

**December 15 | Leon Wansleben** (Max-Planck-Institute for the Study of Societies, Cologne)

### **Decarbonization at your Doorstep: How Infrastructures, Politics, and Climate Activists Shape Household Energy Transitions**

The renewable energy transition is at the heart of any serious effort to slow down global warming. But while renewables provide growing shares of electricity, shifting household energy consumption from fossil sources to green power proves extremely contentious. This lecture sketches these difficulties and discusses relevant factors that can block or ease household decarbonization. A particular focus lies on distributional politics. While past scholarship has mainly highlighted how fossil interest groups oppose and obstruct climate policy, the general population largely fears losing out from domestic energy transitions. Legacy infrastructures and the degree to which institutions prioritize social provisioning or profit interests shape these attitudes and the legitimacy of climate policy. In this politically contentious situation, climate movements must craft new strategies that consider widespread anxieties and demands for social protection.

**January 5 | Estela Schindel** (EUV, Sociology)

### **Beyond the (Hu)man: Challenges and Debates around the Anthropocene**

The 'Anthropocene' was conceptualised as a way of accounting for an epoch in which humans have become a decisive planetary force. While the term has been criticized for universalizing "humanity" and reproducing Western, anthropocentric, and dualist assumptions, it nonetheless opens a useful space for rethinking the entanglements of society, nature, and technology. For the social sciences, this implies a paradigm shift, as it challenges the idea that humans are the main force shaping social life and calls for relational, post-dualist modes of knowing. This lecture explores the Anthropocene as an epistemological crisis, examining key theoretical debates and alternative frameworks that may help reimagine agency beyond human exceptionalism. What conceptualisation of the human might allow for both relational embeddedness in the web of life and a renewed emancipatory horizon? Is a sociology beyond 'Man' possible, and how could it contribute to this rethinking?

**January 12 | André Rottmann** (EUV, Theories of Arts & Media Studies)

### **Images, Infrastructures and Intelligences: Ecologies of Contemporary Art between Nature and Technology**

Since the 1960s, art has commonly been defined as fraying the boundaries between traditional mediums and new media and as situating the aesthetic object in expanded spatial, social, political and discursive force fields. From today's perspective, this critical development may most adequately be revisited in terms of tracing contemporary art's ecological entanglements: starting with Land Art's embrace of entropy in industrial landscapes, through site-specific projects attentive to institutional, architectural and urban infrastructures, to recent works signalling the interdependencies of human and non-human, biological and technical actors and actants. This lecture offers a short history of the relationships that art after modernism has been entertaining with its increasingly relational and hybrid environments. In dealing with salient examples of art in the 2020s, such a discussion of an "ecological turn" necessarily entails a closer look at the role of "Artificial Intelligence" in contemporary art theory and practice.

**January 19 | Andreas Bähr** (EUV, European Cultural History of the Modern Era)

### **Times of Crisis: Concepts of the Past, Present and Future in Early Modern Human-Environment Relations**

Crises are times when the fate of individuals, cultures, and societies is decided. In the early modern period, an era marked by climate change, epidemics, and war, this decision was conceived against the backdrop of the apocalypse. 'Crisis' meant the interpretation of divine signs in terms of salvation history, which promised insight into the progress and end of the world and thus provided guidance for human decision-making and action. The knowledge of the future inscribed in this practice of sign reading was fraught with constitutive provisionality and uncertainty. However, awareness of this uncertainty did not lead to desperate resignation or a carefree pursuit of private interests. Rather, it made people realise that in order to ensure their own self-preservation, they must always consider the impact of their actions on the entire human and natural world.

**January 26 | Amelie Kutter** (EUV, European Politics and Societies)

### **Governmentalities of Sustainability Transition: The Case of Peatlands**

Peatlands have recently gained unusual prominence in policymaking and public debate. When they are wet, they store plenty of greenhouse gases, host endangered species, and regulate the local climate and water, but when they are drained they emit many greenhouse gases. Therefore, the rewetting and reuse of peatlands has become subject of programmed sustainability transition, i.e., targeted policies that aim to make production and consumption more 'climate neutral'. The lecture will use the example of peatlands in the State of Brandenburg in order to examine the way sustainability transition is made 'governable' across scales by both governance instruments and local actors' strategies. Drawing on the perspective of governmentality studies and the political sociology of policy instruments, the talk will outline the rationalities, technologies of knowledge production, and subjectivities that are constituted by these practices. The relations these practices establish between the governing and the governed as well as between nature and humans and what contradictions emerge from that, allowing for contestation, will be assessed, leading to more general conclusions on the challenges of sustainability transition.

**Join via Zoom:**



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**Master of Arts in  
European Studies**



# **BEYOND SUSTAINABILITY HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES PERSPECTIVES ON THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS**

**Lecture Series, winter term 2025/26**

European University Viadrina, Frankfurt (Oder)

Mondays, 4.15-5.45 pm, room AM 233 & Zoom

Conveners: **Estela Schindel & Amelie Kutter**

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Climate change, extractivist devastation, ocean acidification, and the accelerating loss of species continue to worsen worldwide, with environmental damage intensifying globally. As the ecological crisis deepens, the humanities and social sciences are called upon to develop resources — conceptual, analytical, and methodological — in order to make sense of the current situation and to respond to its challenges. The concept of sustainability has been criticized for its association with technocratic, managerial, and neoliberal agendas that fail to address the structural, historical, and cultural dimensions of environmental degradation. At the same time, the crisis demands more than critique: it calls for innovative ways of thinking, organizing, and acting that engage with the social, political, ethical, and symbolic foundations of human-environment relations. This interdisciplinary lecture series examines the ecological crisis from diverse and complementary angles, including critical sustainability studies, decolonial ecologies, environmental justice, or posthumanist theory. By bringing these perspectives in dialogue, the lecture series aims to push the debate beyond sustainability, toward new ways of thinking and acting in the face of ecological transformation.

OCTOBER 27, 2025

**JASON W. MOORE** (ONLINE)

World-Ecology Research Collective, Binghamton University, USA

**On the ‘Sustainability of the Rich’: How the One Percent Uses Nature to Make You Afraid, Keep its Wealth, and Hold on to Power**

In this lecture, environmental historian Jason W. Moore exposes the “climate hoax” at the heart of contemporary sustainability politics, arguing that the planetary elite—the Point One Percent—exploits genuine biospheric crises to safeguard their wealth and power while imposing austerity on the masses. Drawing on historical patterns from the Little Ice Age to the 1960s environmental revival, Moore reveals how ruling classes have repeatedly invoked “Nature” during moments of social unrest to justify repression, enclosure, and technocratic control. Far from an anthropogenic disaster, the climate crisis is capitalogenic, driven by capitalism’s relentless quest for Cheap Nature—a system now faltering amid agricultural stagnation, overaccumulation, and political instability. Moore critiques both climate maximalists, who hype apocalyptic doom to demand emergency rule, and minimalists, who downplay impacts in favor of techno-market fixes, as two sides of the same elite coin. Instead, he indicts the eco-industrial complex as a mechanism for greenwashing monopoly capitalism. Yet, there’s opportunity in the chaos: climate disruption weakens elite grip, opening doors for mass movements to reclaim the web of life for the working-class majority. Rejecting fearmongering and the authoritarianism of climate emergency politics, he calls for a radical reframing: democratizing the web of life and reclaiming power from the bankers, Tech Bros, and warmongers.

Jason W. Moore teaches world environmental history at Binghamton University, USA, where he coordinates the World-Ecology Research Collective. He hates war, loves the working class, and looks forward to the day when the expropriators are expropriated. Recent books include *L’écologie-monde du capitalisme* (2024), *Oltre la giustizia climatica* (2024), *La gran implosion: Clase, imperio y crisis climática en el capitalismo zombi* (2025), and with Raj Patel, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things* (2017). The tenth anniversary edition of *Capitalism in the Web of Life* will be published later this year. His books and essays on class, capital, and empire in the web of life have been awarded the Alice Hamilton Prize in environmental history, the Byres and Bernstein Prize in agrarian studies, the Braverman Prize in labor studies, and the Immanuel Wallerstein Award. A prolific writer and speaker, Moore’s interviews, lectures, and essays can be found in over 20 languages on his website: <https://jasonwmoore.com/>.

**November 3 | Stefan Janković** (University of Belgrade, Sociology)

**Digging into Ecopolitical Dispute: Mapping Controversies around Lithium Extraction in Serbia**

The proposed lithium mine in Serbia’s Jadar Valley has become one of Europe’s most contested ecopolitical disputes. Initially promoted by Rio Tinto and the Serbian government as a driver of development and green transition, it soon provoked massive resistance over ecological risks, legality, and transparency, turning into a paradigmatic case of the Anthropocene’s ontopolitical rupture. The lecture examines how human and non-human actors mobilize claims and shape collective action, while digital infrastructures condition visibility and volatility of disputes. It relies on controversy mapping of 1,004 texts (2004–2025) to trace how evidence, sovereignty, and ecological vigilance were articulated through networks of alliances and oppositions. Findings show cycles of escalation, suspension, and resurgence, culminating in four meta-controversial registers, which reveal deeper struggles over liveable futures in the Anthropocene.

**November 10 | Anna Henkel** (University of Passau, Sociology of Technology and Sustainable Development)

**Dilemmas of Sustainability**

Sustainability is generally recognised as a concept and an objective. In practice, however, it is sometimes understood in very different ways, and conflicts regularly emerge. In order to deal with this, the lecture proposes to use dilemmas of sustainability as a productive heuristic for reflecting on obstacles to sustainable development. First, the understandings of sustainability and dilemmas that Henkel used in her research will be presented, as well as typical conflicts as potential causes of dilemmas of sustainability. Subsequently, the dimensions for early recognition in areas of tension, for clarification and processing of dilemmas of sustainability will be outlined. The derived metacriteria of sustainability with their guiding questions for reflection serve as orientation for project work in the field of sustainability and can be helpful for funding agencies and regulation.

**November 17 | Gal Kirn** (EUV, Philosophy of Culture)

**Liberation Ecology – A Blueprint for Future Research**

The inquiry into a “liberation ecology” aims to trace various moments, artworks and theoretical fragments that were produced by heterogeneous liberation movements in (semi-)peripheral locations, particularly in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Environmental sensibilities and awareness, paired with an important relationship to the land emerged in the (semi-)peripheries long before the Western “ecological turn” in the 1970s, and were able to articulate an explicit care for and alliance with the non-human world in the struggle against fascist or colonial oppression. This research aligns itself with the “maroon ecology” (Malm 2018) and shares the broader perspective of “decolonial ecology” (Ferdinand 2019), which opposes the mainstream Western politico-philosophical-aesthetic canon that determines who or what is (or is not) included in the distribution of the sensible, and exposes what have been –in the most impossible circumstances –artistic expressions of environmental care.

**November 24 | Miriam Lang** (Universidad Andina Simón Bolívar Quito, Sociology of the Environment and Sustainability; ONLINE)

**Fostering Desirable Ecosocial Futures in Times of Darkness**

This lecture will analyse the current disputes around ecosocial transformation in the midst of a civilizational crisis, ranging from the political far right to approaches of systemic transformation, adopting a Latin American perspective. It will also explore what the role of critical social sciences and humanities can be in this scenario, and how we can think about and practice a pedagogy of liberation in these dark times.

**December 1 | Jan-Erik Schirmer** (EUV, Civil Law, Commercial and Corporate Law, Compliance and Sustainability)

**Climate Liability: The David v. Goliath Dynamic in the Courtroom**

Across the globe, climate litigation is increasingly directed at carbon majors such as Shell or RWE, with claims demanding compensation for climate-related damages. Plaintiffs are often actors from the Global South – small farmers, island inhabitants, or Indigenous communities. Owing to this David-versus-Goliath constellation, climate liability cases serve a dual narrative purpose: on the one hand, they translate complex climate issues, such as sea-level rise or glacier melt, into concrete individual disputes that can be readily understood by lay audiences and resonate with their lived experience. On the other hand, liability proceedings provide those affected by climate change with a platform to articulate their concerns in a highly visible way and to raise awareness within the global public. The lecture presents key climate liability cases and discusses the extent to which this narrative effect becomes apparent.

**December 8 | Pierre Wat** (University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, Social and Cultural Art History)

**Paradise Lost? Art Facing the Anthropocene**

Can art still re-enchant the world in the age of the Anthropocene? What, then, is the meaning of the word “re-enchantment” in the context of a world whose finitude seems to impose itself as a major horizon? It is the role of art, and that of the aesthetic categories generally associated with it, such as the Sublime and the Beautiful, that we must question today. What function can now be attributed to art, between consolation, lucidity, and the search for a new form of beauty despite everything, which forces us to reconsider our practices and beliefs in this area? By examining a selection of recent works, the lecture will look at how artists are managing, or not, to preserve a sense of wonder in these times of predicted disaster. The question of the power of art in the face of history will thus be raised.