Carlo Diaz

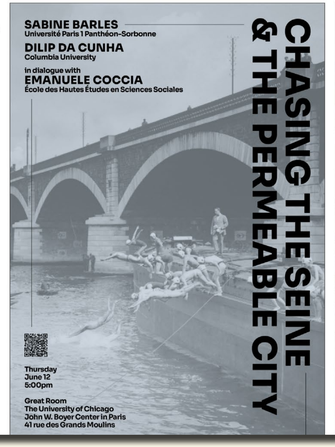
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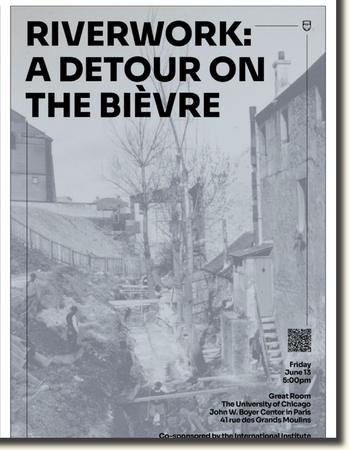
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Based in the Division of Social Sciences at the University of Chicago, the Committee on Environment, Geography and Urbanization (CEGU) is an interdisciplinary platform for critical thinking, advanced research, and innovative pedagogy on the societal and spatial dimensions of climate change, biodiversity loss, and other kinds of environmental transformation.

Key fields of research and pedagogy include urban environmental studies and sustainable urbanism; energy histories and geographies; environmental humanities; spatial and environmental media; environmental policy, design and practice; and community engagement.

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Established in June 2022, the Committee on Environment, Geography and Urbanization (CEGU) is the culmination of a long-standing collaboration between the Program on the Global Environment (PGE), the Committee on Geographical Sciences (CGS), and many other faculty across the social sciences and humanities at the University of Chicago whose research and teaching address the societal and spatial dimensions of climate change, biodiversity loss, and other kinds of environmental transformation. CEGU builds upon the University's legacies of excellence in geographical studies while providing a new divisional and inter-divisional platform for scholarship, teaching, and public events related to environment and society across time and space. With over 50 faculty affiliates drawn primarily from the Division of Social Sciences and the Division of Humanities, CEGU seeks to investigate and respond to the environmental challenges of our time not only by advancing climate change awareness, but by actively centering contemporary planetary environmental emergencies in all aspects of social research and humanistic inquiry.

CEGU is responsible for several pedagogical initiatives in environmental social science and environmental humanities, including the undergraduate major/minor and a doctoral certificate in Environment, Geography and Urbanization. Key fields of teaching and student research include urban environmental studies and sustainable urbanism; energy histories and geographies; environmental economics; environmental humanities; spatial and environmental data visualization; environmental policy, design and practice; and community engagement.

CEGU's major remit is to prepare our students to understand and influence the social conditions that have produced current and imminent planetary environmental emergencies. Through its commitment to a plurality of approaches, CEGU seeks to support and stimulate fundamental interdisciplinary work on the societal mediations of environmental transformations. The intensifying planetary environmental crises of our time necessitate a radical rethinking of inherited frameworks of knowledge in this pluri-disciplinary field. Since its foundation, the University of Chicago has not only supported scholarly excellence but has incubated innovative approaches to research, pedagogy, and practice in response to societal crises. It is in this spirit that CEGU seeks to contribute to the development of a community of scholars, teachers, and students dedicated to the urgent tasks of deciphering contemporary environmental emergencies and, on this basis, confronting the challenges of forging a more equitable, livable, and hopeful planetary future.

CEGU Field Report: April 2025 ↗

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Geopoetics of Urban Rivers
Chicago to Seine, Calumet to Marne—and Beyond

June 12–13, 2025

"Paris is Centralization itself," reads the reputed imperial dictum driving George Eugène Haussmann's rationalization of the metropolis's circulatory system; yet flood and drought, the migration of aquatic species and unchecked circulation of toxins remind us that the waters conditioning Parisian urbanism will not submit to centralization. While both Paris and Chicago as an aspiring "Paris on the Prairie" were modeled according to assumptions about the power of design to domesticate "landscape," contemporary cities demand to be sensed in fluid terms as digestive systems and hybrid ecologies transgressing territorial boundary lines.

This symposium aims to connect humanists and artists with scientists, designers, urban planners, and geographers between Paris and Chicago (and beyond) in order to remap contemporary cities through the waterways that exceed the bounds of fetishized terrestrial zones—viewing urban experience through the lens of water that links urban centers to their peripheries and hinterlands. It posits that the perspective of the humanities and arts is crucial to maintaining a vision of the city as a pooling of planetary crises apprehensible at sporadic sites of rupture or deluge. It responds to Daniel Maximin's call for the undoing of geopolitics through geopoetics—reimagining global community while eschewing the fantasies of stability at the heart of classical Western geography and geopolitics.

Our keynote evenings will open up a dialogue surrounding the parallel expanses of water and power; they will frame a binational symposium addressing challenges facing urban watersheds across the globe in a time of climate change, persistent colonization, and the diminishing effectiveness of regulatory apparatuses—when urban riversheds, long treated as waste sinks and logistics systems, are being sporadically reclaimed for wildlife and recreation, but also wielded as scenographic instruments of gentrification and control of political narratives. The conversation between da Cunha, Barles, and Coccia will challenge the production of the "river" as a contained ideological instrument and the extractivist and colonial perspective that has governed the manipulation of water in the modern age; the reading by Lisa Robertson will excavate the histories of production and obsolescence of the "river" as a site of gendered labor.

Thursday, June 12, 2025

2:00pm

Intellectual Mixer

Great Room, The University of Chicago John W. Boyer Center in Paris (41 rue des Grands Moulins)

5:00pm

Chasing the Seine and the Permeable City: Sabine Barles and Dilip da Cunha in Dialogue with Emanuele Coccia

Opening Keynote Conversation

Great Room, The University of Chicago John W. Boyer Center in Paris (41 rue des Grands Moulins)
Reception to Follow
Free and Open to the Public

The Seine and Paris: A Hybrid History, Late 17th–21st Century
Sabine Barles (Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne)

The links between Paris and the Seine have long been mentioned by historians, to the point that one could say that Paris owes part of its prosperity to the Seine. Furthermore, Paris transformed the Seine, its tributaries and its watershed upstream and downstream, making the watershed an urban one even far from the city. This shaped a particular waterscape made of infrastructures, reservoirs, but also art pieces owned, managed and/or devoted to the French capital, showing that a city is much more than an urban area, and that remote urban impacts are sometimes far more important than local ones.

Sabine Barles is professor of urbanism at Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne and researcher at UMR Géographie-cités. Trained as a civil engineer, she holds a Master's degree in history of technology and a PhD in urban planning. Her work focuses on the materiality of human societies: she is interested in urban environmental history and history of urban technology (18th–21st century), in urban metabolism and territorial ecology. She also developed with an interdisciplinary group of colleagues some prospective socio-ecological scenarios (2050) for the Seine river basin.

Where Is the Seine?
Dilip da Cunha (Columbia University)

There is not one, but three Seines—a terrestrial Seine, hydrologic Seine and oceanic Seine. Consequently, there is not one, but three Parises—an urban Paris, a fairweather Paris and an emergent Paris. Each furthers an imagination with significant consequences for the language of place and habitation, particularly in the face of climate change and a colonization that refuses to go away.

Dilip da Cunha is an architect and planner based in Philadelphia and Bangalore, and Adjunct Professor at the Columbia GSAPP. He is author with Anuradha Mathur of Mississippi Floods: Designing a Shifting Landscape (2001); Deccan Traverses: The Making of Bangalore's Terrain (2006); Soak: Mumbai in an Estuary (2009); and editor of Design in the Terrain of Water (2014). His most recent book, The Invention of Rivers: Alexander's Eye and Ganga's Descent, was published by University of Pennsylvania Press in 2019. The book has received the 2020 ASLA Honor award and the J.B. Jackson Book Prize. In 2017, Mathur and Da Cunha initiated a design platform called Ocean of Wetness directed to imaging and imagining habitation in ubiquitous wetness rather than on a land-water surface. In 2017, da Cunha was a joint recipient of a Pew Fellowship Grant, and in 2020 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship.

In dialogue with Emanuele Coccia (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales)

Friday, June 13, 2025

9:30am–4:30pm

Floating Workshop on the Seine

9:30am—meet at Canauxrama, Bassin de la Villette, 13 Quai de la Loire
10:00am—boat departs from Canauxrama
4:15pm—boat docks at Bibliothèque Nationale de France—Mitterrand, Quai François Mauriac

These floating workshops will unfold on a boat navigating the Parisian canals and River Seine from the Bassin de la Villette along the Canal de l'Ourcq and the Canal Saint Martin, mooring at the Port de l'Arsenal, proceeding to the Tour Eiffel, disembarking at the Bibliothèque Nationale, and proceeding to the UChicago John Boyer Center in Paris for the final keynote performance. The workshop convenes 40 scholars, students, and community members, including artists, writers, activists, and designers, to engage in cross-disciplinary creative practice. Three practicing artists involved in challenges facing urban watersheds are paired with experts on the Parisian watershed to offer workshops on the journey.

We aim to tap and expand participant perspectives surrounding this watershed via creative prompts delivered while we are on the water, opening up a comparative imaginary through analogies with other urban watersheds.

Rendering this component of the symposium special is that the audience is a full participant; it is composed of specialists and students from a wide variety of disciplines and perspectives, travelling together, following creative prompts and sharing knowledge. We have imagined this counter-cruise as a pedagogical opportunity to elicit and discuss creative artifacts hailing from water experts who might not consider themselves artists at all, and to demonstrate that art can offer up genuinely new thinking surrounding urban watersheds.

What the Study of the Seine River Can Say on the Relationship of the Parisians with Their River
Laurence Lestel (Directrice de recherche au CNRS et Directrice de la Zone atelier Seine du CNRS)

Parasitic Reading Room
Rosario Talevi (Architect, Editor, Curator, and Educator, Floating University)

From Below: Urban Waters and the Seine in Practice
Sonia Levy (Independent Artist Filmmaker) & Evelyne Tales (Research Engineer, French National Institute for Agriculture, Food, and Environment (INRAE))

Washing Up: A Performative Workshop (Exploring the History and Politics of Laundry Work on the Bièvre and Seine Rivers)
Lisa Robertson (Poet and Essayist)

Water Values: The Value Case Approach for the Seine in Paris
Carola Hein (LDE Professor of Water, Ports & Historic Cities, Leiden University; Professor of History of Architecture and Urban Planning, TU Delft)

5:00pm

Riverwork: A Detour on the Bièvre

Great Room, The University of Chicago John W. Boyer Center in Paris (41 rue des Grands Moulins)
Reception to Follow
Free and Open to the Public

Lisa Robertson (Poet and Essayist)

Poet/essayist Lisa Robertson will be framing and reading from *Riverwork*, a novel-in-progress whose site is the ancient Bièvre river in Paris. Long the urban locale of textile industries, tanning, laundry and paper mills, flowing from the south towards the Jardins des Plantes to empty into the Seine, diverted in stages through the 19th century to be finally completely covered over in 1912, the year it also lost its name and its designation as a river, the Bièvre in this narrative is tracked by means of its literary and documentary traces, through the work of Rousseau, the Goncourt brothers, Hugo, Rabelais and Delvau.

Hosted by Jennifer Scappettone (The University of Chicago), Olivier Brossard (Université Gustave Eiffel), and Sabina Shaikh (The University of Chicago).
Co-sponsored by CEGU, the International Institute of Research in Paris, the Université Gustave Eiffel, and UChicago Global.

The CEGU undergraduate major prepares students to understand and confront the wide-ranging societal, historical, and spatial dimensions of contemporary planetary environmental crises, including climate change, biodiversity loss, and other forms of large-scale socio-environmental transformation. Such issues are explored in diverse spaces, including cities and metropolitan regions; zones of extraction, agriculture, energy production and waste; dispersed settlement spaces and village ecologies; rangeland, forest and jungle landscapes; remote wildlands; and coastlines, rivers, watersheds, and oceans. The curriculum emphasizes a plurality of theoretical approaches to the histories and geographies of socio-environmental transformation, underscoring the contested character of environmental knowledge in a polarized and turbulent world order.

CEGU is also home to additional undergraduate initiatives including Expositions Magazine ↗—a student-written magazine presenting environmental and urban scholarship, creative writing, and visual art; the Frizzell Learning and Speaker Series—a student-led endowed lecture series; and Environmental Frontiers Campus ↗—a faculty-student engaged research program on campus sustainability in partnership with the Mansueto Institute for Urban Innovation ↗ and Facilities Services ↗. CEGU regularly hosts student activities and events, internships, and discussions with alumni, community leaders and faculty, often in partnership with Chicago Studies ↗.

The major in Environmental and Urban Studies (ENST) is now the major in Environment, Geography and Urbanization (CEGU major). For all ENST majors declared before the CEGU major was launched, the ENST requirements will remain in effect. New requirements for the CEGU minor will also then replace those currently in effect for the ENST minor.

Major and Minor in Environment, Geography and Urbanization (CEGU)

Major and Minor in Environmental and Urban Studies (ENST)

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Petitions and Forms: CEGU, ENST

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Student Events

Frizzell Learning & Speaker Series

Expositions Magazine

CEGU Exhibitions

Calumet Quarter

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES —SPRING 2025



Committee on Environment, Geography and Urbanization
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ABOUT PEOPLE EVENTS UNDERGRADUATE STUDIES DOCTORAL STUDIES

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES IN ENVIRONMENT, GEOGRAPHY AND URBANIZATION (CEGU)

Autumn 2024

All Courses, Capstone Courses

Other Quarters: AY 2023–2024

Climate Change, Environment, and Society
Christopher Kindell

Mo/We, 1:30–2:50pm
CEGU 20001, ENST 20011, GLST 21001, HIST 25031

description ↓

The Politics of Environmental Knowledge
Jessica Landau

Tu/Th, 11:00–12:20pm
CEGU 20002, ENST 20012, GLST 21002, HIST 25032

description ↑

How has "nature" been understood and investigated in the modern world? Building upon diverse approaches to environmental history and philosophy, the history of science, and cultural studies, this course surveys the major frameworks through which the environment has been understood, investigated, and transformed since the origins of global modernity. Such issues are explored with reference to the mobilization of science, technology, and politics in several major areas of socio- environmental transformation in the modern world. Case studies might explore, among other issues, empire, race, and public health; cities and infectious disease since the Black Death; the 'great enclosures' of land associated with settler colonialism; the 'Green Revolution' in industrial agriculture; strategies of resource stewardship, land conservation, terraforming, hydrological engineering and watershed protection; the politics of global warming; and current debates on urban sustainability, carbon capture and geo-engineering. The course also considers the rise and evolution of environmentalist movements and conservation strategies, and the contested visions of nature they have embraced. The course concludes by investigating the competing paradigms of knowledge, science, and environment that underpin divergent contemporary programs of environmental governance and visions of 'sustainability'.

Writing the City
Evan Carver

Mo/We, 3:00–4:20pm
CEGU 20002, ENST 20012

description ↓

Class, Race and Urban Space: Producing the city
Mary Beth Pudup

Mo/We, 4:30–5:50pm
CEGU 20154, ENST 20154

description ↓

Environmental Law Practicum I
Mary Beth Pudup

Reading and Research Course
CEGU 29700

description ↓

U.S. Environmental Policy

Tu/Th, 12:30–1:50pm

description ↓

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FACULTY AND ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Neil Brenner, Chair
Lucy Flower Professor of Urban Sociology, Department of Sociology and CEGU

Sabina Shaikh, Director of Academic Programs and Director of Undergraduate Studies
Senior Instructional Professor, CEGU

Ryan Cecil Jobson, Director of Doctoral Studies
Neubauer Family Assistant Professor of Anthropology and CEGU

Mary Beth Pudup, Director of Community Studies and Coordinator of BA Capstones
Instructional Professor, CEGU

Christopher Kindell, Coordinator of BA Theses
Assistant Instructional Professor, CEGU

Jessica Landau, Coordinator of Undergraduate Studies
Assistant Instructional Professor, CEGU

Brisa Aschebrook-Kilfoy
Associate Professor of Population and Precision Health, Department of Public Health Sciences and CEGU

Alexander Arroyo
Senior Research Associate in Global Political Ecology, Urban Theory Lab and CEGU

Jacobé Huet
Assistant Professor of Art History, the College, and CEGU

Aaron Jakes
Assistant Professor of Modern Middle Eastern History, the College, and CEGU

Amir Jina
Assistant Professor, Harris School of Public Policy and CEGU

Fredrik Albritton Jonsson
Associate Professor of British History, Conceptual and Historical Studies of Science, the College, and CEGU

Catherine Kearns
Assistant Professor in the Department of Classics, the College, and CEGU

Emily Kern
Assistant Professor of the History of Science, the College, and CEGU

Sol Kim
Research Associate, Urban Theory Lab and CEGU

Alan L. Kolata
Bernard E. and Ellen C. Sunny Distinguished Service Professor of Anthropology, Social Sciences in the College, and CEGU

STAFF

Tess Conway
Student Affairs Administrator, CEGU

Carlo Díaz
Lecturer and Project and Communications Coordinator, Urban Theory Lab and CEGU

Nina Olney
Graduate Student Research Mentor, CEGU

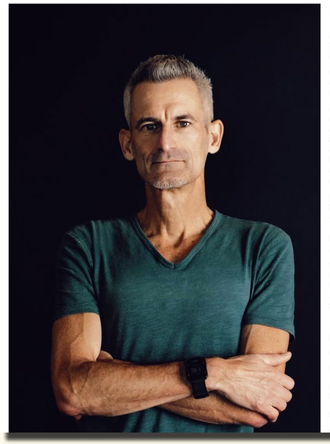
Ariana Chiapas
Instructional Assistant, CEGU

Anna Selden
Instructional Assistant, CEGU

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NEIL BRENNER

Lucy Flower Professor of Urban Sociology, Department of Sociology and Committee on Environment, Geography and Urbanization (CEGU)
Chair, Committee on Environment, Geography and Urbanization (CEGU)
Director, Urban Theory Lab

Ph.D., Political Science, University of Chicago, 1999
M.A., Geography, UCLA, 1996
B.A., Philosophy, *Summa Cum Laude*, Yale College, 1991

Neil Brenner is a critical urban theorist, sociologist and geographer who is interested in all aspects of research on cities and urbanization within the social sciences, the environmental humanities, the design disciplines and environmental studies. His writing and teaching focus on the theoretical, conceptual and methodological dimensions of urban questions, and on the challenges of reinventing our approach to urbanization in relation to the crises, contradictions and struggles of our time. Brenner has made influential contributions to scholarly debates on critical urban theory, the critique of capitalist urbanization, urban restructuring, state space, the political economy of rescaling, variegated neoliberalization and planetary urbanization. His current work is focused on the question of how "hinterlands"—the non-city territories, infrastructures and ecologies that support urban life—are being remade under contemporary supply-chain capitalism. This inquiry aims to connect the study of urbanization more directly to the analysis not only of primary commodity production (the historical geographies of agro-industrial and extractive capitalism) but also to the critical exploration of contemporary environmental crises and emergent struggles for postfossil—and postcapitalist—planetary futures.

Brenner's most recent books are *New Urban Spaces: Urban Theory and the Scale Question* (Oxford, 2019) and *Critique of Urbanization: Selected Essays* (Bauwelt Fundamente, 2016), as well as the edited volume *Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization* (Jovis, 2014). Brenner's previous books include *New State Spaces: Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood* (Oxford University Press, 2004) and the co-edited volumes *Cities for People, not for Profit: Critical Urban Theory and the Right to the City* (with Peter Marcuse and Margit Mayer; Routledge 2011); and *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe* (with Nik Theodore; Blackwell, 2003). Brenner's writings have been widely translated into other languages, including complete books or essay collections published or forthcoming in Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish.

Prior to his return to the University of Chicago in 2020, Brenner served as Professor of Urban Theory at Harvard's Graduate School of Design and as Professor of Sociology and Metropolitan Studies at New York University. Brenner serves or has previously served on the editorial boards of several urban studies and economic geography journals, including *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, *Urban Studies*, *Antipode*, *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* and *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*. During the previous two decades, Brenner has supervised or co-supervised Ph.D. research in Sociology, Geography, History, Political Science, American Studies, Law & Society, Urban Planning and Architecture, among other fields.

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Link to articles and essays: https://chicago.academia.edu/NeilBrenner

Neil Brenner, *New Urban Spaces: Urban Theory and the Scale Question*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

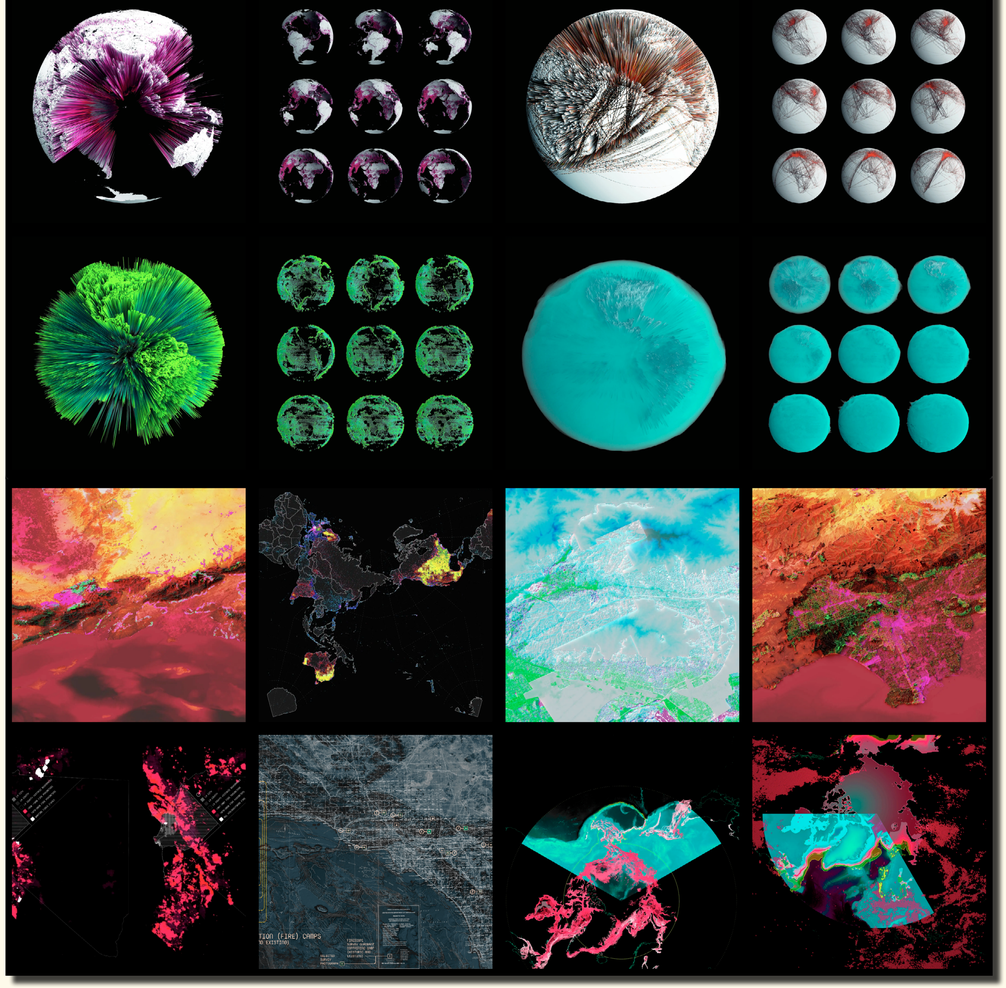
Neil Brenner, 城市，地域，星球：批判城市理论 / *City, Territory, Planet: Studies in Critical Urban Theory*. Translated by Li Zhigang, Xu Jiang, Cao Kang and others. Beijing: Commercial Publishers, 2019.

Neil Brenner, *Espaços da Urbanização: o urbano a partir da teoria crítica*. Observatório das Metrópoles series, Letra Capital Editora: Rio de Janeiro, 2018.

Neil Brenner, *Stato, spazio, urbanizzazione*. Translated and edited by Teresa Bullano. Milan: Guerini Scientifica, 2017.

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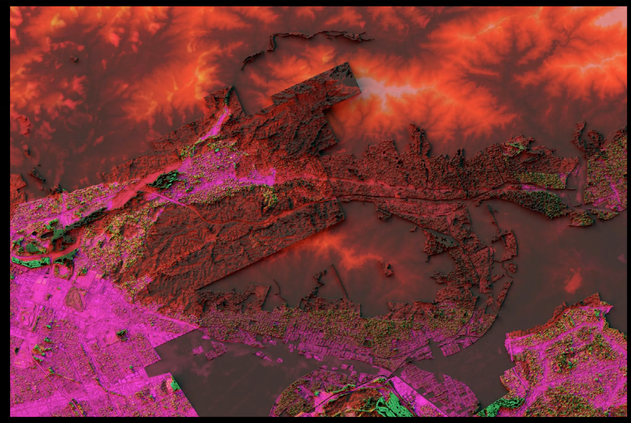
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Xenocartographic composite of Wildland-Urban Interface in LA county

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Title	Contributors	Institution	Date
Data-Spheres of Planetary Urbanization	Neil Brenner, Grga Bašić, Nikos Katsikis, Mariano Gomez-Luque	The University of Chicago	2021–2025
Planetary Urbanization, Fossil Energy, and the Shatter Zone	Neil Brenner, Swarnabh Ghosh	The University of Chicago / Harvard University GSD	2025–Ongoing
Climate Rights	Alexander Arroyo, Sol Kim, Grga Bašić, Nabil Ahmed	The University of Chicago	2024–Ongoing
Xenocartographies	Grga Bašić, Alexander Arroyo	The University of Chicago	2024–Ongoing
Dismantling Carbon Form	Alexander Arroyo, Michael Watts, Casey Mathur	The University of Chicago	2025–Ongoing
New Arctic Frontiers	Alexander Arroyo, Tøne Huse, Berit Kristoffersen, Michael Watts	The University of Chicago	2024–Ongoing
Mapping Carbon	Alexander Arroyo, Casey Mathur	The University of Chicago	2025–Ongoing
Remapping Resilience: Urban-Ecological Infrastructures of Climate Change Adaptation in Southeastern Florida	Alexander Arroyo, Stephanie Wakefield, Grga Bašić, Sol Kim	The University of Chicago	2023–Ongoing

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Swarnabh Ghosh
Postdoctoral Scholar, Urban Theory Lab
Committee on Environment, Geography and Urbanization
Department of Sociology
The University of Chicago
swarnabh_ghosh@g.harvard.edu



Swarnabh Ghosh is a geographer and historian. He recently defended his dissertation, "Value in Motion: Infrastructure, Perenniality, and the Production of Punjab, 1870-1940," at Harvard University. The dissertation examines the entwined geographies of steam power, perennial irrigation, and agrarian capitalism in northwestern India—and the western Indian Ocean—in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and develops a new interpretation of the relation between fossil-fueled circulation and the political economy of agricultural production.

He has two interrelated sets of research and teaching interests: (1) the political economy and ecologies of urbanization and (2) the history of infrastructure from the nineteenth century to the present, with an empirical focus on South Asia and the Indian Ocean world.

In addition to a monograph based on his dissertation, he is currently working on a book project with Neil Brenner on the relationship between urbanization, fossil energy, and biospheric collapse. His broader research interests include political ecology, international political economy, state theory, and the history of global capitalism. His recent work has appeared in *Critical Historical Studies*, *Development and Change*, *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, and the *Journal of Agrarian Change*.

Swarnabh holds a PhD in Urban History and Planning, with a secondary degree in Science, Technology, and Society (STS) from Harvard University, a Master of Philosophy in Urban Studies (with distinction) from the University of Cambridge, where he studied as a Bass Scholar, and a Master of Architecture from Yale University. Prior to entering academia, Swarnabh worked at the interdisciplinary studio Diller Scofidio + Renfro in New York City, where he worked on projects spanning art, media, and architecture.

Work








Publication	Alien Planet, Dead Labor—Review of Hellworld: The Human Species and the Planetary Factory	2026
Publication	Entornos de urbanización planetaria	2026
Project	Planetary Urbanization, Fossil Energy, and the Shatter Zone	2025–Ongoing
Publication	Environments of urbanization	2026
Publication	Environments of Planetary Urbanization	2025
Publication	The Monster 'Within': Capitalist Urbanization as Geometabolic Escalation	2025
Publication	Review – Labors of Division: Global Capitalism and the Emergence of the Peasant in Colonial Panjab by Navyug Gill	2025
Publication	History and Theory in the Time of Capital: On Banaji's Method	2024
Publication	The Global Industrial Feedlot Matrix: A Metabolic Monstrosity	2023
Publication	Planetary Urbanization and the Political Ecologies of Emergent Infectious Disease	2022

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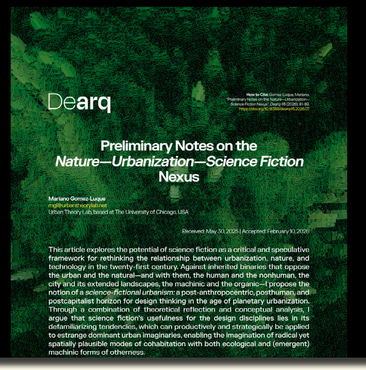
Mariano Gomez-Luque | Preliminary Notes on the Nature—Urbanization—Science Fiction Nexus | In *Dearq* 45, "Decentered City: Multispecies Design" (Bogotá: Universidad de los Andes, 2026), 81–89.

This paper intentionally intersects design thinking, urban theory, and science fiction (SF), deliberately entangling these discourses and setting them in contact and dialogue with one another, thereby creating productive friction among them. The form of the article—which alternates between two sets of textual blocks: one advancing a general narrative through a sequence of citations and commentaries; the other configuring a series of "bibliographic folders" where sources are assembled and pondered—is itself designed as a refractive medium through which the argument unfolds. The resulting idiosyncratic and expansive literature review registers the manifold conceptual resonances emerging from these staged encounters. By weaving a set of possible relations across this epistemic nexus, the paper proposes that both design activity, as praxis, and science fiction, as discourse, constitute two sides of the same mode of thought—at once critical of the existing and projected toward alternative yet plausible future planetarities—with the potential to decenter the hegemonic imaginaries of capitalist urbanization.

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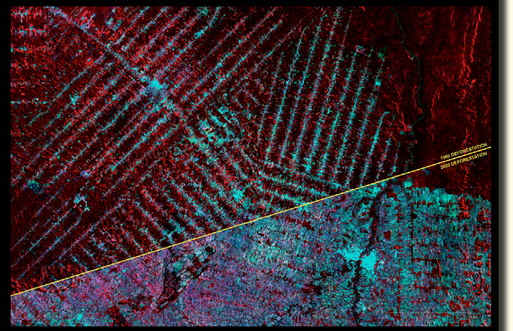
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Pixels, Planet, Power: Visualizing Urban & Environmental Change | Grga Bašić | The University of Chicago | Winter 2026

CEGU 23517, ENST 23517, ARCH 23517, DIGS 23517, MAAD 13517, ARTV 20665

From hurricanes and wildfires to urban sprawl and deforestation, the way we understand urban, environmental, and planetary change is increasingly mediated by satellite images and geospatial data. This hands-on methods course trains students across the humanities, social sciences, and sciences to turn earth-observation data into persuasive, narrative visualizations that not only show where change is happening, but why, and to whom. Working primarily in Google Earth Engine and other open-source tools, students will learn how to acquire, preprocess, analyze, and map earth-observation data, from spectral indices and machine-learning classification methods to time-series composites and cartographic design. Short lectures frame the technical labs within larger questions of power, representation, and justice, encouraging students to critique the assumptions that shape geospatial workflows even as you master them. Each year, the class grounds these skills in a topical module that tracks the most pressing environmental and urban challenges, demonstrating how evolving geospatial methods confront fresh, real-world problems. Weekly exercises build toward a collaborative final project: an evidence-rich, story-driven visualization portfolio that showcases analytical rigor and creative design. No prior coding or mapping experience is required; curiosity and a willingness to experiment are essential. The course fulfills the CEGU methods requirement and may also be eligible to meet methods requirements in other social sciences and humanities majors.

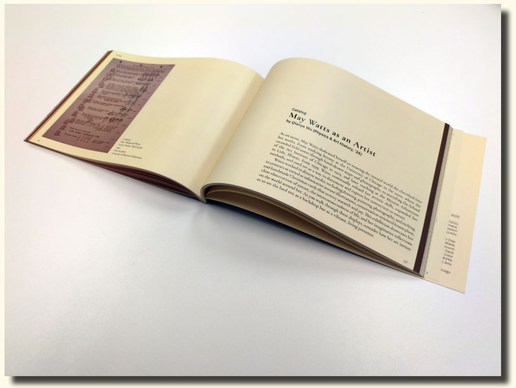
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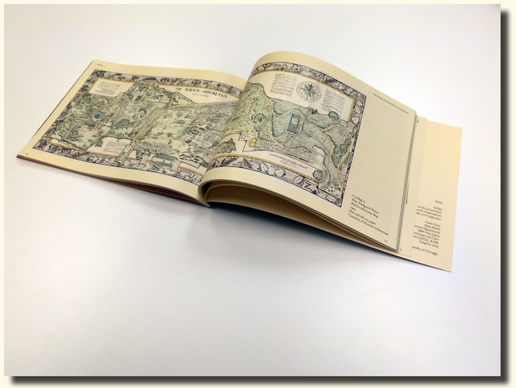


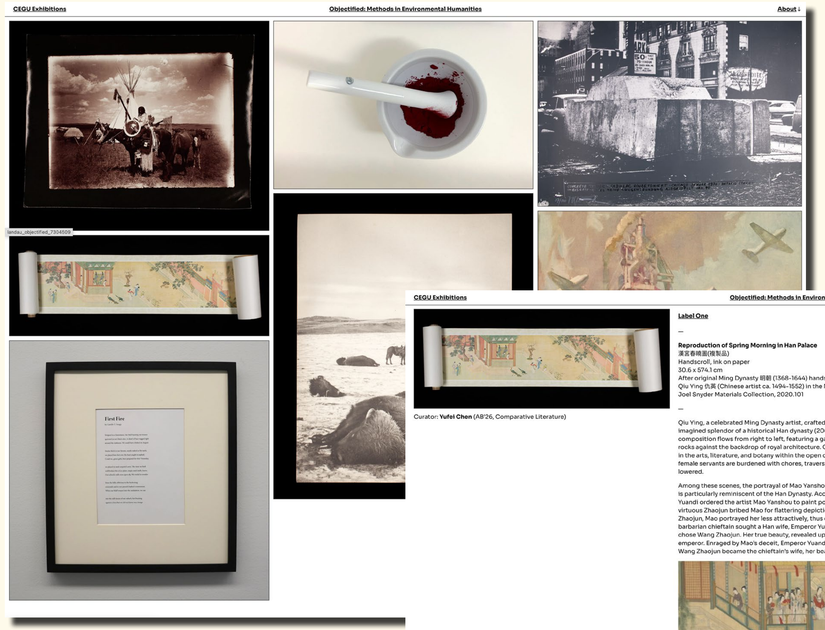
Rondônia deforestation (false color composite by Kai Foster, Lucas Ribeiro, Matilda Spadoni, Will Vanman)

exhibitions









CEGU Exhibitions | Objectified: Methods in Environmental Humanities | About ↓

Curator: **Yufei Chen** (AB'26, Comparative Literature)

Label One ↑

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Reproduction of Spring Morning in Han Palace
漢宮春曉圖(複製品)
Handscroll, ink on paper
30.6 x 574.1 cm
After original Ming Dynasty 明朝 (1368–1644) handscroll by
Qiu Ying 仇英 (Chinese artist ca. 1494–1552) in the National Palace Musuem, Taipei
Joel Snyder Materials Collection, 2020.101

—

Qiu Ying, a celebrated Ming Dynasty artist, crafted this handscroll to depict the imagined splendor of a historical Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) palace. Its composition flows from right to left, featuring a garden adorned with trees and rare rocks against the backdrop of royal architecture. Court ladies are depicted indulging in the arts, literature, and botany within the open chambers. In contrast, the palace's female servants are burdened with chores, traversing the chambers with their heads lowered.

Among these scenes, the portrayal of Mao Yanshou (毛延壽) and Wang Zhaojun (王昭君) is particularly reminiscent of the Han Dynasty. According to the story, Han Emperor Yuandi ordered the artist Mao Yanshou to paint portraits of his concubines. All but the virtuous Zhaojun bribed Mao for flattering depictions. Receiving no bribe from Zhaojun, Mao portrayed her less attractively, thus concealing her beauty. When a barbarian chieftain sought a Han wife, Emperor Yuandi was misled by the portrait and chose Wang Zhaojun. Her true beauty, revealed upon their meeting, astonished the emperor. Enraged by Mao's deceit, Emperor Yuandi had him executed. Nevertheless, Wang Zhaojun became the chieftain's wife, her beauty acknowledged only too late.



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In my first label, I employed the methodologies of critical fabulation and visual analysis. These were simultaneously applied in examining the handscroll, as the construction of the fabula necessitated meticulous observations. This approach achieved two primary objectives. Firstly, it aimed to accentuate the experiences of the female servants depicted in the handscroll. These individuals are often illustrated facing away and walking alone, possessing limited means to attract direct visual attention. This focus draws inspiration from Hartman's advocacy to "make visible the production of disposable lives".[1] In this handscroll, a pronounced contrast is evident between the opulent lives of court ladies and their female servants. By highlighting this dichotomy, we direct the audience's attention to a broader spectrum of subjects depicted. Secondly, I intended to narrate the story of Mao Yanshou and Wang Zhaojun,[2] which would be largely unfamiliar to the predominantly American audience of the exhibition. This scene is critical not only for its historical content but also because it explains the uniqueness of the painter as the sole adult male within the palace. I anticipate viewers to notice this anomaly and, through the narrative, comprehend the painter's presence within a historical context. This forms a fabula in itself, as viewers may be less familiar with historical narratives outside the handscroll's original cultural milieu than they would be in a museum located in that specific culture. Hence, reading the label grants viewers a comprehensive understanding of this handscroll through narrative.

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1. Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism 12, no. 2 (June 1, 2008): 1–14, https://doi.org/10.1215/-12-2-1.
2. Jeni Fraser, "Unfurled: The Chinese Handscroll | The Arts Society," accessed January 28, 2024, https://theartssociety.org/arts-news-features/unfurled-chinese-handscroll.

Label Two ↑

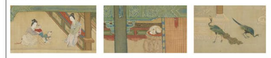
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Joel Snyder Materials Collection, 2020.101

—

Qiu Ying, a celebrated Ming Dynasty artist, brings to life a Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) palace in this handscroll. The panoramic view from right to left reveals a garden with trees and unique rocks, set against a backdrop of royal architecture. Court ladies are depicted indulging in the arts, literature, and botany within the open chambers. Animals also appear in various locations, interacting with the palace residents. One scene depicts a child lifting a puppy from the ground under the watchful eyes of his mother. In another scene, a cat rests on a stool behind a group of practicing musicians. A pair of peacocks gather under the window to be fed.

The theme of "Spring Morning in the Palaces of Han" (漢宮春曉) is popular amongst artists who seek to recapture the long-lost grandeur of Han dynasty. These works offer an idealized representation of the "Han palace" as imagined through the lens of later periods. Qiu Ying's work, while rooted in historical Han themes, incorporates elements like the peacocks that symbolize fortune only in later Ming culture. These anachronisms in the handscroll become a testament to the evolving artistic narrative, bridging past and present.



—

In my second label, I integrated Haraway's theory of companion species with historical analysis to shed light on often-overlooked multispecies relationships in the peripheries. The handscroll depicts a child interacting with a puppy, exemplifying Haraway's concept of "an emergent process of co-habiting".[3] Additionally, the depicted cat, while demonstrating less physical dependence on humans, claims a distinct right to rest on a well-crafted stool, without disturbing the band's rehearsal. This aligns with Haraway's concept of constructing "rights" between companion species and human, as exemplified by the mutual respect between musicians and the cat. Transitioning to a historical analysis, I sought to inform readers that the handscroll's title, "Spring Morning in the Palaces of Han", is not unique to this piece.[4] My research indicated that peacocks, instead of being a theme of Han paintings, actually belonged to Qiu Ying's contemporary Ming Dynasty culture.[5] Ultimately, my objective is to dismantle viewers' preconceptions about the painting's title, thereby heightening their awareness of the significant temporal and cultural gap between the depicted Han Dynasty and Ming Dynasty. This, I hope, will promote critical thinking among viewers regarding artistic representations of the past.

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3. Donna Jeanne Haraway, The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness, Paradigm 8 (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003).
4. Anita Chung, Drawing Boundaries: Architectural Images in Qing China (University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wqvvg.
5. Ying Ding and Xiaolong Li, "On the Decoration and Symbolization of Chinese Ancient Official Uniform in Ming and Qing Dynasties" (2014 International Conference on Mechatronics, Electronic, Industrial and Control Engineering (MEIC-14), Shenyang, China, 2014), https://doi.org/10.2991/meic-14.2014.229.

In composing the tombstone for the two labels, I referenced label formats from the National Palace Museum in Taipei,[6] where this painting is housed, and the Art Institute of Chicago, to understand how an eminent American art museum presents information about early Chinese art. Notably, the Art Institute categorizes pre-PRC artists equally as "Chinese."[7] However, in my tombstone, I chose not to follow this practice. The term "ancient China" seems like an externally imposed nomenclature, whereas people historically identified their nations by dynasty names. Additionally, I incorporated photographs of specific scenes mentioned in the label for two key reasons. Firstly, to highlight the exact portrayal of the discussed details in the labels, and secondly, to enhance the label's interactive potential. Given the visual richness of the work, pinpointing these detailed shots can encourage viewers to engage more critically and thoroughly with the artwork.

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6. National Palace Museum, "Painting Animation: Spring Dawn in the Han Palace," Exhibits, National Palace Museum (National Palace Museum, June 29, 2018), https://theme.npm.edu.tw/exh107/npm_anime/SpringDawn/en/index.html.
7. Wen Zhengming, Autumn Mountains 秋山圖, 1550-1570, Handscroll; ink on gold-flecked paper, 31.8 × 120.8 cm (12 9/16 × 47 9/16 in.), 1550-1570. https://www.artic.edu/artworks/62536/autumn-mountains-%E7%A7%8B%E5%B1%B1%E5%9C%96.

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Bibliography

Chung, Anita. Drawing Boundaries: Architectural Images in Qing China. University of Hawai'i Press, 2004. https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wqvvg.

Ding, Ying, and Xiaolong Li. "On the Decoration and Symbolization of Chinese Ancient Official Uniform in Ming and Qing Dynasties." Shenyang, China, 2014. https://doi.org/10.2991/meic-14.2014.229.

Fraser, Jeni. "Unfurled: The Chinese Handscroll | The Arts Society." Accessed January 28, 2024. https://theartssociety.org/arts-news-features/unfurled-chinese-handscroll.

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Museum, National Palace. "Painting Animation: Spring Dawn in the Han Palace." Exhibits. National Palace Museum. National Palace Museum, June 29, 2018. https://theme.npm.edu.tw/exh107/npm_anime/SpringDawn/en/index.html.

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reports & catalogs



CEGU
UNDERGRADUATE COURSES
WINTER 2024

COMMITTEE ON ENVIR
GEOGRAPHY AND URE
Division of Social Scier
The University of Chica



CEGU 23517 (ENST 23517, DIGS 23517, ARTV 20665, MAAD 13517, ARCH 23517)

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Introduction to Critical Spatial Media: Visualizing Urban, Environmental, and Planetary Change
Alexander Arroyo, Grga Bašić, and Sol Kim

TU/TH
2:00–3:20PM

This course introduces critical theories and techniques for visualizing interconnected transformations of urban, environmental, and planetary systems amidst the pressures of climate change, urbanization, and global economies of capital-

CEGU 20001 (ENST 20011, HIST 25031, GLST 21001)

—

Climate Change, Environment, and Society
Christopher Kindell

TU/TH
11:00AM–12:20PM

How has natural and anthropogenic climate change shaped human relationships with the environment? Against the backdrop of planetary environmental emergencies of the early-21st century, this discussion-based course wil
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CEGU 22102 (ENST 22102)

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Methods in Environmental Humanities
Jessica Landau

MO/WE
1:30–2:50PM

What are the environmental humanities and how do their approaches differ from those of other humanistic disciplines? In answering these questions, this course will equip students with tools to reckon with some of our planet's

CEGU 22301 (CEGU 32301, ENST 32301)

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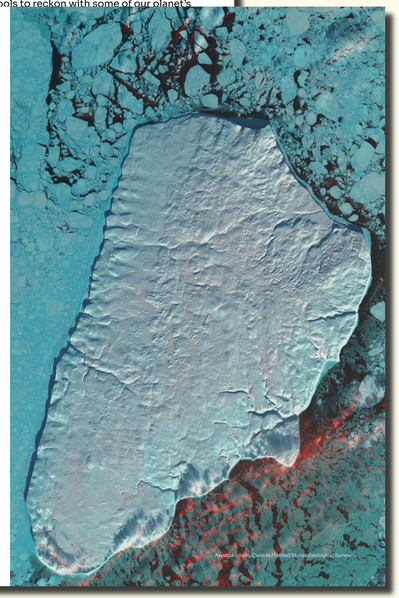
Digital Geographies of Climate Justice
Alexander Arroyo

WE
1:30–4:20PM

Struggles for climate and environmental justice are increasingly mediated by digital technologies and geospatial data, especially in the Global South. In Amazonia, for example, the plight of indigenous groups bearing the brunt of ecological dispossession and political violence by deforestation is frequently represented through remotely-sensed data showing time-series of canopy loss; in turn, these data are often prompted, groundtruthed, and mobilized by indigenous communities and affiliated activists in legal and political campaigns. In parallel, across the world ocean, countries across the Global South– from Papua New Guinea and Ecuador to Ghana– are partnering with watch-dog organizations using satellite imagery and GPS data to track illegal fishing and human rights abuses at sea, acting as an auxilliary ecological police force to identify and provide data to prosecute offending vessels.

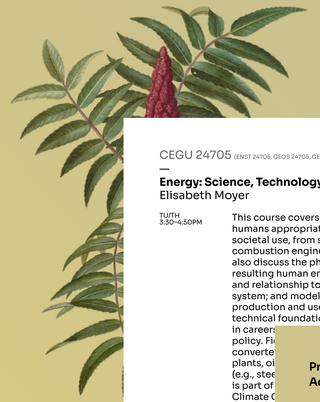
The proliferation of these digital geographic technologies and techniques pose a number of complex questions. Drawing on contemporary cases, experimental projects in "forensic" approaches to activism, and recent work in critical geography, aesthetics, STS, and political theory, this seminar will attempt to map out these digital geographies of climate justice as they emerge. The course will also involve introduction to entry-level remote sensing + GIS workflows (no prior experience required) in a pair of intensive workshops led by guest lecturers/practitioners.

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CEGU
UNDERGRADUATE COURSES
SPRING 2024

COMMITTEE ON ENVII
GEOGRAPHY AND URI
Division of Social Scier
The University of Chica



Based in the Division of Social Sciences at The University of Chicago, the Committee on Environment, Geography and Urbanization (CEGU) is an interdisciplinary platform for critical thinking, advanced research, and innovative pedagogy on the

CEGU 24705 (ENST 24705, GEOS 24705, GEOS 34705, ENSC 24705)

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Energy: Science, Technology, and Human Usage
Elisabeth Moyer

TU/TH
3:30–4:50PM

This course covers the technologies by which humans appropriate energy for industrial and societal use, from steam turbines to internal combustion engines to photovoltaics. We also discuss the physics and economics of the resulting human energy system: fuel sources and relationship to energy flows in the Earth system; and modeling and simulation of energy production and use. Our goal is to provide a technical foundation for students interested in career
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CEGU 26100 (CEGU 36100,
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Roots of the Moderr
Michael Conzen

TU/TH
2:00–3:20PM

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CEGU 22211 (ENST 22211, ARCH 22211, CHST 22211, KNOW 22211)

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Riding about the South Side
William Nickell

WE
6:30–9:20PM

This course is based on bicycling through the South Side neighborhoods surrounding the University of Chicago. There will be some readings, but the primary input will be from riding–from seeing things at street level and

Pre-registration is open February 12–16.
Add/drop opens March 11.

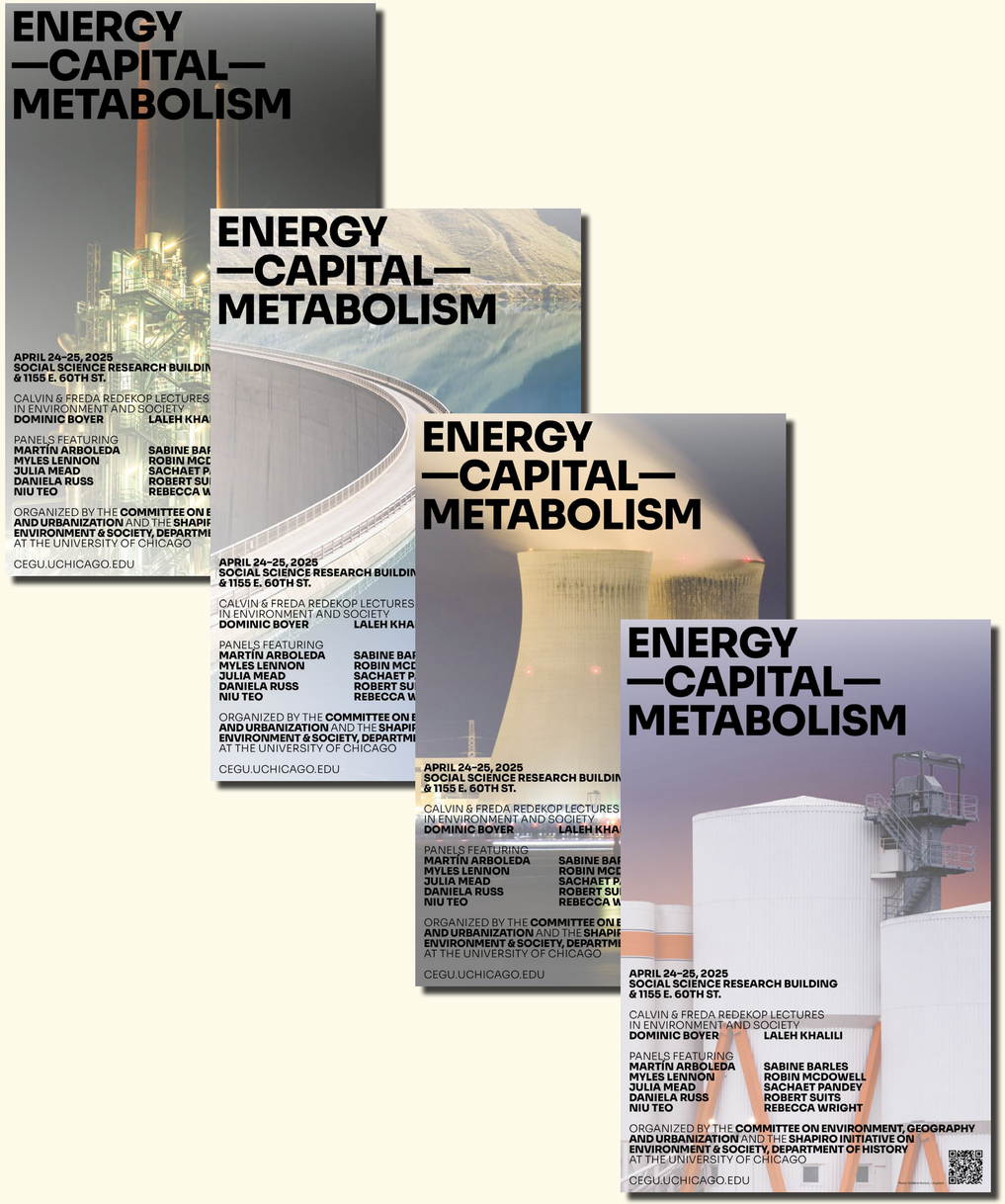


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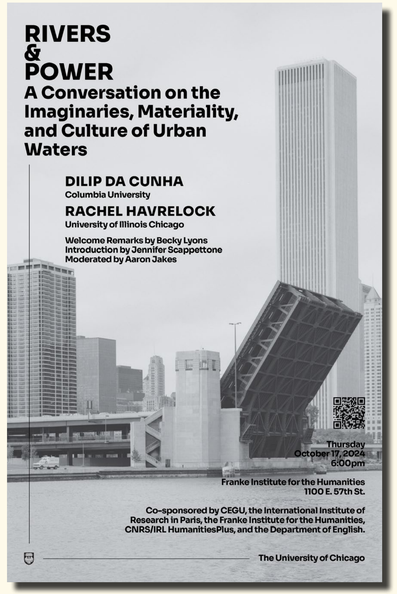
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Typeface: Sora
Images: Johannes Simon Holtzbecher (1610–1671), Wikimedia Commons

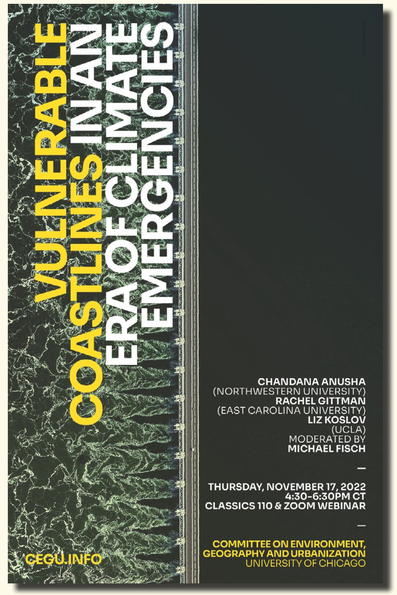
LAST UPDATE: February 5, 2024

events


ENERGY
—CAPITAL—
METABOLISM
APRIL 24–25, 2025
SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH BUILDING
& 1155 E. 60TH ST.
CALVIN & FREDA REDEKOP LECTURES
IN ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIETY
DOMINIC BOYER
LALEH KHALILI
PANELS FEATURING
MARTÍN ARBOLEDA
MYLES LENNON
JULIA MEAD
DANIELA RUSS
NIU TEO
SABINE BARLES
ROBIN MCDOWELL
SACHAET PANDEY
ROBERT SUITS
REBECCA WRIGHT
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AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
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RIVERS
&
POWER
A Conversation on the Imaginaries, Materiality, and Culture of Urban Waters
DILIP DA CUNHA
Columbia University
RACHEL HAVRELOCK
University of Illinois Chicago
Welcome Remarks by Becky Lyons
Introduction by Jennifer Scappettone
Moderated by Aaron Jakes
Thursday
October 17, 2024
6:00pm
Franke Institute for the Humanities
1100 E. 57th St.
Co-sponsored by CEGU, the International Institute of Research in Paris, the Franke Institute for the Humanities, CNRS/IRL HumanitiesPlus, and the Department of English.
The University of Chicago

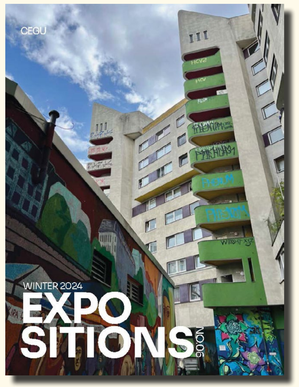

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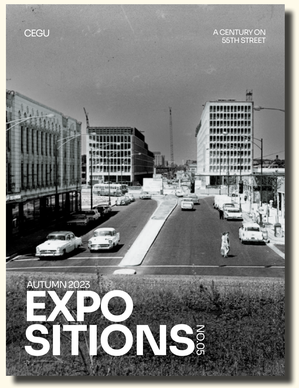

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COASTLINES IN AN
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(NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY)
RACHEL GITTMAN
(EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY)
LIZ KOSLOV
(UCLA)
MODERATED BY
MICHAEL FISCH
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2022
4:30–6:30PM CT
CLASSICS 110 & ZOOM WEBINAR
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UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

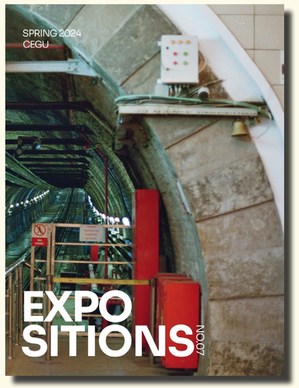

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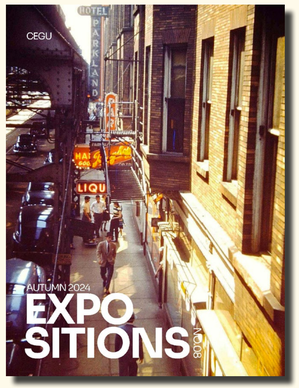
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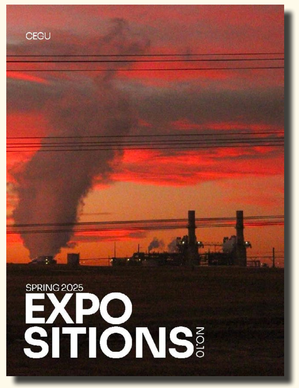














November 2026

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