

Call for Papers
The Coronavirus Pandemic: An Environmental Humanities Perspective

Organized by Tatiana Konrad, Chantelle Mitchell, and Savannah Schaufler

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| <i>Type:</i> | Call for Papers |
| <i>Dates:</i> | February 15-17, 2023 |
| <i>Abstract Submission Deadline:</i> | June 1, 2022 |
| <i>Venue:</i> | University of Vienna |
| <i>Subject Fields:</i> | Environmental Humanities; Health Humanities; Environmental History/Studies; Ecology; Anthropocene Studies |
| <i>Keynote Speakers:</i> | Dr. Cymene Howe (Rice University) Dr. Eben Kirksey (Deakin University) |

“The Coronavirus Pandemic: An Environmental Humanities Perspective,” a conference convened as part of the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) project “Air and Environmental Health in the (Post-)COVID-19 World,” invites abstract submissions for consideration. This three-day on-site event will take place at the University of Vienna on February 15-17, 2023.

The COVID-19 pandemic is identified as resulting from human-animal entanglement, or multispecies interactions between individuals and collective populations in proximity, and has since spread across borders and continents.¹ With the encroachment of human populations on natural habitats a key driver for the spread of zoonotic disease, this conference identifies the coronavirus pandemic as a matter of concern beyond epidemiological frames, and extending into spheres of ecology and the environment. Apprehending the coronavirus within a human and environmental nexus, this conference seeks proposals which bring together the environmental humanities and natural sciences in consideration of crisis across social, ecological, political, and biological spheres.

Borne from human and more-than-human encounter, the pandemic necessitates attention to broader environmental contexts. As the pandemic spread across the globe in 2020, news feeds were flooded with stories of cougars roaming the locked-down streets of Santiago, Chile, wild goats in Llandudno, Wales, or boar in Barcelona, Spain, at the same time as infection rates and casualty numbers continued to increase. With the shuttering of borders and the grounding of flights came stories of normally smog-filled skylines clearing as a result of decreased travel—the Himalayas visible from Uttar Pradesh, India, for the first time in decades evidencing the direct correlation between human activity and environments, and their transformations in the context of the coronavirus. Beyond these highly visible examples, the pandemic can be seen to have great scholarly significance within environmental humanities perspectives, presenting as a critical landscape for ongoing research.

J. R. McNeill positions COVID-19 as “an environmental history event as well as a public health crisis.”² This conference seeks proposals which recognize this crisis as operating within these spheres, as well as extending toward environmental presents and futures. In particular, the resurgence of single-

use items throughout the pandemic, the impacts of border closures and travel suspensions, and ongoing alterations to human/ecological relationships in light of the COVID-19 pandemic are identified as important considerations within this nexus.

“The Coronavirus Pandemic: An Environmental Humanities Perspective” seeks timely, crucial, and necessary considerations of the coronavirus pandemic from scholars engaged in environmental humanities research. In recognition of the interdisciplinary nature of such research, this extends to scholars working from social sciences, the medical and health humanities, and natural sciences perspectives; however, a list of desirable topics is provided to outline the scope of possible contributions. In the context of the “Air and Environmental Health in the (Post-)COVID-19 World” project from which this conference emerges, we especially seek abstract submissions that consider COVID-19 in relation to air and atmosphere, through transmission, respiration, breath, and infection. We strongly encourage scholars working within the Global South to apply, and proposals from PhD candidates and independent researchers are welcome.

We invite individual paper proposals considering the following topics:

- Coronavirus and Climate Crisis (including pollution, travel, and atmospheres)
- Human/Animal Relationships (proximity, wildlife in urban spaces, and zoonosis)
- Environmental Degradation and Biodiversity Loss
- Air, Transmission, and Respiration
- Waste and Sustainability (including litter, single use items, plastics, and transmission)
- Anthropause/Isolation (social and planetary health approaches)
- Lived Contexts and Socioeconomic Environments (including marginalized perspectives)
- Ecosocial Perspectives
- Death, Necropolitics, Grief, and Mourning
- Pandemic Turns (engagements with scholarly trends)
- Human-Ecological Temporalities (including environmental/pandemic futures)

Please email your abstract of 300 words and short biographical statement of no more than 150 words by June 1, 2022 to air.anglistik@univie.ac.at. A limited travel allowance is available for a small number of participants facing barriers to access. If you would like to be considered, please include a short statement of motivation.

Submissions are required to be original proposals and should not have been previously published or be awaiting publication during the evaluation process for this conference. Following the conference, selected presentations will be invited for submission to an edited collection.

This conference is convened by Tatiana Konrad, Chantelle Mitchell, and Savannah Schaufler (Department of American and English Studies, University of Vienna). More information about the research project “Air and Environmental Health in the (Post-)COVID-19 World” can be found at: <https://airproject.univie.ac.at/>

This research was funded in whole, or in part, by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) [P 34790].

¹ Serenella Iovino, “Cross-Species Conversations and the Coronavirus,” *Seeing the Woods, The Rachel Carson Center*, 2020, <https://seeingthewoods.org/2020/05/22/cross-species-conversations-and-the-coronavirus/?fbclid=IwAR0SVI8nLdp7Kso6t6Hr8adp-f3FaA33nSrfiLFMV6IL5-3XfCzregViDik>.

² J.R. McNeill, “Bats, Battiness, and the COVID-19 Pandemic,” *Environmental History* 25 (2020): 635-639.