

Event-Full Affect

Seminar Conveners: Nathan Snaza × Chad Shomura

What is an event? For whom does an event amount to a provocation while others are left unmoved, debilitated, cold? How do some situations and encounters animate and provoke learning while others do not? How do sensitivities, receptivities, and empathies—human or otherwise—transform, or not, with respect to architecture, circulations of bodies through spaces, energetic and pheromonal transfers, the atmosphere of a room? What affective, embodied, and relational states arise when events do not, or, alternatively, when an event lingers without yet settling into a new ordinary?

This seminar works through “animations and provocations” by focusing on the vital place of the event in and around affect theory. We will look carefully and collectively at a few crucial theoretical statements on the event, especially in connection to history and material relations that extend far beyond the human. We are especially interested in relationships between the event (along with quasi-events and non-events), affect, and a variety of politics—queer, antiracist, decolonial, and nonanthropocentric, to name just a few. We explore the emergence and obstruction of sensing, attuning, registering, accounting, intuiting, experimenting, inflecting, gesturing, learning, creating, and accounting. We engage histories of racism, coloniality, hetero- and homonormativities, and violence to assess whether and how situations become events and what sensibilities, orientations, and modes of being and becoming are made possible or shut down.

This seminar emphasizes that there are multiple pathways into and out of the event, and that the event lies along multiple pathways of its own. We thus consider whether and how the workshop itself can *become* an “event” and, if it does, what kind(s) of event that may be. This seminar compels participants to acutely reflect on the unpredictable, uncontrollable conditions of our encounter to ask how we create and emerge from the event of the meeting itself. We will be sensitive to how the seminar itself entangles, inflects, differentiates, intensifies, augments, and challenges their engagement with the question, “What is an event?” Put differently, we hope to weave together our individual dalliances with the *concept* of the event into a collective autotheoretical event.

The seminar meets over three sessions. We will first engage a predetermined set of readings. Based on our discussion, we will then select material for the remaining sessions. During and between our meetings, small groups will engage a participant-created cache of brief statements, literature, and media on the event. Based on their research projects, interests, and questions, the groups will produce short provocations concerning affect and the event. Before we meet, participants will need to submit two things: 1) a text (of any kind) for our event-full cache, and 2) a question about the/an event. These questions may be modeled on the following samples, which we offer here as provocations that might begin to animate our collective thinkingfeeling:

Nathan's questions

Whitehead sees pretty much everything as an event. Other thinkers distinguish between events and some kind of pre-evental conditions of possibility, so that while everything *could* be event, events only sometimes emerge. What do we get out of one or the other of these approaches?

The event that interests me the most, at least now, is the one Wynter calls the production of Man, which is, I think, a great shorthand for a complex nexus of colonialisms, emergent capitalist and industrialist modes of production, and a shift in the form of the state. Part of this event, for me, involves capturing study in schools, and linking those schools closely with (humanist) state politics.

So how can we think about education as in some sense *always* being part of the politics of humanization, precisely because it is part of the "event" of Man. And how we can we seize on the possibilities, *if there are any*, of reorienting educational events such that they can set us moving away from Man? (I tend to think here of Puar's riffs on delinquency and Halberstam's on failure.)

Chad's questions

How do notions such as impasse, stuckness, obstruction, abandonment, and the wake provoke a retheorization of the event? How might the durational quality of some histories and ordinaries make the event very rare? How might modes of endurance, decay, abandonment, and social death be situated with respect to affect and the event?

Alongside Nathan's interest in reading the production of Man as an event is Christina Sharpe's notion of "the weather" in which racial slavery is a singularity—something of a dynamic forcefield that generates spatial and temporal distortions, holding black bodies in its wake for centuries. We might also think of colonial invasion as another event; while Patrick Wolfe holds invasion to be a "structure not an event," we might operate with other notions of the event to account for the elasticity and dynamism of settler colonialism.

Placing the event at the heart of antiblackness and settler colonialism may complicate and enrich imaginations of antiracist and decolonial politics. Whether an event marks a disruption or reorganization of antiblackness and settler colonialism may not be so clear. If so then Nathan's questions concerning the reorientation of educational events become more pressing. The place of affect would be accentuated in efforts to move away from Man. What modes of sensing, processing, intuiting, speculating, and experimenting might become valuable/crucial?

2) 3 2-hour blocks

3) Participants will read some essays before the event, and engage other texts/events between sessions as determined during the workshop. They will also write, individually and/or collaboratively, during the workshop.

4) Queer theory; decolonial thought; process philosophy; literary studies

5) Nathan Snaza teaches literature, gender studies, and educational foundations at the University of Richmond. He is the author of *Animate Literacies: Literature, Affect, and the Politics of Humanism* (Duke UP, 2019) and co-editor of *Pedagogical Matters: New Materialisms and Curriculum Studies* (Peter Lang, 2016) and *Posthumanism and Educational Research* (Routledge, 2016).

Chad Shomura is Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Colorado Denver. He researches and teaches in political thought, feminist and queer theory, and Asian American, Indigenous, and black studies. He is working on two major research projects: *The Bad Good Life*, which develops a notion of impasse to describe how dominant formations of race, sexuality, and coloniality manage to endure the powerful efforts of marginalized subjects to live otherwise; and a manuscript that reimagines the human, life, and time in the Anthropocene.

6) No additional requirements.