ecosystems and people alike, simplified and homogenized landscapes in order to mass produce crops, imported foreign plants and people, and ultimately produced global environmental change [Davis et al 2019, 4]. The colonial influence on the environment even extends to the atmosphere: the genocide of Indigenous people and resultant regrowth of forests produced a significant decrease in atmospheric carbon dioxide, referred to as the Orbis Spike [Davis and Todd 2017, 766].



In other words, climate change isn't caused by the inherent greed or wastefulness of humans, and all humans aren't equally responsible for or affected by environmental pollution. Climate change originated in processes of racialized capitalism and colonialism: a small number of powerful nations and corporations bear much of the responsibility, and a universal narrative does not hold them accountable. Moreover, equating all human experiences of environmental change fails to account for the way histories and structures of colonialism, racism, and capitalism have left populations unequally vulnerable to climate change's effects.

Last but not least, universal narratives are insufficient in recognizing specific responsibilities. This refers less to holding Western nations accountable, and more to recognizing the specific obligations all humans have towards their environment, shaped by land relations that are specific to communities or individuals [Liboiron 2021, 24]. Appropriate responses to climate change will vary depending on the local ecosystem and needs of the local population, and a universal, top-down approach to climate may harm more than help.

Before taking this class, I accepted the universal framing of climate change: after all, we all lived on the same planet, and we would all be affected by global warming. In other words, I equated universality with unity. However, universality instead can generalize the effects and causes of global warming, erasing accountability from global to local levels. Moreover, obligation cannot exist without specificity, and specificity requires the acknowledgement of difference [Liboiron 2021, 24]. Solidarity is necessary to restore the planet, but solidarity can and must exist without universalism.



Temporality

Shailee Sran

Going into the class, I thought the biggest problem regarding climate change was convincing people that the issue was severe enough to require immediate, drastic action. The next twelve years – based on the timeline offered by the IPCC’s 1.5-degree-warming report – will be crucial in determining the future of the planet, and I, as well as many of my peers, remain baffled and furious by the lack of urgency demonstrated by the government. However, numerous authors in this course have warned that urgent solutions are not necessarily comprehensive, and in fact may make the situation worse.

Kyle Whyte argues that current rhetoric on climate change is shaped by a **crisis epistemology**, wherein the issue is assumed to be unprecedented and urgent [Whyte 2020, 53]. These presumptions imply the need to become solutions-oriented in a way believed to differ from how solutions were enacted previously [Whyte 2020, 54]. Furthermore, the sense of imminent and unique disaster makes it possible to willfully forget previous lessons taught by crises, and suspend typical concerns about morality and justice [Whyte 2020, 52]. For example, in the United States, Indigenous people are excluded from US clean energy bills even as hydroelectric dams are built on their lands, sustaining and reenacting colonial systems of displacement, exclusion, and coercion. [Whyte 2020, 56]. The climate crisis masks the immoral continuation of colonial power relations.

Crisis epistemologies are not the only harmful temporal frameworks. The modern news cycle and the internet have created a culture in which news is sensational and immediate. Violence is understood to be highly visible, newsworthy because it is event focused and time bound [Nixon 2011, 3]. This serves to erase what Nixon calls slow violence: violence that occurs over long time spans and out of sight, facilitated by systems built by long-forgotten individuals and thus dispersed anonymously, that is not only attritional but exponential [Nixon 2011, 3].

Nixon emphasizes that much of the power of slow violence derives from the unequal attention given to spectacular and unspectacular time: the slow-paced and open-ended nature of slow violence makes it difficult to contain, smoothes the way for collective amnesia, and places it inconveniently out of alignment with election cycles, until ultimately the violence itself is decoupled from its original causes by the workings of time [Nixon 2011, 6-11].

Finally, positioning the climate crisis as an urgent and unprecedented issue does not take into account the fact that many populations in the Global South have already dealt with severe effects of environmental change [see the previous discussion of universality]. In fact, for some populations anthropogenic environmental damage has occurred in cycles, caused by repeated demonstrations of settler colonialism [Whyte 2017, 7]. Reducing climate change to an upcoming apocalypse on an abstract universal timeline means that presently suffering populations do not receive the assistance they require now [Farman 2020, 3].

In conclusion, while climate change is undoubtedly an urgent issue, we have to be careful that the temporal framework through which we comprehend the climate crisis is not only characterized by urgency, lest we continue to enact and obscure colonial power relations. When we suggest climate solutions, we must be conscious of their temporality.

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Incommensurability

Genevieve Cabadas

Incommensurability, a term coined in Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's "**Decolonization is Not a Metaphor**", provides us with a conceptual tool for understanding the multi-pronged nature of necessary solutions and changes to live in a world that is decolonized, that is socially, politically, and economically equitable, and that has ended extractive colonial violence, dispossession, control, and domination – all of which are themes of our course. To be incommensurable is to have no common measure [Merriam-Webster]. Tuck and Yang use incommensurability as a concept to highlight the fact that "decolonization" gets extractively applied and utilized in discourse that it has no place being in. Further, these terms should only be used in conversations about decolonizing, which is explicitly defined as the "repatriation of Indigenous lands and life" [Tuck & Yang 1]. What the concept of incommensurability asks of us is that we acknowledge that there is not a singular action for which we can "all" advocate for and which will "save" or "redeem" our planet and our humanity. Rather than using the term "decolonize" and applying it to all social justice projects, incommensurability suggests that people must recognize what is "distinct" of these movements and must advocate for decolonization alongside the various other changes that are necessary to live in a different world. Colonialism is a structure that has been and continues to be perpetuated across time and space, and incommensurability clarifies the relationship between climate change and colonialism by highlighting that dismantling one system of colonial violence is not the equivalent of dismantling all institutions or systems of colonial violence.

Put more simply, decolonizing is one action out of many that must be completed, in parallel, in order to create a different world. Additionally, decolonizing will not immediately end climate change in the same way that switching to renewables will not immediately end climate change - climate change is a colonial structure that requires a multitude of solutions [decolonizing, energy transitions, reparations, amongst others] in order to change our present and future conditions. Max Liboiron, in “Pollution is Colonialism”, reaffirms this in their explanation that incommensurability extends into obligations to varying communities. Liboiron asserts that the specific responsibilities and obligations, which may exist in contradiction to one another, which may contain different values and end-goals, are no more or less important than another because of their incommensurability. Incommensurability is generative for me because, in a time where I think so many people are asking “where do we go from here?”, it suggests as a framework that we take part in something, it enables individuals to partake in collective action and removes what I consider to be a kind of “decision paralysis” and instead allows us to experience the contradictions of different world forming while requiring that we support the incommensurable movements that will get us there. Liboiron provides sources for those who are interested in investigating how to do solidarity work “across difference” [25].

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Vulnerability

Renata Happle

Vulnerability does not, as many think, come down to ‘bad luck’ or happenstance or fate. **Susceptibility to be harmed is intermingled with compounded injustices**, says Kyle Whyte, creating increased geographic and economic vulnerability paired with their overall lack of historical responsibility [Whyte 2017, 15]. Indigenous vulnerability was constructed by the convergence of these three histories: carbon-intensive capitalism colonized the atmosphere and exploited native labor and land, the impacts from industry are felt more acutely by Indigenous communities because of their “resource-based livelihoods,” and, finally, colonial histories produced socioeconomic conditions that are characterized by “poverty, isolation, discrimination, and social invisibility” [Whyte 16]. Farhana Sultana, author of *The Unbearable Heaviness of Climate Coloniality*, discusses how climate change exposes the persistence of coloniality by its reliance on the co-constitutive structures of colonial governance, capitalism, imperialism, and international development [Sultana 2022, 3]. Further, she claims that the underpinnings of vulnerability are rooted in legacies of imperial violence, which “[exacerbate] environmental violence and increase climate induced disasters” and as people are faced with natural disaster events, the impacts are felt more intensely corporeally, communally, politically, economically, and ecologically [Sultana 2022]. The impacts are cumulative, seen as current day sites, cities, or ecosystems reel with the historical pressures of being deemed disposable or sacrificial. Historical wounds have been left to fester, undeniably getting worse with time, as impoverishment and disposability persist, buoyed by a racialized logic that condemns countries and communities to uneven harm.

She describes the nature of harms, which are “both overt and covert, episodic and creeping” through pollution, toxic waste, mining, disasters, desertification, and land erosion, characterizing land by its growing lack of livability.

International understandings of vulnerability are underpinned by two central assumptions described by Whyte in his 2017 paper *Colonial Déjà Vu*. Firstly, the belief that increased vulnerabilities experienced by Indigenous people are due to their “continuing dependence on local ecosystems,” is held by the United Nations, who in several reports blames their “close relationship with the environment and its resources;” locale, where “impacts on their territories and communities are anticipated to be both early and severe due to their locations in vulnerable environments, including small islands, high altitude zones, desert margins, and the circumpolar Arctic;” and finally, “due to their continuing reliance upon resource-based livelihoods” which are “heavily dependent on their natural resources for economic and cultural identity” [Whyte 13]. This language omits historical context and obfuscates colonial responsibility by claiming that Indigenous people are more dependent on their environment than others and, further, suggests that Indigenous people exercising autonomy over where or how they live inherently places them at risk [Whyte 14]. Further, the UN’s narrative omits legacies of social subjugation, from poverty to marginalization, attributing a lack of resilience to culture, rather than structural conditions [Whyte 14]. Vulnerability comes from the decision to label land as a sacrifice or extraction zone, damning communities to a life of risk, pollution, and power imbalances from the planetary to the bodily, singular issues spanning the local and global concepts that lead to inequitable exposure to harms.

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Cyclicity

Lela DeVine

The slam of car doors, accompanied by the harsh crunching of dried, broken down foliage – slashing through an eerie silence of the land in front of us. We must have only been 16 or 17 at the time. Lush, tropical rainforest disappears around us, and we are surrounded by acres of dry, pale, overgrown fields. As we sneak through an abandoned gate, the land opens up to the coast around us. Intricate etchings within the earth display the route of the Onomea and Alakahi streams, flowing down from Mauna Kea. Concrete infrastructure looming in front of us appears as a dystopian, post apocalyptic scenery. In the midst of the palm trees, an industrial bell, boldly labeled “PLANTATION” co-exists with nature. Concrete tunnels and alcoves are grown over with vine and adorned with eerie warnings and messages in spray-paint.

As the physical presence of sugar plantations recedes in Hawai’i, there is a striking form of “... ‘haunting continuities’ that fix contemporary social life on the now [almost] immaterial foundation of the plantation” [Bond, 2022, 151]. I can’t help but think of how three teenagers could stumble across ruins of a sugar plantation on their drive to the beach, a part of Onomea re-lived. Cycles of the plot being discovered and rediscovered throughout history. First, Native fishing peoples and farmers, followed by small communities, colonialists, plantation owners, refugee workers, businessmen, contractors, and now, us.

It was as if we were looking into the past. A transition from fishing village to colonialistic industrial monocrop scarred into the land in front of us. Overgrown plots running through the hills and towards the water. Broken down signage. Boating chains and metal pieces.

What has the plantation and the plot provided? The ethics of the plot are complex and interwoven, forged and articulated through racial-political struggle [McKittrick, 2013, 5-8]. The land in front of me wasn't just loose dirt and dust, rather, the very root of what I understand my home to be today. The plot is both grounding and challenging. The local Hawaiian accent is rooted in pidgin as a dialect, and speaking to my local aunties and uncles remind me of the kinship of the plot that followed us lineages into the 21st century. Hawai'i is often thought of as a "melting-pot" of diverse cultures and backgrounds that have persisted to this day, and its strength is not only rooted in kinship, but can be a testament to the principles of good use surrounding the plot as a site of care, cultivation, and a creative source of hope for collectivity [Davis et al., 2019, 8-9]. This collectivity has actively shaped our local communities into what they are today, and is an unyielding force to many of the cyclical colonial structures that remain.

But the plot consistently challenges my perception of my home. The plot redefined what it means to be in Hawai'i, no longer a kingdom, but an entity colonized by the U.S. and stuck here today. The colonialistic challenges of the plot remain in every environmental protection pushback, luxury resort, and bleached reef that appears before us. "Luxury villas" in the area are refurbished plantation villages, sought out by outsiders as a desirable and historical home near the coast. The Onomea Sugar Plantation didn't just represent extraction from the 1880s to beyond 1965, it has emphasized [to this day] what it means for extraction to be a continual relation [Gilmore, 2021, 260]. Plantations in Hawai'i that still hold strong today are now predominantly a tourist attraction, "bridging" a connection between people from the mainland and our natural landscapes.

“All aboard for two miles of pineapple fun on the Pineapple Express Train Tour, where you’ll learn the story of pineapple in Hawai’i, hear how James Drummond Dole founded his world-famous agricultural empire where the Dole Plantation stands today, and travel through the stunning scenery of the island’s famous North Shore!” [Dole Plantation, 2023].

The plot manifests as a haunting and ongoing continuation of its colonized roots. It recycles and redistributes an established “attractiveness” of Hawai’i – flower leis and coconut bras, lush farms and “exotic fruits”, tiki bars and fire dances – to appeal to the white supremacist idea of exotica, with total disregard to the local people and land. For the local people of Hawai’i, it can be said that our horizon of extinction is moving closer with “accelerating increments and feedback loops” [Farman, 2020, 2], and we have to grapple with the essence of terminal reality every time a cruise ship rolls in to the port of Hilo, a friend gets Dole Whip in Wahiawa, and blue striped towels are laid out on Waikiki beach.

The physical manifestation of the worked plantation has fallen. Land that was sought – once “nowhere” and inhabited by “no one” [McKittrick, 2013, 5-8], to become a booming site for economic capital and sugar has ceased to exist, passing its horizon of extinction. We’re left with the remains and relations of what once was, and what lives on. The plot is cyclical, and its continuity [in whatever form it chooses to materialize in] lives on.

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Conquest/White Saviorism

Ava Roche

When taking a course that focuses on the **interconnectedness between climate change and colonialism**, one must begin by acknowledging the “geopolitics that contribute to the reproduction of ongoing colonialism through existing global governance structures” [Sultana 2022, 1]. Such global structures that have been the source of all climate change and ruin include settler colonialism, land and human exploitation, sacrifice, generational trauma, and racial hierarchy.... All of which have been justified time and time again by the colonial logic of conquest, which goes hand and hand with white saviorism. Colonial logic of conquest can be explained as generational logic that colonizers have used over time to justify their irreversible, and irredeemable effects on both people and the environment. As this logic aims to release the guilt of such damage, it is often done through seeing other humans and entities as “less than” for a multitude of reasons. This form of redemption that takes the colonizers out of the equation of ugliness by putting themselves on a pedestal can also be categorized as “White Saviorism”; White Saviorism is defined as, “an ideology that is acted upon when a white person, from a position of superiority, attempts to help or rescue a BIPOC person or community” [Murphy 2023, 3]. This ailment is “the fundamental underpinning of Western imperialism” that hides the piracy of land and people behind a vein of innocence, pure intention, and western thought [Murphy 2023, 3]. Through this piece I aim to draw on the similarities between White Saviorism and colonial logic of conquest to highlight their detrimental effects on our society and climate over time; it is only through such deconstruction that we can begin to decolonize the omnipresent corruptness within our society that bleeds of past trauma and seeps into our very souls.

As the point of this piece is the education and utilization of vital, unacknowledged consciousness, I'd like to begin with a personal anecdote surrounding the term and application of "White Saviorism". The first time I recall hearing this term was in middle school when many of my classmates would attend "mission trips" in Africa throughout the summers. For background, the town I grew up in was very racially homogeneous and quite frankly, extremely exclusive to others. As I now know that many of my classmates visiting Africa had no prior knowledge of which country in Africa they were attending, nor what language the people there spoke, I achingly longed to attend such a trip . I distinctly recall my parents' insightful response when I brought up these trips, and begged to participate. They explained to me that these types of trips were not the way in which I could constitute genuine change, and they informed me of the wrongful power dynamics at play when white private school girls show up to "help" those in need and put such "accomplishments" on their resumes. This explanation was paired with the idea of White Saviorism, and its detrimental consequences, as it is not a coincidence that all of my classmates were thoroughly fascinated with " the popular push to "save" ailing Africa and its children reveals it as a continental human geography that is not human at all but an unlivable space occupied by the racially condemned, the already dead and dying" [McKittrick 2013, 7]. At the time of this in depth conversation I felt upset, but I soon realized who these trips really benefited: my classmates with plentiful smiling photos to post holding children whom they never knew the names of. This example is why it is vital to be properly educated on the systems that have shaped our lives as we know it and how these systems have negatively impacted and infiltrated our world over time. Without thoroughly acknowledging and deconstructing the narratives deemed "normal in our lives", we are unable to constitute change and understand how history has affected our world as we know it.

Through learning about the underpinnings of conquest logic and its tie to White Saviorism, we can begin to grapple with the state that our society, and environment is in today.

Moving forward, I'll now touch on a few of the many different strategies of conquest logic related to White Saviorism that drive ideas of innocence and continue this detrimental colonialist cycle as an "attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt and responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all" [Tuck & Yang 2012, 10]. When settlers first conquered The Americas and Africa, these places were "tagged as geographically inferior, based on an "Old" World European temporal schema that deemed the biospheric matter of these regions "newer" than the soil, earth, air, and water of Europe. This geographic presumption, in part, contributed to the "old" European worldview that those indigenous to "new" landmasses in Africa and the Americas also have nascent, and therefore unsophisticated and underdeveloped, worldviews" [McKittrick. 2013, 6]. This explicitly false theory that backed racism and white superiority off of the pretense of geographical "facts" was an execution that drove the idea of conquest innocence within colonization, and helped to form the Western Superiority complex that led to hundreds of thousands of years of racial inequality and disparity. It is important to understand and mention this, as it is only through knowing the history and start of such manipulation that one can break its deadly cycle that continues to plague our environment today. This superiority complex strengthened as settlers compared their idea and definition of "modernity" with those of "others". As the indigenous lived off of the land, and saw beauty and value within the natural world, to Europeans, everything, and everyone was valued based on how much money they could acquire. This mentality sounds familiar, doesn't it? This mindset has only strengthened with time as westerners wrongly categorized the indigenous as, "without restraint, in the enjoyments of the hour", and with a need to be turned into, "docile disciples" in European arts of self-restraint,

keeping them “from barbarism and idolatry”—at least while closely supervised, given their persistent “defects” of “improvidence, indolence, and want of economy” [Satia 2022, 5]. This sickening quote demonstrates settlers’ idea of modernity which is a “want of economy” [Satia 2022, 5].

This is where climate change is roped into our conversation, as land is the source of ALL economic value by providing oil, gold, coal, diamonds, wood... everything we own. If we understand conquest logic’s correlation with White Saviorism we see a pattern in our current lives. This is a pattern of mass destruction of communities and people [Nigeria and St. Croix], as “Settler colonialism is a structure and not an event” [Ibid., 5]. The White exceptionalism that came hand and hand with the way in which settlers manifested their “innocence” has been a record playing over and over again for generations, yet with time its song has just grown to sound different, but just as catastrophic. With all of this newfound knowledge and complex interconnectedness between White Saviorism, colonial logic, and climate change, I challenge all readers to notice how these complexities, and ideologies present themselves everywhere in our everyday lives, even when disguised as “innocent” and with “pure intent”. Our world finds itself mirroring the same problems believed to have been “solved” by previous generations, but in a “cloaked anachronism” [McKittrick 2013, 9], as in reality we are stuck in an endless cycle of exploitation. We can break the cycle by being properly educated and wary of the corrupt world in which we live in today. No person should be molded into a ghost for others benefit, and no ecosystem should be utterly destroyed for others profit. The only thing that needs to be killed is White Superiority, before it kills us.

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Monocultures/Bad Relations

Isabel Halama

Anyone who has flown over or driven through America's heartland can attest to the jarring aesthetic perception of an environment reduced to homogeneity. As the granddaughter of farmers and a product of rural Wisconsin, it never occurred to me to question this inherited understanding of the proper order of the natural world. The bucolic hills are blanketed with a singular crop, with little suggestion of what sort of rich diversity might once have thrived there.

The **plantation as a mode of racialized and extractive agricultural production** relies on the importation of foreign crops to replace local ecosystems. These industrial monocultures replace indigenous foodways, thus, an analysis of monocrops is inextricable from the pyrogeography of the plantation and racial capitalism. The success of the plantation depends on its ability to choke out all life that cannot be commodified, in the process cleaving agricultural practices from the intimate relations of physical and cultural nourishment, sustenance, and enrichment.

In "Anthropocene, Capitalocene, ... Plantationocene?: A Manifesto for Ecological Justice in an Age of Global Crises," Davis, et al. describe how "the plot" circumvents the monocropping regimes of export-oriented commodity production by nurturing biodiverse relational ways of being central to sustenance through radical foodways [Davis, et al., 2019, 8]. Monocropping practices exemplify what being in bad relation to the land means. If good relations embody practices of reciprocity and care, the colonial reification of Land as a resource that must be managed is definitively "bad" [Liboiron 2021, 62]. Polyculture, especially as manifested in the plot, is an enactment of good relations against larger systems of extraction.

McKittrick understands these plots of land that were bestowed to some enslaved people in order that they might cultivate their own crops to nourish their communities and thus maximize profits for the enslaver as a locus of “resistance to the overriding system of the plantation economy” that “illustrates a social order that is developed within the context of a dehumanizing system as it spatializes what would be considered impossible under slavery” [McKittrick 2013, 11]. Not only does the plot empower food sovereignty, but it is an active rebellion against colonialism’s insistence on agrarian futures driven by exploitation and objectification.

Beyond disrupting indigenous foodways and good relations with the Land, monocrops and their attendant colonial extraction processes hinder the ability of communities to thrive, even today. Neel Ahuja contends with the legacies of monocultures in his book, *Planetary Specters*, asserting that formerly colonized states are especially vulnerable to global inflation as many of their economies –lacking diversification and reliant on natural resource extraction– were contingent on the ability to import basic goods [Ahuja 2021, 84]. The legacy of monocrops as deeply harmful to community wellbeing is bound up in the sibling processes of racial capitalism and neocolonialism. Forced to accept trade liberalization in order to keep their people from starving, decolonizing states are impeded in their ability to develop sovereignty over their economies. Colonialism necessitates processes that are both scalable and exportable. This leaves very little room for specificity and the centuries-honed strength of local ways of knowing. From farming collectives transitioning from imported monocrops to indigenous seed varieties that are better suited to the changing climate of Bangladesh, to eating both locally and seasonally, in addition to other ways of being that are attendant to practices of reciprocity and care with the Land, communities that are reclaiming agricultural diversity are enacting good relations and working towards a more resilient and just climate future.

Perhaps, one day, Wisconsin's bucolic hills will feature mixed forest and prairie once more, interspersed with polyculture plots of agricultural land. What was once waves of amber grain—as far as the eye could see—will be something better, something different, something that embodies practices of reciprocity and care, for both the Land, and for all those who call it home.

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Terminality

Maria Little

In his piece “**Terminality—the Ticking**,” Farman discusses the presence of inevitable and apocalyptic narratives in the fight against climate change. He attributes these narratives to a logic of terminality: the belief that humanity cannot focus on minor issues in the face of the climate crisis because our primary concern should be saving ourselves from this looming threat [Farman 2020]. Farman argues that unpacking terminality is necessary to understand the histories and current ideologies of the climate crisis. As he and others have shown, the logic of terminality structures how powerful nation-states, corporations, and activists seek and interpret solutions to climate change. Specifically, Farman, Nixon, Whyte, and Ahuja demonstrate how terminality is vital to discussions about climate change and colonialism because it explains how colonial logics in climate activism undermine the structural change necessary to confront the climate crisis.

A major part of terminality is the sense of urgency central to climate change discourse in the past 20 years. In *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Nixon [2011] defines slow violence as the gradual and hidden violence of destruction [2]. He explains how privileged people cannot see slow violence because they live in a turbo-capitalist world, where a sense of insufficient time is compounded [Nixon 2011, 8]. This perception of time increases the urgency to fix the climate crisis. To those in positions of privilege, the sensation that time is moving fast makes the end of the world feel like it is closer every day. Whyte expands on Nixon’s discussion of time in *Against Crisis Epistemology*. He explains how crisis epistemologies form a presumption of urgency, where responsive actions to crises create harmful consequences that actors view as unfortunate but acceptable [Whyte 2021, 55].

Whyte's analysis reveals how urgency creates the circumstances for slow violence and justifies it. In the context of the climate crisis, urgency allows the prioritization of some lives over others for the sake of humanity. Ultimately, sentiments of urgency fuel apocalyptic narratives of terminality, as they rest on the idea that humanity's current situation requires urgent action.

The inevitability of climate change, another aspect of terminality, pushes for adaptation strategies as solutions rather than structural change. Ahuja [2021] describes these adaptation strategies in *Planetary Specters: Race, Migration, and Climate Change in the Twenty-First Century*. For example, he says that the US focuses on adapting to inevitable rising temperatures and establishing defenses against significant impacts to avoid responsibility for causing climate change [Ahuja 2021, 42]. The trend toward adaptation reflects the idea that climate change is inevitable. In other words, if climate change is going to happen no matter what, humanity should focus on adjusting to it rather than waste energy trying to stop it. This mirrors the logic of terminality because it deprioritizes structural problems in the face of an inevitable apocalypse and centers adaptation strategies for people facing less immediate threats. The characterization of climate change as inevitable contributes to the logics of terminality that privilege the survival of some over others. Both Farman and Nixon highlight how terminality ignores the climate crisis's current effect on people worldwide. Nixon [2011] explores this phenomenon in the representational bias against slow violence, which impacts what is considered a casualty of climate change [13]. Terminality contributes to "representational bias" by driving the conversation on climate toward immediate problems rather than the gradual and intergenerational harms of ecological destruction. In this sense, terminality obscures climate discourse from Black and Indigenous communities who have faced the effects of the climate crisis for decades. Farman [2020] makes a similar claim about environmental activists.

He says that privileged activist groups have ignored the structural concerns of local activists, separating ‘social’ and ‘environmental’ justice and designating efforts to save the climate as more important [Farman 2020]. Farman shows how Nixon’s idea of representational bias functions in activist spheres. Terminality again ignores how climate change has affected particular communities for decades and how social and environmental justice are intertwined.

Terminality also inflicts harm by reproducing colonial logics within the climate change movement. Farman [2020] summarizes this point when he says that people imagine the end of their world as the end of the world. This kind of terminal thinking has led privileged people to create solutions like reopening industrial plantations and eco-fascism [Farman 2020]. These responses to climate change are reproductions of colonial tactics that created the crisis in the first place. Terminality only allows people to see the threats of climate change to their immediate environment, not how it already affects people. Ahuja [2021] critiques the discussion on climate migration, saying that racialized and gendered vulnerability imagines rural people as victims who need external intervention [68]. He describes how colonial narratives of white saviorism distort understandings of climate migration, which prevents productive action against climate change. Both Farman and Ahuja’s examples show how colonial perspectives prevent privileged people from learning about solutions that would bring about the structural change necessary for the survival of communities facing ecological destruction. Logics of terminality are significant in the discourse on climate change and colonialism because they demonstrate how urgency and inevitability characterize the climate crisis and how these depictions undermine climate activism. Farman [2020] argues that approaches to climate change should acknowledge the connections between whiteness, capitalism, and civilization to create solutions for survival. Logics of terminality obscure these processes yet consequently reveal the necessity to address colonialism in productive climate discourse.

Its logics have influenced how privileged people understand and seek solutions to the climate crisis. Therefore, identifying terminality helps us see which issues have been ignored and must be addressed.

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ADJECTIVES



Resilience

Maia Laitinen

Resilience is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as “the quality or fact of being able to recover quickly or easily from, or resist being affected by, a misfortune, shock, illness, etc.; robustness; adaptability,” [Oxford English Dictionary 2022]. In this course, we have encountered the concept of resilience mostly through a colonial framework, in the contexts of international development and in responses to crisis events. However, the possibility for resilience outside of colonial frameworks exists too, through grassroots initiatives focused on whole communities, possibilities for new ideas of the future, and an emphasis on cultivating kinship relations.

In international development, the concept of resilience is part of a larger colonial mindset that sees development subjects as lesser, through a lens of vulnerability, and aims to help them become resilient, through their ‘expert’ knowledge. Sultana describes how the “colonial white gaze...cultivates epistemologies of deficiency yet relies on ‘resilient’ locals to be good development subjects who ‘adapt’” [Sultana 2022, 6]. However, the development subjects are rarely given agency to ‘adapt’ to climate change on their own terms, as Kasia Paprocki describes development practitioners believe that it is “our job to figure out what the future will look like and then to introduce people to it so they can begin to adapt” [Paprocki 2018, 303]. As summarized by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh, “our contribution [is] to turn ‘vulnerability’ into ‘resilience’” [Cons 2018, 272].



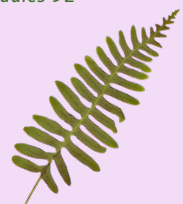
Programs aimed at resilience to climate change or crises can cause harm to communities. Jason Cons argues that development aims to create resilience at the level of the individual or at most, at the level of the nuclear family. This can alienate people from others in their community, as well as “shifts the primary burden of preparedness from the state to individuals,” [Cons 2018, 275]. Yarimar Bonilla recounts this phenomenon as in the case of the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, when the government issued a “public demand for strength and resilience,” but did not provide support to its citizens [Bonilla 2020, 2-5]. Additionally, this individual responsibility for resilience was seen through the feeling that “it was up to the individuals to prepare for the storm” [Bonilla 2020, 7]. Based on this, Bonilla explores the concept of resilience as “a form of neocolonial endurance” [Bonilla 2020, 5]. Furthermore, Paprocki argues that although development practitioners are aware that they may cause harm [“all solutions are bad solutions for some people” [Paprocki 2022, 302]], the harm that they do cause is cyclical, leading to the need for more ‘resilient’ climate solutions. Her concept of anticipatory ruination outlines this, as the anticipation that climate change will cause ruination necessitates programs that promote resilience and adaptation to these changes, but these programs then lead to social and ecological ruination [Paprocki 2022]. In light of the harm caused through the idea of resilience, Bonilla questions, “do we really want our communities to become well adapted to structural [and infrastructural] violence?” [Bonilla 2020, 2].

Bonilla’s question compels an exploration into potential anti-colonial ideas of resilience. She briefly discusses the potential for resilience as “the site for gestating new forms of sovereignty and new visions of postcolonial recovery” [Bonilla 2020, 1]. The need to be resilient leads to new ideas about the future.

Jason Cons also discusses anti-colonial modes of resilience, focusing on farmer's collectives and groups, whose projects "enact engagements with a resilience that is situated in the everyday politics of land and livelihoods," based on values of "inclusion, communal investment, and participation" [Cons 2018, 286]. The grassroots nature of these collectives, their focus on community as a whole, and their situated knowledge of their lands allows them to create a resilience for themselves. Moreover, Kyle Whyte argues for "epistemologies of coordination" as a way to respond to crises, and navigate changes. Epistemologies of coordination center "kinship relations of care, consent, and reciprocity," and focus on cultivating these relations is key [Whyte 2020, 59]. Having these kinship relations gives people the "capacity to respond in coordinated ways to change that are supportive of their mutual well-being," which is resilience in an anti-colonial context [Whyte 2020, 59]. These alternative approaches offer the communities the agency to decide how they withstand climate change and its crises, but have a deeper focus on the well-being of the community as a whole, allowing them to benefit beyond individual crises, as well as actively work against colonial structures. These approaches have liberatory potential.

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Love

Ruth Meschery-McCormack

“Love is always about violating your own attachment to your intentionality without being anti-intentional.”
– Lauren Berlant. [Walia 2013, 76]

“I love you”

Joan said

After we had

had our first full conversation [After class, in the rain,
she holds my arm as we
walk down stairs, like another mentor used to do. Joan lives
with her daughter;

they like cold weather because they can bundle up
[Love] together.]

Intentions are both actions and mutual discomfort –
How can I teach and be taught?

“I love you, too.” I said back.

Didn’t have to think about what it meant
Until later,
when Joan was on her train.

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Afterword

The essays in this collection are the result of many weeks of collective study, generous peer review, and thinking through big questions about the shape of the contemporary world. As the instructor for “Climate Change and Colonialism,” it has been incredibly moving to see how my students have grappled with the ways in which colonial forms endure in the present day, and how colonial histories structure inequality globally, nationally, and locally. Through close engagements with texts from disciplines including Anthropology, History, Black Studies, Indigenous Studies, Philosophy, and others, my students have reflected deeply on how the crises of climate change and inequality have come to be, and what must be done to address them in order to create change that centers justice. Their curiosity, openness, lucidity, and erudition have expanded and reaffirmed my own commitments. I thank the contributors to this collection, and the Editorial Collective, for their precise analysis, creative vision, and for insisting on the possibilities of social and political transformation. They are already bringing the future they want to see into being through their work and in their lives. Thinking alongside them has been my privilege and pleasure.

– Dr. Dilshanie Perera

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dilshanie Perera". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'D' and 'P'.

Some recommendations for repair & recovery

Ava Roche, Barnard '25: "Exterminate All the Brutes." Raoul Peck, HBO 4 Part Series.

Genevieve Cabadas, Barnard '24: Reconsidering Reparations - Olúfẹ̀mi O. Táíwò

Gitanjali Eva Sadana, GS Sciences Po Dual BA '23: A walk in central park to the waterfall at the Arch listening to 'A matter of degrees' podcast.

Isabel Halama, Barnard '24: Robin Wall Kimmerer, Braiding Sweetgrass. Downloading the NYC Smart Compost app. Buying your produce from the farmer's market.

Julianna Lozada: Katherine McKittrick, Plantation Futures. <https://edgeeffects.net/haraway-tsing-plantationocene/>.

Lela DeVine, Barnard '25: Long walks on the beach and nature drives.

Madeline Liberman: The Invention of Green Colonialism, Guillaume Blanc.

Maia Laitinen, Barnard '24: Joy Oladokun, Changes [song].

Renata Happle, Barnard '24: The art of Salman Toor. Sitting in the sunlight with your eyes closed.

Victor Jandres Rivera: Wendy Wolford's video "Conversations on the Plantationocene", <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yhc78dUkAc>.

Megan Yang, Barnard '25: Alethea Arnaquq-Baril, "Angry Inuk"

Ruth Meschery-McCormack, Barnard '25: "I want us to dream a little bigger" — Noname and Mariame Kaba on Art and Abolition, NPR interview



a zine for growth
and repair