

PRIVILEGE ON A WARMING PLANET



Jeremy Williams, Leon Sealey Huggins, Anneleen Kenis, Harriet Bergman

**READING GROUP , LECTURES, PANEL
DISCUSSION AND PRESENTATIONS**



University of Antwerp
| Center for European Philosophy

23 and 24 September 2021

**FOSSIL
FREE
CULTURE**

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the *Centre for European Philosophy* and
the *Raad Dienstverlening*

Broadcast of panel discussion in collaboration with
Fossil Free Culture NL and *Dekolonisatie Netwerk
Nederland*.



**Universiteit
Antwerpen**



University of Antwerp
| Faculty of Arts

PROGRAM

Thursday, September 23d

11:00-12:15

Opening and Preparatory reading group and discussion
on campus and online

12:15 - 13:45

Agora Kaffee, Grote Kauwenberg

13:45 - 15:00

Preparatory reading group and discussion
on campus and online

15:00 - 15:30

Coffee break

15:30 - 16:30

Book presentation
Jeremy Williams on Climate Change is Racist
on campus broadcast and online

17:00 - 18:00

Lecture TBA
Leon Sealey Huggins
on campus broadcast and online

20:00 - 21:30

Panel discussion 'Privilege on a Warming Planet'
Jeremy Williams, Leon Sealey Huggins, moderated by Harriet Bergman (online and Antwerp) and Talissa Soto (Amsterdam)
on campus broadcast, online, and broadcast and discussion in collaboration with FFC-NL

preparatory reading groups and webinar for a broader audience

PRIVILEGE ON A WARMING PLANET

PROGRAM

Friday, September 24th

11:00-12:00

**Opening and
Anthropo-who?**

Jasmijn Leeuwenkamp

12:00 - 13:30

lunch

13:30 - 15:00

Privilege and denial

Vanessa Weihgold and
Ewoud Vandepitte

15:00 - 15:30

Coffee break

15:30- 17:00

**Colonialism and Climate
Change**

Archana Ramanujam
and Elias Koenig

20:00- 21:30

Lecture TBA

Anneleen Kenis

*Online and broadcast &
discsusion at Antwerp Campus*

Presentations and discussions

PRIVILEGE ON A WARMING PLANET

CONFERENCE AGREEMENTS

The atmosphere at this conference aims to be not only academic, but also highly personal and political. Any conversation that touches upon inconvenient truths and wildly different experiences, with high stakes involved, can become uncomfortable. The aim of this policy is not to take any discomfort away, but to create a space in which possible discomfort is used as an opportunity to learn.

By taking part in any part of the conference program, participants agree to these principles. This implies all are doing their best to stick to these and any extra agreements, are willing to be called in or called out, and commit to correcting people in a respectful manner that encourages their learning process, rather than shutting them down.

Step up/step down

If you normally take up a lot of space, be it because of a dominant identity or because of an extravert personality, we ask you to regularly step down in conversations and let other people speak first, even if it entails a short awkward silence. If you normally stay in the background, be it because of societal expectations or shyness, we ask you to regularly step up in conversations and take the floor, even if your answer might 'wrong' or imperfect.

Be aware of your own privilege, consciously challenge implicit hierarchies, and take a step back so marginalized people can lead.

Mindful with emotions

Everybody is entitled to their own affective states. However, the expression of emotions itself is deeply cultural and political. Be mindful that some participants' lives might be closely tied to the history of colonization, and that philosophical investigation should not take place at the emotional expense of other participants. (adapted from the Decolonizing Philosophy Workshop Reader)

Don't speak on behalf of others

Refrain from speaking on behalf of other participants. (adapted from the Decolonizing Philosophy Workshop Reader/BARC collective)

Other agreements we make together to make the conference a success.

Because we don't know everything and are willing to take to heart any advice or agreements that enable your best participation in the program, we'll take the morning session on Thursday to add to this list.

REGISTER FOR THE ONLINE PROGRAM

Register on zoom for all online events

Register for the online meetings and webinars by clicking on the links below. The same zoom link provides you entry to the various slots of that part of the program. After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

PREPARATORY READING GROUPS

11:00 - 12:15 and 13:45- 15:00

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYucuivpjkrEtcg65SAJwH90tuK36-3rAhO>

BOOK PRESENTATION AND LECTURE

15:30- 16:30 and 17:00 and 18:00

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJwkdeChqz0tHtWOY9JCCdNPlkafxK0WBjQ0>

PANEL DISCUSSION PRIVILEGE ON A WARMING PLANET

20:00 - 21:30

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/98795463878>

PAPER PRESENTATIONS

11:00- 12:00, 13:30 – 15:00, 15:30- 17:00

Register in advance for this meeting:

https://zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlvc-iqpzsjNGCCJyAq6jZ3Hv_zR6cJgjR

CLOSING LECTURE

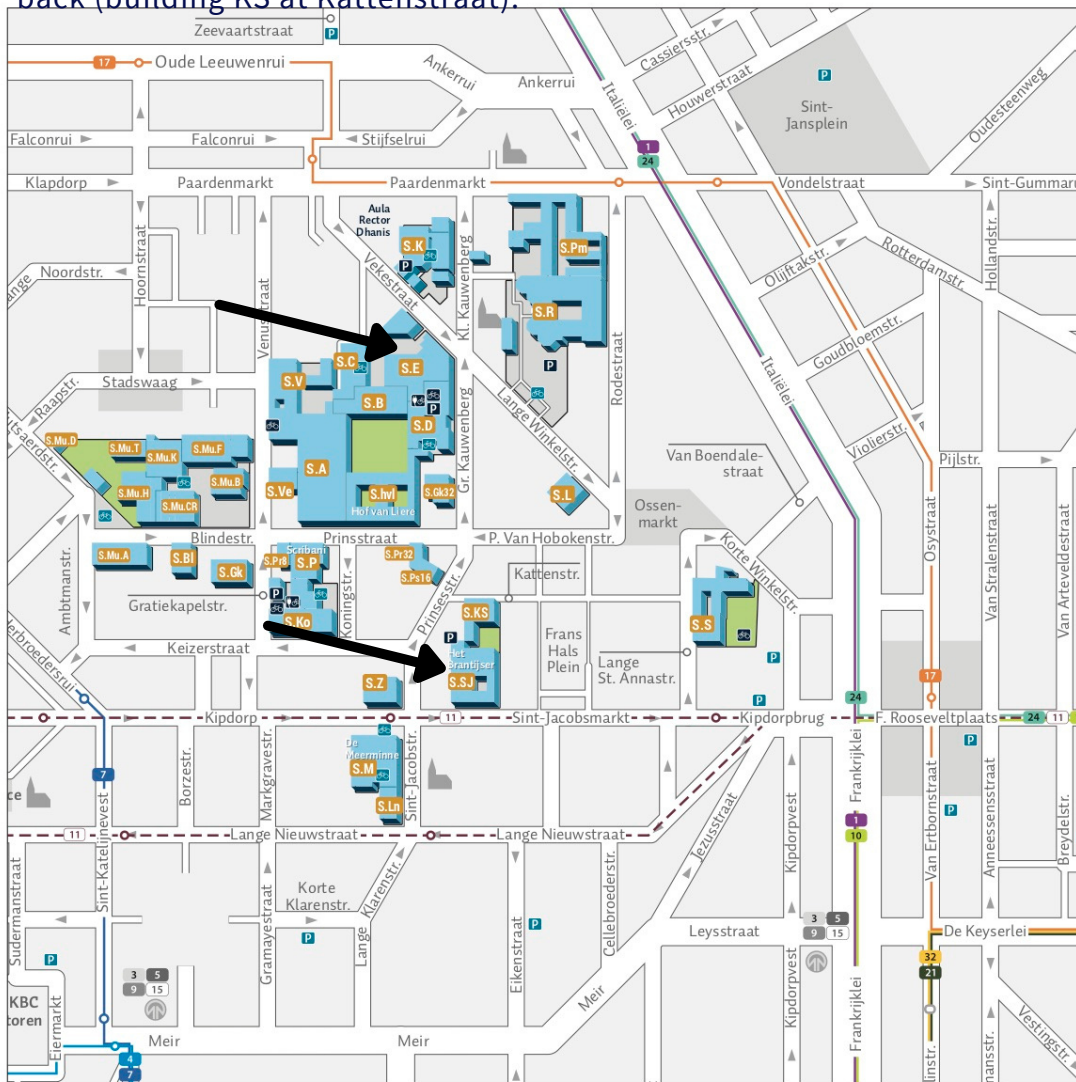
Join Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/91853517905>

REGISTER FOR THE CAMPUS PROGRAM

All live events and broadcasts will take place at the City Campus Antwerp, in room KS 203 and KS 204 of *Het Brantijser* (Sint-Jacobsmarkt 13, KS and SJ on the map). Lunch will be at *Agora Kaffee* (Grote Kauwenberg 2, SE on the map).

Access the entrance building, move through the main building (building SJ) and over the second courtyard and then enter the building at the back (building KS at Kattenstraat).



At all physical locations on campus, we'll practice social distancing. Everyone is required to wear mouthmasks while moving, but can take them off once seated.

BIOGRAPHIES

Thursday book presentation, lecture and panel discussion

Leon Sealey-Huggins is assistant professor in the Global Sustainable Development division of the School for Cross-faculty studies at the university of Warwick. His work centres on the social and political relations of climate breakdown, with a particular focus on the Caribbean region. In his work, he considers the sociology and politics of the climate crisis investigating what climate justice means in the context of global historical, and present, inequalities.

Jeremy Williams is a writer and campaigner for environmental and social justice, and author of *Climate Change is Racist: Race, Privilege and the Struggle for Climate Justice*. He writes *The Earthbound Report* (Britain's leading green blog) and edited the *Extinction Rebellion* book *Time to Act*. He grew up in Madagascar and now lives in Luton.

Harriet Bergman writes a PhD *Habits of Privilege* at the Centre for European Philosophy at Antwerp University, where she examines what climate justice activists can learn from anti-racism struggles about privilege, denial, ignorance, guilt, and unequal power relations. She is involved in various climate justice groups.

Talissa Soto will moderate the discussion in Amsterdam. She is an organizer, facilitator and poet working on developing feminist, anti-racist, decolonial praxis to fight and repair climate and environmental injustice. She also provides trainings for grassroots groups and NGO's working on social and environmental issues.

Fossil Free Culture NL is a collective of artists, activists, researchers and critics working at the intersection of art and climate activism. Their goal is to confront oil and gas sponsorship of public cultural institutions in the Netherlands. They are committed to eroding the fossil fuel industry's public image and their social license to operate.

Friday paper presentations, workshop and closing lecture

Anneleen Kenis is a post-doctoral research fellow of the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO), affiliated with the Division of Geography and Tourism at KU Leuven and the Department of Geography at King's College London. Her work centres around political ecology focusing in particular on processes of politicisation and depoliticisation in relation to climate change, air pollution and genetically modified organisms.

Ewoud Vandepitte is a phd candidate in sociology at the UAntwerp and investigates the climate movement and their relation to hope. He combines his academic work with long time involvement in climate and other social movements. He studied moral sciences and sociology at the UGent and is interested in topics like social movements, climate justice, anarchism, narratives, social transformations, transgression and many more.

BIOGRAPHIES

Friday paper presentations, workshop and closing lecture

Jasmijn Leeuwenkamp is a PhD candidate at the Amsterdam School of Cultural Analysis (ASCA) of the University of Amsterdam where she is researching the possibility to reimagine human rights from a non-anthropocentric perspective in her project "Human Rights and the Anthropocene: Thinking Through the Implications of the Critique of Anthropocentrism for Universal Rights." The project involves case studies about Urgenda, the Embassy of the North Sea and the Dakota Access Pipeline, where questions of ecological and social justice are interconnected.

Archana Ramanujam is interested in how colonial capitalism is reproduced by the climate crisis, and how we can decolonize, towards economies that center justice, care and regeneration. Part of this work includes racial inequalities in environmental destruction (environmental racism) - she just worked on a report about this in the context of Europe. She is also currently working on a small project on how to use fossil fuel nationalization towards a phase-out in the US, and how to build democratic, antiracist governance on this to prevent the reproduction of previous inequalities and power dynamics.

Vanessa Weihgold's PhD-project at the universities Aix-Marseille and Tübingen addresses the question whether ecological emotions show a cultural conflict. Vanessa studied Philosophy in her Master and Philosophy, Romance Studies and Economic Psychology in her Bachelor. She has been working in Marketing and Exports for a Wholesaler and in Production and Typesetting at a publisher.

ABSTRACTS

Panel 1.11:00 - 12:00 Anthro-who?

Climate justice and the over-representation of Man in Human Rights- **Jasmijn Leeuwenkamp**

In recent years legal action has proven to be a promising strategy for climate action. Two examples are the 2019 Urgenda case and the more recent Shell case, where the court ruled that CO2 emissions must be radically reduced in the upcoming years, holding these parties responsible for causing dangerous climate change. In each case, the lawyers demanding emission reduction referred to human rights as a basis for demanding climate action. This is in line with recent efforts of human rights scholars and lawyers to ground climate justice in universal rights demands.

However, although demanding climate justice by referring to human rights may seem like a promising strategy when climate change is considered as an existential threat to human life, the philosophical foundation and history of human rights problematize the idea that all (human) life is equally benefited by these aims. The problem is that human rights stem from an Enlightenment discourse in which 'human' meant only white, bourgeois male humans, regarded as the universal prototype of humanity, whose essence and ground for 'dignity' (Kant) lies solely in 'rationality'. This essence was opposed to all the 'lower forms of being' (non-whites, women, slaves, animals, etc.), which have since then been regarded as 'needing' white 'Enlightened' men to save, dominate and govern them. Human rights are not only grounded in this discourse, but they are also part of the colonial and postcolonial projects that it inspired.

This makes it relevant to ask which human life is precisely protected by human rights in the first place, and how its protection is connected to the wellbeing of other forms of life. In this paper I will show how the project of demanding climate action by referring to human rights might be critically assessed from the perspective of the 'overrepresentation of Man', by drawing on the work of Sylvia Wynter and Zakiyyah Iman Jackson. With 'overrepresentation of Man', Wynter means the overrepresentation of the European bourgeois, white male 'ethnoclass' that since colonial modernity has represented the essence of Being, Power, Truth and Freedom, repressing other forms of being (human). First, I will show how the human rights framework functions in recent legal strategies to ground climate action in human rights, by looking at the cases of Shell and Urgenda and the strategy of Ecocide. Second, I will critically reflect on the notion of 'human' that is behind the human rights framework, by looking at the work of Wynter and Jackson, and show the implications of their critique for said strategies. As a third step I will show how the anthropocentric human rights framework is also deeply connected to the modernist distinction between 'man' and 'nature', by discussing how recent eco-philosophers such as Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway propose to overcome the 'nature/culture' divide of modernity and reflect on the question to what extent these authors reformulate ideas and views that have already been formulated by non-Western peoples but have been repressed by the framework 'overrepresenting Man'.

ABSTRACTS

Panel 2. 13:30 - 15:00 Denial and Privilege

The Fear of Justice in realizing Climate Privilege - Vanessa Weihgold

Acknowledging the structural racism of climate change is shading a new light on the emotional reactions to environmental loss. While research from the Global North reports anxiety, (Clayton et al. 2017) depression, (Sandilands 2017) or denialism, (Norgaard 2011) Indigenous peoples seem to be more affected by grief for their environment and culture. (Cunsolo et al. 2020) Even though Ogunbode and colleagues showed that people from 25 different countries all over the globe are concerned with climate change, (Ogunbode et al. 2021) anxiety still seems to be a primarily white phenomenon. (Ray 2021) This paper will focus on the question why White people seem to be blocked. Other than Ray, I do not think that Black and brown people are more resilient, but that there is no need for them to feel this way. In my view, anxiety, depression and denialism can be analyzed as repression of the subconscious realization of climate injustice. This is in line with Jeremy William's analysis of the "intersectionality of denial". (Williams 2021, 95) The feelings of responsibility and guilt for living in a polluting society are blocked by fear of being an outsider if changing one's behavior. (Norgaard 2011, 97) Following structural thinking, I argue that addressing engagement – be it environmental or anti-racist – has to take the underlying emotions into consideration.

Ruled by urgency? Tense temporalities in the Climate Justice Movement - Ewoud Vandepitte

A sense of urgency is one of many possible drivers for climate action. But what happens when a movement gets ruled by urgency? In order to grasp the multi-faced and multi-paced climate (justice) movements, a closer look on movement temporalities is necessary. Through document analysis and twenty in-depth interviews with Belgian organizers in the Climate Movement, a tension emerged between on the one hand an urgent and fast-paced temporality and on the other a 'slowing down' approach rooted in climate justice.

Publicly dominant narratives place urgency central through slogans such as 'act now', or 'now or never'. More recent groups such as Youth for Climate/Fridays for Future and Extinction Rebellion added to this by emphasizing the concept of a climate emergency. While these group's actions and their narratives of urgency led to a short but heavy upsurge of protests in 2019, intra-critiques soon followed. Firstly, an emphasis on urgency can lead to impatience and might enhance vulnerability to disappointment and resulting disengagement. Secondly, urgency-narratives can raise intra-organizational stress, limit space for reflection and reinforce interpersonal oppressions. Thirdly, a 'hierarchy of urgencies' that prioritizes climate-threats above e.g. racism or poverty stands in tense relation to attempts of connecting social movements under the meta-narrative of climate justice.

In contrast, an alternative temporality of 'slowing down' sees the climate-justice struggle 'not as a sprint but as a marathon'. Proponents state that 'doing it good' might be more important than 'doing it now'. As such this approach invests in building multi-movement alliances aiming at profound system change through cultivating interpersonal relationships and spaces of reflection.

ABSTRACTS

Panel 3. 15:30 - 17:00 Climate Change and Colonial afterlives

Towards a Du Boisian Approach to the Climate Crisis - Archana Ramanujam

Current mainstream understandings of the climate crisis often frame the issue in technocratic terms such as parts per million and greenhouse gases, focusing on reduction or elimination as a solution. In contrast, climate movements and certain academics are increasingly pointing to capitalism as the culprit. Capitalism is seen as the endless pursuit of growth, exploiting nature and its finite resources for profit and thus moving humanity beyond Earth's carrying capacity. However, racial inequities produced by climate disruption cannot be explained by capitalism alone, nor can the disproportionately large contributions of global North countries towards ecological crisis. While certain climate justice movements and scholars have framed these dynamics in terms of environmental or climate-related racism, only a select few link this form of racism to underlying colonial and racial capitalisms.

In this paper, I seek to show how Du Bois' conception of colonial capitalism can develop our understanding of the causes and dimensions of the climate crisis, and how we might build upon a contemporary Du Boisian approach towards a solution. First, I show how current criticisms of capitalism in the context of the climate crisis fall short. I then briefly address the environmental justice and environmental racism literature, and how far this scholarship goes in terms of linking inequities to underlying systems or structures. I further proceed to review Du Bois' conception of colonial capitalism. Finally, I attempt to synthesize a contemporary Du Boisian approach to the climate crisis that is based on his conception of colonial capitalism, but also incorporates an understanding of settler colonialism and that further develops critical aspects.

Climate Justice Beyond the Canon: Undoing Conceptual Imperialism - Elias Koenig

This paper argues that the racially motivated exclusion of non-European philosophies from the European philosophical canon in the late 18th century helped to facilitate the hegemony of a fundamentally unsustainable modern conception of Nature. The erasure of non-European theorizations of nature and humanity's place in it enabled the global export of a view of Nature as a passive object that can be owned, traded, and exploited for the exclusive benefit of some Humans, a vanilla essence of white maleness. Philosophers were, thus, instrumental in supplying ideological fodder to those justifying the violent imperialist appropriation of human and non-human labor around the globe that underpinned the emergence of the current fossil capitalist world order. Notably, the exclusion of non-European philosophies from mainstream Anglo-European philosophical discourse remains widely effective today, continuing to haunt the syllabi and confine the conceptual cosmos of contemporary academic philosophy. This is the case even in the field of environmental and climate philosophy. For instance, most theorizations of climate justice still rely on a broadly Rawlsian framework, privileging concerns of distributive justice and reproducing a view of Nature as a thing to be re-distributed. Given the pressing need for a global philosophy of climate justice that critically examines its own problematic ontological premises, the paper makes the case that climate and environmental philosophy in the 21st century should engage more with the alternative theorizations of Nature and of human-ecological relationships that were developed by many non-European philosophical traditions, including, for instance, Chinese philosophy.