

S1

AFFECT AND ESOTERIC INHUMANISMS

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This stream will focus on the overlaps between theories of affect and esoteric practices. Both affect and magic concern the open-ended becoming of the world as a process of bodily, sensory, and emotional attunement beyond persuasion and demonstration. Where affect denotes the ability to affect or be affected, magic offers techniques for producing changes in the world; where affect signals the production of feeling, magic subsists in the residual feeling of something-happening. Like affect, magic is often denigrated for its alleged anti-intentionalist irrationalism and sparks worries about the erosion of discernment in public discourse. This stream asks how affect and magic map onto and illuminate each other; how we might understand ritual magic as a form of affect theory *avant-la-lettre* and what the return of magic as popular culture tells us about the place of affect in the contemporary, a place that spans the range signaled by "PITS."

Panelists will pursue the meeting of affect and magic through a range of esoteric practices and knowledges: occultism, tarot, haunting, witchcraft and *bruja* feminism, mysticism, and weird speculativisms. Often, when these come up within contemporary humanist and social scientific research, they end up being interpreted as displacement, metaphorization, and allegory. Against this interpretive move, we want to take the esoteric seriously as a vector of material practice, knowledge production, and emergent, queer collectivity in the shadow of Enlightenment epistemes. At a moment when many theoretical currents are turning to advanced technoscience to ground their materialisms, we want to linger on those forms of knowing-doing that exist in fugitive relation to Enlightenment mechanisms of "primitive" accumulation. This includes thinking through queer temporalities that

exceed both the normalizing fictions of state and family, and the forms of affective perception indexed as “haunting” that play such a crucial role in literatures arising from the trans-Atlantic slave trade and settler colonialism in the Americas. Unlike the universalist (read: colonialist) impulse hard-baked into Enlightenment rationality, the esotericisms we seek to explore are linked with inhumanist collectivities.

In this stream, we want to read various forms of esoteric practice through and against affect theory as a way of attuning to alternatives to Enlightenment subjectivity and humanist politics. And we wonder, collectively, how these practices may hold the capacity to animate inhumanist futures detached from modes of colonial, capitalist, heterosexist, and anthropocentric capture. We invite papers that take up questions such as:

- What affects attend (our) investments in esoteric practice in academic spaces?
- How do we understand and work through/with the ways we may be made to feel shame and embarrassment for believing in, practicing, or just taking seriously esoteric knowledges?
- How might making public our esoteric commitments reconfigure how we practice academic labor?
- What kinds of methods are required to think through contemporary esoteric knowledges in relation to earlier forms of witchcraft, sorcery, magic, etc.?
- How do we think shifting relations between politics and esoterisms?
- How might discourses of queer temporalities help us understand the ways such historical engagement is saturated and motivated by affect?



S2

POLITICAL PITS

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This stream on politics and affect explores the pits as zones of affective pitfall and of orchestrating otherworldly noise. Pits evoke stuckness and despair, but also hiding places and refuge. They can entrap or relieve. How might pits shape understandings of affect and politics?

Sociopolitical pits fill the air with hopelessness, dread, and resignation. They call for prompt, forceful action and raise dire questions about how to sustain political projects and movements. Affect studies have generally explored the politics of slower, subtler activities, from sharpening the senses to experimenting with processes of becoming (Bennett 2020). How might these and other affective practices engage urgent political issues? What are their pitfalls? How does affect inform oppositional, activist, and militant politics? What affective tones dominate politics, and are they energizing or enervating? What feelings might invigorate the political?

Although political, economic, and ecological fragilities might break social promises of the good life, perhaps the historical present remains oriented by the promissory. White supremacy, fascism, transphobias, militarism, and settler violence have sought to jumpstart the good life. What is the affective relationship of the promissory to political imagination? Could political value be found in the unpromising and, if so, what might it be?

Impasses emerge, as when antagonisms hit a head, or they can be instituted to halt business as usual and open other paths. What are the politics of impasses and their conventional qualities like stuckness, blockage, and incommensurability? What lines of flight are smoldering in impasses, and how might they be detected and channeled? How might “transitional infrastructure” (Berlant 2022) to uncertain futures be built?

Alongside threats to bodily autonomy, democracy, and earthy life, certain humans and nonhumans are framed as threats to comfort, social norms, and national

futures. What are the biocultural registers of threat, and how are they modulated to reproduce sociopolitical orders (Wynter 1984)? What becomes possible through disidentification as a threat and being threatening otherwise? Can the threat be playfully reclaimed?

As the sociopolitical and planetary here and now is increasingly unsettled, we might ask: what affects have been dampened in order to consolidate that here and now? How might their traces be sensed, activated, or amplified? How do settlements—of sensoria, images, matter, spaces, borders, discursive practices—depend on dispossession of potentialities of unsettlement?

With much falling apart and uncertainty darkening the future, what is there to affirm? What might an affirmative politics look and feel like from within the pits? Papers in this stream may explore the provocations above, below, and many topics besides:

- Political qualities of pits/the pits: worstness, lowness, wretchedness, darkness, loneliness, solitude
- Racial and colonial politics of sunken places (Peele 2017).
- Political atmospheres of pits: dark, dank, stinky
- Minimalist performances of affect: unfeeling (Yao 2021), inscrutability (Huang 2022), inexpression (Post 2023)
- Joy: sparking it (Kondo 2010), killing it (Ahmed 2023)
- Political sensoria: *la facultad* (Anzaldúa 1987), watching and waiting (Stewart 2007), arts of noticing (Tsing 2015)
- Impasses as political technologies: blockades, strikes, liberated zones, refusals (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2014; Moten 2018; Honig 2021)
- Theorizing systems of power through/as process (Connolly 2011; Massumi 2015; Manning 2016; Snaza 2024)



S3

PLANETARY DISPOSITIONS: AFFECTIVE (UN)SETTLING IN CATASTROPHIC TIMES

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How do affective dispositions come to settle and unsettle planetary regimes of disposability? Through what affective sediments and atmospheres of feeling has the catastrophe of capitalist and colonial world-making geomorphed into planetary instability? And what might it take to unsettle and refuse the toxic dynamics of redemptive optimism and despondent pessimism that now suffuse the air?

This stream welcomes papers that explore and experiment with a host of planetary dispositions— those that have sedimented through the strata of modern terraforming, and those that might yet unsettle and confound the hopes, promises, dreams and fears through which social lives are made through climate wreckage and planetary change. A collective exploration of what it might take to eke out a life amidst catastrophe, we welcome papers and propositions that bite down hard as they examine the affective infrastructures of the many histories, cosmologies, and political architectures that subtend catastrophe, as well as ideas and provocations for unsettling our sedimented dispositions and affective responses to an earth forever unstable and unsafe. We invite papers that explore:

Planetary dispositions as sediments of modern terraformation, extractivism and colonial and capitalist catastrophes

- Affective regimes of disposability, planetary biopolitics, or metaphysics of race
- Affective sediments and atmospheres of feeling that emerge from colonial and capitalist terraformation and catastrophies
- Affective infrastructures and aesthetics subtending catastrophe

- Transformations and relations between the affects of catastrophic colonial and capitalist world-making and exacerbations planetary instability—including, but not limited to toxic atmospheres of pessimistic resignation and redemptive optimism

Planetary dispositions that might yet unsettle and confound the hopes, promises, dreams and fears through which social lives are made through climate wreckage and planetary change.

- Affective dispositions that unsettle planetary regimes of disposability
- Refusals of toxic dynamics of redemptive optimism and/or despondent pessimism
- Provocations for unsettling our sedimented dispositions and affective responses to an earth forever unstable and unsafe.

Planetary instability in the compositions of dispositions, affective infrastructures and aesthetic regimes.

- Geological instability as generative of atmospheres of feeling, dispositions, aesthetics and affective infrastructure
- Planetary affects, metaphysics, and cultures



S4

AFFECTIVE SPACES OF OPACITY

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Pussy Riot's *Punk Prayer* (2012) disrupted the space of the Moscow Cathedral and caused a national sensation in a matter of minutes. It proved enigmatic and permeated the public imagination. Why couldn't the state and church displace four young women in ski-masks from the center of national discourse? "Mad", "hysterical", "sensationalist", and many other labels were deployed, but none of them managed to grasp the affective charge of the event. Within an otherwise sacred site, *Punk Prayer* introduced a space of opacity, bringing into question the unshaken pillars of society—patriarchy, religion, and the state apparatus.

This stream calls attention to such spaces of opacity across theoretical, historical, activist, and political discourses. We see spaces of opacity as inherently unstable; they remain in permanent tension, refusing interpretations. Opacity reveals and conceals, allowing us to experience, beyond sight, what was previously hidden and obscuring what appeared obvious or straightforward. While this instability delimits a space of possibility, promising some potential liberation from set forms and ways of seeing, it also threatens to create further modes of exclusion and oppression. Instances of opacity proliferate all around us and throughout history; they include revolutions and periods of socioeconomic transition, social and protest movements, discourses that destabilize the legibility of sexual and racial identities, and an aesthetic that plays on sensation rather than cognition. Resonating with Eve Sedgwick's "sites of productive opacity", Martine Beugnet's "aesthetics of blur", and Édouard Glissant's "the right to opacity for everyone", spaces of opacity are necessarily affective (Sedgwick 2003, Beugnet 2017, Glissant 1997). They invite multiplicity and error, and resist reason and rationality. They are vague and therefore constitute impasses, in which "strong" theoretical models are pushed to their limit (those of affect studies included) and the need for new or reworked ones becomes especially acute (Ashtor 2021).

Opacity is historical and political, but disturbs historical linearity, codified structures, or mimetic representations of reality. In instances of opacity, affects come to the forefront; they are intensified and their interplay is surfaced. It is here that it becomes increasingly clear that emotions, as Sara Ahmed puts it, “do” things and determine the future because reason ceases to reason (2004). The vision of the future proves inherently partial and identities incomplete, necessitating change and adjustment but providing no clues for how to move forward. It is thus not only a theoretical impasse, but also a literal, embodied one. Opacity simultaneously promises and threatens. Life modalities are altered and “cruel optimisms” amplified, mobilizing not only hope for change, but also pain of detachment and anxiety before the future (Berlant 2011).

Spaces of opacity encompass feelings that are “emergent” (Deleuze 1986) and are always “embryonic” (Williams 1977). The present thus serves as opaque, it functions as a “pastness opening directly into the future”; it is incipient, a realm of potential that is not yet rationalized (Massumi 2002). Within an instance of opacity the center necessarily pivots, giving way to feminist and alternative black epistemologies, radical manifestations of queerness and sexuality, and new uses of the erotic and poetic (Jaggar 1989, Hill Collins 1990, Muñoz 2009, Lorde 1978 & 1979). The changes are rapid and settling is incipient, but its shape is not yet clear. Sites of opacity thus demand urgent and expansive analyses, given that they form the futures we will all live in. Learning from the opacity of the past can help us traverse the future, and identifying its present manifestations is crucial to envisioning and most importantly enacting liberatory futures.

We seek proposals that locate, problematize, theorize, and propose new ways of navigating spaces of opacity. Possible topics include but are not limited to:

Politics, Revolution, Transition, Activism, Protest

- Opacity of historical transitions and its impasses
- Modalities of physical or digital protest that resist legible practices and strategies
- History as multiplicity and/or polyvocality that elude linear accounts
- Rhizomatic intersections of art and activism that challenge institutional formations and codified expressions
- Spaces of opacity that emerge amidst circulation and distribution of information or as an effect of the disruption of the continuous flow

Race, Sexuality, Desire

- Ambiguity, invisibility, and opacity against a reduction to identitarian taxonomies
- Rethinking otherness (race, queerness or any other abject identities) as a resistance to language, meaning, and interpretation
- Extreme, unprecedented, or other-than-human configurations of desire and intimacy beyond conventional categories
- Showing and/or concealing identity in cinema and screen media
- Invisibility/hypervisibility in digital media, networks, or environments

The Decolonial, the Anticolonial

- The opacity introduced by oppositional geographies and alternative cartographies
- The poetics of landscape and the poetics of questioning (Glissant 1997), the disruption of authority and reason underpinning charts, figures, maps, and/or official records
- Diasporas and nomadic patterns, rethinking space as opaque and unfinished
- The “demonic”, the uncertain, the non-linear, the un-predictable as a departure from determinism and positivism (McKittrick 2006)



S5

PHENOMENOLOGY/AFFECT/CRITIQUE

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Understood broadly, phenomenology is the effort to characterize how phenomena manifest, how they appear, contrasted to a more empiricist or realist effort to determine the truth or falsehood of an already assumed real. While many post-structuralists critiqued phenomenology as remaining wedded to a substantialized notion of Subject, phenomenologists themselves often characterized their own thinking as an effort to escape the Cartesian divide and to understand phenomena outside of the subject/object constraints of consciousness. Since much of affect studies has traditionally been aligned with post-structuralist thinking in its philosophical formations, phenomenology early on seemed to be ignored, if not dismissed, as an approach to think the affective dimension.

This dismissal has shifted in the last few decades. What was once viewed as almost an impasse between critique and phenomenology has become more of a cross-fertilization of thought. In appeals for social justice and climate activism, critique needs a way to express why there should be a valuation of one politics over another, and some have looked to phenomenological thinkers to do so. And in phenomenology, particularly in feminist phenomenology, there has been an increasing focus on the need for critique of extant reality, along with a focus on how it is manifest. In the last few years, this ongoing reassessment of phenomenology has taken on the designation of *critical phenomenology* (see Weiss, Salamon, Murphy, editors, *50 Concepts for a Critical Phenomenology*; and contributors to *Puncta: Journal of Critical Phenomenology*).

In the years since the publication of Gregg and Seigworth's *Affect Theory Reader* (2010), affect theory, too, continues to shift and morph its orientations and concerns. The essays in Seigworth and Pedwell, editors, *The Affect Theory Reader 2* (2023) express a full range of reassessments of both affect(s) and affect theory, a range the editors evoke through terms such as "provocations," "reinterpretations,"

“dishabitations,” “occlusions,” “omissions,” and “ossifications” (4). In conceptual parallel with critical phenomenology (which suggests not a negation of phenomenology but the ongoing need to translate earlier texts to new times, spaces, and practices), we might call this a *Reader in critical affect theory*.

This stream seeks the promises and threats posed by the confluences or divergences of critical phenomenology and critical affect theory. Submissions may pursue any thematic within this confluence or divergence. Some possibilities include:

- Affective interpretations of Merleau-Ponty’s notions of atmosphere, institutionality, expressivity, or dimension.
- Critical affective and phenomenological interpretations of intercorporeality. What hinders intercorporeality? How is intercorporeality felt (lived) as threat?
- What roles do specific institutions or specific social habits/practices play in promising, marshaling, threatening, or hindering particular affective modalities?
- What lived experiences of *disaffection* are crucial for us to think, deploy, or resist today? (e.g., Xine Yao and Simone de Beauvoir; Claudia Rankine and Frantz Fanon)
- Phenomenology and affect theory have each maintained ambivalent but productive relations with Marxian thought. How might critical affect theory and critical phenomenology contribute to newer folds in theorizing global capitalism, suggested by the recent and more desperate labels of, e.g., brutality (Mbembe), remaindered life (Tadiar), disaster capitalism (Klein).



S6

PROMISSORY NOTES, OR HOW THE BODY TRADES IN FUTURES

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In the Nietzschean cast, to promise is to guarantee a kind of stability within the subject: to remain identical to oneself in all the tenses—to be accountable, responsible, predictable so that a promise made in the past can be fulfilled in the future. Memory takes centre stage here—one must remember oneself through time—as does the movement of time. While his analysis highlights certain essential elements to making promises, our interests shift away from questions of sovereignty and bad conscience to explorations of bodily potentialities. We think of promises as time travelers with uncertain futures, as promissory notes that may or may not be legal tender but that carry us through goals, hopes, injuries lasting and passing, broken dreams and unanticipated wins. Promises move, and it is the quality of this movement that captivates us.

With this panel, we want to look at the kinds of promises that our bodies in movement can bring. What happens as we simply attempt to keep going, whether that's freestyling in a lane next to Ann Cvetkovich by continuing to get ourselves to the swimming pool in times of public depression, or lacing up for our long runs "because it make[s] [us] think so good that [we] learn things even better than when [we're] on [our] bed[s] at night," following Alan Sillitoe, or if we simply give ourselves over to "dogpaddling around in the meanwhile," a la Lauren Berlant? We want to think about how bodies in movement can promise futures, and we want to think about how these promises are kept, how they are broken, and how they sometimes fail to materialize. Bodily promises can set you up to feel like a protagonist, have you dreaming of winning, or imagining something that feels like a cousin of redemption, but they can just as easily leave you with a pulled ego, a stress reaction, or a fracture in your relationship or your day. When our bodies write promissory notes, we can never be sure they'll make good on them. Or, if we'll even want to cash those

checks when they come. Still what choice do we have? Movement is in part an agreement to get going, to fuck around and find out what happens next.

This stream seeks proposals that write and think with the promises, annoyances, and weirdnesses of moving bodies. We are interested in thinking with people across disciplines and various scholarly dispositions.

Possible topics and themes include but are not limited to:

- Affect, memory, and the body
- Queer bodies in motion
- Moving while trans
- Crip theories of movement
- Race, affect, and bodies on the move
- Running or swimming along in queer time
- Affects of injury or flow states
- Visual culture or material culture and the body



S7

IS THERE GEOPOLITICAL DIVERSITY IN AFFECT THEORY?

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At the first affect conference (“Affect: Worlding, Tensions, Futures,” 2015, Millersville), it felt like most speakers quoted the same authors, which could have been a sign of the field’s lack of vitality in contrast with its fairly recent institutionalization (Gregg & Seigworth 2010; Clough 2007). Interestingly, in the same year, affect theory started to emerge in Latin American aiming at coping with right-wing turns in countries like Argentina and Brazil (Macon, Solana, Vacarezza 2021; Safatle 2015). While Latin American’s publications and translations increased, affect theory continued to expand in the Anglo-Saxon academy (Seigworth & Pedwell, 2023), introducing new authors and fueling new concepts. Yet, South and North academies do not often seem to intersect or dialogue. This fact deserves serious consideration: if affect theory is truly engaged with thinking and performing inclusive and plural affect worlds in contemporary global societies, how can geopolitical diversity be overlooked?

Affect theory develops in diverse geopolitical territories at different speeds (Pais 2021). In part, the reason for this lies in language segregation and unequal labor conditions in peripheral and southern contexts. Affect is also always situated, thus, knowledge on affect is necessarily historical and culturally specific. Finally, one of the biggest challenges of research on affect is to find adequate tools and methodologies to approach specific objects considering embodied knowledge that is, nonetheless, culturally shaped as well. In other words, embodied/affective knowledge can be pivotal to advance knowledge on affect, namely diverse conceptual frameworks, but it requires cultural awareness or openness to affective accents. Such practice echoes what Bolivian scholar and activist Silvia Cusicanqui names “corazonar” (2018: 92): a mode of thinking with the heart, in a situated context.

Recalling an important debate in the field of performance studies that questioned the imperialist effects of Anglo-Saxon narrative and epistemological dominance in

the field—initiated by Jon Mackenzie with the essay “Is PS imperialist?” (2006)—perhaps it is time to ask a similar question to affect theory: is there geopolitical diversity in affect theory? How can we counter geographically isolated research? Can we listen through other geopolitical affective knowings and bring forth stronger and more inclusive epistemologies to a paradoxical world of felt disconnections and endless connectedness?

This stream wishes to create space for geopolitical diversity in dialogue (not as a ghetto), welcoming proposals from all disciplines and angles that engage with the promises, impasses, threats and settlings of imperialist effects of affective epistemologies.

Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Modes of (uneven) production and distribution of knowledge
- Alternative genealogies of affect theory
- Imperialist effects vs. epistemological affects
- Knowledge on affect vs embodied/affective knowledge
- Methodologies for the study of embodied knowledge
- Peripheral and south conceptual landscapes for knowledge on affect
- Cultural multiverses of affective experience
- Affect, performance and memory
- Cross-temporalities and cross-spatiality in affective experience
- Culturally aware forms of “corazonar”
- Theorizing situated affect
- performativity of affect
- The role of affect in a global world
- Far-right political affects, mobilization and manipulation
- Disconnections vs. connections



S8

THEORY'S OTHERWISE TEXTURES

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This stream is an invitation to follow the pits, hollows, scars, depressions, perforations, and other uneven surfaces of the ordinary through writing, and in doing so explore textures of theory as a method for thinking with affect. Like any old pit, words can be a place to bury or store. We mine words in our attempts to momentarily render comprehensible the events, affects, or contingencies of worlds experienced in the ongoingness of throwing together and falling apart (Stewart 2015). But words, like worlds, can also be pitted and pustular, an incitement or pitting-against, a generative futility: "it's the pits!" Writing bumps up against moods and material vicissitudes, proliferating ruin and toxicity, waves of impasse and upheaval, moments of joy or giving a damn.

Writing alongside small intimacies, breakups, and bad hair days or in the visceral wake (Sharpe 2016) of colonization, slavery, police brutality, and genocide, razor-sharp definitions often seem irrelevant. Besides, our objects are reeling: deepfakes, doomscrolling, New Ageisms, the postcolonial frictions of coordinating between scientific or indigenous empirics. When affect sediments into either jargon or the too-personal, its textures collapse inward. Instead, we might write sideways: mapping adjacencies and blurs, kneading, iterating, genre flailing (Berlant 2018) as a means to hone capacities of noticing, get a rise, and grow wider affiliations.

Affect's methods might be murky, but across fields and fads writing is a common denominator in feeling out worldly forces—a "phenomenal method of attending and composing" (Stewart 2015, 29). This stream invites papers that wrestle the animating power of words as they bind subjectivities and affectivities with life and death racial and multispecies stakes (Chen 2012). It favors anticolonial and more-than-human forms of attention, witness, and storytelling (Bird Rose & Van Dooren 2017; Million 2009; McKittrick 2021; Simpson 2011; Tsing et al 2020; Verran 2001), insists that style matters (Anzaldúa 2015), and takes compositionality not

only as a matter of affect's writing, but how the world works: material-semiotic things patched together or teased apart (Haraway 1997; Dumit 2014). In this spirit, 'theory's otherwise textures' explores potentials for writing to forge spaces of promise amid prevailing impasses and threats, by attending to, tracing, or resisting the settling of events, encounters, flights, and ordinaries. The stream asks participants to write with the textures of theory, the materiality of the discursive, and the tactility of composition. Papers in this panel will write through and alongside experimental modes attuned to the promises, impasses, threats, and settlings-in of writing as a method for affect:

- How do autoethnographic, autotheoretical, or fictocritical practices burnish otherwise ways of noticing, shift public feelings, or generatively deform (Muecke 2002) the canonical?
- Can science studies methods like implosion (Dumit 2014) or figuration (eg. Neimanis 2013) help to historicize affect studies or amp up its politics?
- What can formal constraints do? Hundreds (Berlant & Stewart 2019), surveys (Law 2009), speculative archives (Gumbs 2018), etc.
- Is atmospheric attunement (Stewart 2011) a method? How?
- What affectivities are harnessed by "speaking in tongues" (Anzaldúa 1987)?
- How might genres of "felt theory" (Million 2009) unsettle genres of life?



S9

SENSUAL PEDAGOGIES

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This stream explores pedagogies as an affective entanglement of “sensual” relations, rather than a stable set of curricular moves. Within pedagogical spaces, such relations un/expectedly emerge to highlight affect as an embodied sense-making experience: a feeling that reverberates, resonates, wavers (Duggan & García Zarranz, 2022), produces—potentially “undoing” us at every turn (Berlant, 2011). According to Berlant, our potential undoing by (negative) forces is a “sensual, historical experience” in that it invites us to become curious about those pedagogies that sense and refuse the rhetoric, ideologies, and norms of the dominant public sphere (Anderson et al., 2022).

These threats from the dominant public sphere have become heightened in the aftermath of the global pandemic. Everyday media headlines continue to be peppered with racist, homophobic, anti-trans, and anti-abortion agendas. Education bills have been effectively introduced and signed into law that strictly limit what can be taught and discussed in pre-K–12 schools regarding race, sexuality, and gender. These incidents are not isolated to the US and have manifested in similar iterations across Canada and the UK. In fact, the past few years have seen a steady, precipitous rise of “anti-woke” discourses, text censorship rhetoric, and “science of reading war” debates (Dernikos et al., 2023).

Educational scholars have noted concerns that the cultural, political, and racial evasiveness of narrow views of pedagogy both ignore the sociocultural factors involved in learning and reinforce homogenizing, one size fits all approaches to

instruction that do not account for children’s creativity and “breathtaking diversity” (Genishi & Dyson, 2009). As Patel (2023) reminds us, “binaries kill nuance” and cannot account for the affects that such threats re/produce. An attention to affect and pedagogy as sensual relations is thus necessary to examine the “politics of feeling ” within educational spaces: how feelings not only become markers of subjectivity/humanity, but also technologies of domination (Yao, 2021). For instance, in recent years, educational critiques (see e.g. Dernikos et al., 2023) of #AffectSoWhite have highlighted how the assumption of “universal” affect in classroom spaces is racialized—affectively aligned with white, cis-hetero feelings and representative of the “ideal humanist subject” or “Man” (Snaza, 2019; Wynter, 2003).

Sensual pedagogies resist master accounts of knowing/being/doing/feeling while embracing “messiness,” that is, a commitment to become curious, worried, and suspicious of academic practices, methodologies, and theories that refuse relational thinking/feeling as well as all forms of life (McKittrick, 2021). Sensual pedagogies, however, do not deny joy. They approach normativity as “a scene of negotiated sustenance”—where educators become, think, and feel anchorless amid a shifting sociopolitical landscape that is all at once ambiguous, turbulent, hopeful (Berlant, 2011; cf. Anderson et al., 2021).

This stream invites papers that explore affect’s possibilities and promises, but also its limitations and threats, so that pedagogies may be felt, imagined, and *sensed* otherwise. Possible topics include but are not limited to:

- Race, gender, sexuality, class, and education
- Anxiety, paranoia, pessimism, resistance, and/or refusal
- Art, music, film, literature
- Ordinary and extraordinary violence in educational spaces
- Fatigue, fear, and fatalism
- AI: technological foreclosures and advancements
- Pedagogy under threat
- Childhood and youth as aesthetic and affective states
- Sonic technologies
- Trauma and affective hauntings



S10

BOTTOMLESS PITS, UPWELLING FLOWS

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This panel thinks through the Promises, Impasses, Threats and Settlements (PITS) themes from a hydrofeminist praxis. *Bodies of water* (Neimanis, 2012) is a figuration that encourages generative ways of thinking about how conference participants may respond to (the) PITS. In this stream we invite proposals that swim-think-read-write-make with the praxis of hydrofeminism conveying the fluidity of watery bodies, which challenge Cartesian notions of discrete, atomised, self-sufficient landlocked human and more-than-human individuals, aligned with affect theory.

Promises

Oceans, ponds, rivers, dams and lakes cannot be used as human dumping grounds or mined for further human greed and consumption, without serious consequences for the dying planet. Rather than be seen as bottomless pits, we invite responses that explore how slow upwelling flows from the pits in bodies of water—octopus and shark dens, feeding pits, blue holes, pockmarks from methane gas—might give rise to capacious nutrient-rich potentialities for un/settling impasses and threats. Some questions that panelists may wish to pursue include:

- How might slow methodologies performed in bodies of water provide alternative moistenings for scholarly practices and doing academia differently?
- What might we learn from water and the creatures living in water?

- How might affect studies flow—with processes of swimming—thinking—reading—writing?
- How might we think differently about human and more-than human care-carriage practices that are fluid rather than contained?

Impasses

Watery bodies, in their vibrant buoyancy, support and carry a potential for uncanny sensibilities that lure towards new speculative imaginaries. Panelists may wish to pursue the following:

- How might we take advantage of the impasses of Berlant’s “dog paddling in the meanwhile”?
- How do watery attunements and encounters with sea creatures that sense the not-yet help develop multisensorial response-abilities for a changing world?

Threats

Human violences to other humans, animals, plants, and land pose threats to all life on the blue planet. With increasing pollution (chemical, sewage, plastic), oceanic acidification, rising sea temperatures, mining and seismic surveys, overfishing by big corporations, we wit(h)ness a reduction of algae and watery species. Not only are marine algae the main producers of oxygen, they are also nurturant habitats of diverse species.

Some questions that panelists may wish to pursue:

- How might we think with algae as nurturing spaces that encourage diversity and flourishing in the midst of the threat of their demise?
- What role might affect play in making such threats visible?
- What implications do these threats have for how we do higher education pedagogy and scholarship?

Un/Settlings

The hydrocommons is not a conducive space for feeling settled and yet the ocean has been the conduit for haunting hydro-settler-colonialism—the movement from north to south and the appropriation of land and resources including slave trade.

Panelists may wish to ponder:

- How do watery bodies sediment histories settling/settler colonial encounters?
- How might exploring the aphotic zone—the dark region of the ocean and inland water bodies lying beneath the surface sunlit waters—un/do and un/settle taken for granted notions of that which is un/knowable?



S11

ENTERING THE HAUNTED ARCHIVES/ HAUNTING THE ARCHIVES: THREATS AND/OR CRITICAL POTENTIALITIES OF VULNERABILITIES

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In an era where we are increasingly vulnerable and simultaneously released and encased into and within closed black boxed yet algorithm-driven social media, machine learning and artificial intelligence platforms, how might we unravel what we see to reveal both threats and potentialities? For instance, subaltern and counterhegemonic actors gain access, voice, and visibility—whether through #metoo, #sayhername and many others from global south contexts—in these networks. Yet this visibility also puts them at risk—subject to state surveillance and retaliation for any “wrong” kind of visibility.

Carolyn Pedwell (2019) notes, “we become increasingly algorithmically mediated by digital capital at the micro-level of affect, gesture and habit” (p. 3). Such mediation at the micro-level makes individuals vulnerable in both predictable and unpredictable ways, leading us to think both in terms of the threats and potentialities that come from dwelling and lingering in these spaces (Weins and Macdonald, 2024). These spaces both haunt and are haunted by past and continuing hierarchies and oppressions. They visibly and invisibly shape futures through seemingly disjointed “displaced and submerged narratives, actors, agents, and entities that primarily exist as an absent presence” (Blackman, p. 685). Data archives thus stain and resist the movement of data futures but also promise different imaginaries of futures—utopic, ambiguous, and dystopic. The horror of the everyday tentacles of hate within social media is as prolific as the optimism of protest. Yet affective intensities and forces bring strangers together in uncanny encounters within and across platforms to create political groupings that may

sometimes have sociopolitical impacts—whether through elections, through the forging and re-forging of solidarities, (re)construction of subjectivities, building of social movements and so on. Each of these in turn seem to construct and mobilize various forms of affective excesses.

For this stream, we are interested in work that attempts to open up ways to understand the affective shaping and tacking together of media assemblages whether through what Rey Chow refers to as “*scenes of entanglement*” or through what Blackman refers to as “hauntology.” We are open to proposals that approach generative AI tools and social media presences through the lenses of automaticity, hauntology, or affective, speculative, and intuitive modes of engagement with cultural texts and their production.

We would like this stream to be a space that engages affect theory in relation to marginalized identities—whether a thinking-through of protest movements, assemblages of hate or the (im)possibilities of machine-learning and generative AI. We are not looking for arguments regarding the authenticity of representation and identity bias—rather we would like an emphasis on affective assemblages while critically engaging race theory, queer and feminist theory, and postcolonial theory for instance.

Some suggested themes for exploration include looking at threats and vulnerabilities in relation to:

- Homophilic hate groups, automaticity and affect
- Hauntology and imaging/imagining scenes of entanglement
- Protest assemblages and networks of queer time and place
- Affective “stickiness” in generative AI storytelling around marginal identities
- Spectral geographies, everyday and colonial spatialities
- Regimes and counter-regimes of affective visibility; spectres and spectacles in archives



S12

EROS IN THE END TIMES: DESIRE AND AFFECT BEYOND THE HUMAN

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Georges Bataille's notion that eroticism is "assenting to life even in death" takes on new urgency in the Anthropocene, an era marked by ecological catastrophe, capitalist excess, and the "always-looming threat of extinction" (Thacker). This stream invites explorations of the role of 'Eros' during our seemingly endless 'End Times.' Currently, we exist at a libidinal and existential impasse. As ecological crises render the planet unrecognizable, our once familiar world becomes 'unhomely,' estranging us from our environment and ourselves. This disorientation is particularly manifest in our libidinal desires, which vacillate between the extremes of capitalistic overindulgence and existential withdrawal, distancing us from the tangible, sensual pleasures we once embraced.

How, then, does Eros evolve? The dwindling of our libidinal energies (Pettman) inevitably reshapes our interpersonal connections, sexualities, subjectivities, and intimacies. The question arises whether our desires are shifting toward non-human or non-sexual forms. No one is immune to the negative affects permeating our present apocalyptic moment—even though sex today has been fully incorporated into the logic of capitalism: "We are too overworked to be deeply, collectively horny" (Lewis). We thus explore this question from dual perspectives: how might we conceive of an Eros without 'us' (the human) or alternatively an 'us' without Eros? We recognize that these stances are not mutually exclusive. This inquiry sets the stage for a deeper examination of emerging forms of desire, 'sex,' and connection, prompting a reevaluation of intimacy and eroticism in an era defined by collapse.

"Sex, like man, or like the category of the social, may only last for a while," wrote Baudrillard. If psychoanalysis helped to bring sex to the forefront in the second part of the twentieth century, perhaps it also orchestrated its demise. In the past ten

years, we have witnessed what some would call an ‘anti-sex panic,’ with a notable rise in asexuality as a sexual identity, an exploration of desires beyond traditional human-centric and heterosexual norms, and frequent reports of declining sexual activity among young people globally (Willingham). How should we interpret these shifts? Rather than viewing them with concern, this might be an opportunity to rethink the role of Eros—or its absence—in our current era. If we once had sex without sexuality, are we now moving towards sexuality without sex? (Giddens) Amidst looming human extinction and planetary catastrophe, is it possible to reconceptualize our relationship with Eros to transcend the anthropocentric perspective, thereby ‘assenting to life’ even as we confront our possible end?

Building upon critical posthumanities and queer negativity, we seek proposals that address affects at the interstices of Eros and discourses surrounding the Anthropocene and existential risk, such as the current debates around ‘peak libido’ and libidinal exhaustion, to think differently about intimacies and pleasures ‘in the end times.’ Various fields are invited to contribute, including posthumanism, eco-studies, indigenous studies, queer theory, feminist theory, critical animal and plant studies, psychoanalysis, and philosophy.

Possible approaches include but are not limited to:

- Insights from posthuman, queer, Indigenous, ecocritical, (xeno)feminist (Cuboniks) perspectives
- Alternative theories of desire: post-Eros and/or post-sexuality (Markiewicz), including critical and speculative posthumanities, various ‘posts’ (postmodernism, poststructuralism etc.)
- Life, matter, and biopolitics: how biopolitics, new materialism (Bennett), and new animism (Descola) shape our understanding of desire
- Art, nature, and aesthetics: examine how nonhuman elements, sensation, and artifice influence our feelings and attractions (Lingis)
- Digital and artificial desires: desire for nonhumans, such as AI, avatars, and digital objects (Konior), as well as speculative concepts like ‘post-planetary’ desire or ‘xenoeroticism’ (Roden)
- Erotic temporalities (Cerankowski)
- Desire for collapse (Servigne), planetary dysphoria (Apter), antinatalism (Edelman), existential risk (Moynihan)
- Negative and ambivalent affects: negativity, resignation, and passivity toward sex, desire, and love (Bersani)
- The absence of Eros: asexuality, autoeroticism, asexual reproduction (Przybylo) and non-sexual pleasures
- Sexuality as a modern construct (Giddens), anti-capitalist critiques of sexuality (McGowan)

S13

AFFECTIVE WITHDRAWAL:

GOING NUMB AS SURVIVAL AND RESISTANCE

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We're going numb. In this era of hypervisible violence and tragedy, we seem increasingly unmoved by daily images of death, destruction, and despair. Besides, many of us are weary of the constant expectation to perform empathy and grief, especially when that demand often comes from and serves those with far greater privilege than ourselves. For too long, the labor of caring (as in, "taking care" of others, but also just "caring about" their problems) has disproportionately fallen on women, immigrants, refugees, poor people, queer people, and people of color to provide (Berlant 2015). Disenfranchised subjects have long been expected to display sympathy (Yao 2021), hyperempathy (Leong 2016), gratitude (Nguyen 2023), and a whole range of other emotions (arousal, awe, fear, etc.) in order to be allowed the privileges of "humanization" (Schuller 2018). Against these conditions of viral trauma-porn and demands for emotional labor, going-numb feels like both a means of survival and political refusal.

This stream invites us to sit in the impasse of disaffection—of being unable, or unwilling, to be affected—and to find what sort of politics this makes available. This might entail deliberately curating where and how we spend our emotional energies, so as to center on those who most need it (Malatino 2021; Yao 2021). Or, it might look like turning away from human sociality entirely and toward our non-human kin as sites of restoration, whether in the form of plant relatives (Jacobs & Narvaez, 2022), ecological landscapes (Luciano & Chen 2015), animals and pets (Han 2022), cyber-relations (Hayles 2010), spiritual entities (Pérez 2007), or even inanimate objects (Chen 2012).

Furthermore, it invites scholars to rethink what change-making looks like when we can't rely upon the mobilization of mass empathy. Our traditional models for social movements, which depend on the "transmission of affect" and shared feeling (Brennan 2014)—on its members "moving" and "being moved by" one another

(Ahmed 2015)—seem insufficient to today’s affective insularity. In its wake, we need new frameworks for what justice looks like, ideally detached from the ableist privileging of “movement” and “mobility.”

This stream invites work that rethinks what it means to be unfeeling. It hopes to weave together theory from critical race studies (African American, Indigenous, Latine, Asian studies, etc.), disability studies (mad studies, deaf studies, and critical autism studies, etc.), performance studies, and gender, queer and trans studies to examine how demands for emotionality fall across racialized, gendered, and ableist lines. It also prompts thinking with and through the fields of intimate labor (Boris & Parreñas, 2010), posthumanism, theology, critical animal and plant studies, philosophy, political theory, new materialisms, and eco-feminism to imagine alternatives ways of being in-relation. Further possible subtopics include:

- Tarrying between self-care, self-preservation, selfishness, self-soothing and communal care as political
- Making kin (Haraway 2018), multispecies relationality, or other forms of non-normative solidarity
- Emotional consent and boundaries
- The politics of racialized trauma
- Ontological objecthood (Cheng 2021) or fugitive ontologies
- Flat affect (Berlant 2015) and affective opacity
- Rethinking moral goodness, as disassociated from empathy
- Infrapolitics and racial interiority
- Post-activism (Akomolafe, 2020)
- Animism and animacy (Chen 2021)
- Biopolitics of emotion



S14

(UN)SETTLING TENSIONS IN THE RELATIONAL FIELD

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This stream is about the relational extra arising when you commit to nonseparation between practice and theory. Once you find your “visceral literacy” (Seigworth & Pedwell, 2023) feet, you cannot set them down. This leads, often, to the situation of an affect alien— feeling the right thing at the wrong time or the wrong thing at the right time (Ahmed, 2010). It is continuously unsettling. The unsettledness prompts speaking and acting, but interactions with the viscerally ignorant often lead to impasse. This is about how the sensations of the world saturate experience but articulating or engaging them is to repeatedly hit brick walls (Ahmed, 2019).

I know we can get to otherwise in the relational field (Manning, 2023), yet the settled horrors continually mediate the potentials of relating. Shaking things up (naming, for instance, whiteness) can send sedimented feelings swirling into solution. But too often shakeups resettle into even more unshakeable impasses.

In this stream, the hope is to articulate the nuances and details of the feelings of impasse that occur when pointing out connections, say, to whiteness and the need for affirmative action programs. This stream grapples with how making connections often leads to disconnection--to impasse. In this stream, commiserating about the impasses arising in what was hoped to be a fruitful relational field is welcome. This stream swells with the weariness of nonrecognition and clings to the hope that (right?) relating can produce fruit. This stream is not certain of encountering promise, but it is not going to stop trying.

The ideas in this stream foreground affect theory as relational practice. Situations in this stream sense the tension between connectedness and living as-if autonomous. It is the feeling of getting a student eval that the class is an “easy A,” after a semester of practicing radical empathy in the classroom. It is deciding to stop flying on airplanes and your mother-in-law getting mad because she wants the family to go to Hawaii. It is about arguing that it is fine to go to Hawaii while Hawaiians beg us not to. It is going to work sick. It is having to argue with your partner about why you must side with Palestinians, despite the looming threat of a Trump reelection. It is knowing that we can get to otherwise through the relational field but having to

navigate unending, unsettling relational impasses. This stream recognizes these tensions and asks how affective praxis can navigate them.

This stream will sparkle with ideas that engage:

- Conflicting and competing affective worlds
- Tensions between the individual and collective
- Struggles arising from the perceived non-relation of the human and non-human
- Relational failures, hope, and starting over
- Impasses between knowing and doing
- Shaking up the settled and its resettling into something worse than before



S15

THE PROMISES AND IMPASSES OF AFFECT AS METHOD

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This stream will consider the promises and impasses of affect as method. Everything has an affect. As the atmospheric, porous, embodied, and alive ‘this-ness,’ or haecceity of moments, places, and people, affect is by definition unable to be captured. But what if we look at what affect does? At the changes it creates? The margins of performance that are adjusted? This line of inquiry holds great methodological promise for site specific work and research that is attune to atmospheres and orientations. However, there are also impasses presented by specific readings of affect as a concept and orthodox approaches to empirical qualitative research methods. Paper submitters are invited to consider the role that affect plays in making research, and, in this capacity, consider affect as part of their methods.

Affect theory, which delves into the pre-/non-conscious experiences shaped by bodily responses, is increasingly seen as a significant methodological approach in humanities and social sciences research. Deleuze’s separation of affect from emotion has been taken up widely—while emotion is a subjective content, affect is an intensity, a moment of unformed and unstructured potential. This perspective challenges the traditional dominance of representational thinking and textual analysis in cultural studies and invites researchers to consider the vibrations and resonances that precede and exceed cognitive capture.

In exploring affect as a research method, this seminar series will investigate how affective intensities navigate the space between the body and its environment, between the individual and the collective. The methodological implications here are vast. Engaging with affect prompts a rethinking of how data is collected, analyzed, and presented. It calls for methodologies that are not only reactive but also proactive in tracing and responding to the transient, ephemeral, and often elusive atmospheres and energies of social environments.

Presentations might explore, for example, how urban spaces generate specific affective responses that could inform urban planning and public policy. Research might be drawn

from theories of the lived/built worlds, where authors like Jane Bennett and Nigel Thrift discuss the vibrancy of matter and non-human agencies in shaping human affective states. This could extend to environmental psychology and how physical settings contribute to emotional well-being.

Another suggested area for exploration is the affective impact of digital media. With the rise of virtual reality and interactive media, researchers could examine how these technologies engineer affective experiences and shape user engagement, drawing on work from media studies and communication theory. The educational field is yet another area where affect as a method can yield significant insights. The emotional geographies of classroom settings, the affective dimensions of pedagogy, and the non-cognitive aspects of learning could all be examined. This approach aligns with the work of educational theorists like Megan Boler, who advocates for an "affective pedagogy" that recognizes the role of emotions in learning processes.

In calling for presentations, I encourage potential contributors to consider how methodologies rooted in affect can disrupt traditional research paradigms. Proposals might address questions such as:

- How can affective methodologies help us understand societal shifts and cultural movements?
- What tools or techniques are best suited to capture and interpret affective data?
- How can researchers remain attuned to their own affective responses without overshadowing the phenomena under study?

Potential topics and questions for presentations might include:

- The role of affect in social or religious movements and how it influences collective behavior
- Affective economies in consumer culture, examining how desires and anxieties drive market trends
- The impact of architectural and urban design on the emotional and affective experiences of space users
- Methodological challenges in studying non-verbal and pre-conscious affective interactions
- The interplay between affect, technology, and user experience in the design of digital interfaces
- The work of feeling in global political landscapes

The seminars aim to be interdisciplinary and inclusive. I invite contributions from sociology, anthropology, religious studies, literature, cultural studies, media studies, and other related fields. Each presentation should ideally combine theoretical explorations with practical examples or case studies, illustrating the application of affect theory in

concrete research settings. This call for presentations is an invitation to rethink traditional research approaches and explore the dynamic, if intangible, terrain of affect. It is an opportunity for scholars, practitioners, and researchers to engage with a vibrant field of study that bridges the gap between empirical analysis and the nuanced, often unpredictable realm of human feeling and response.



S16

WORKING WITH AFFECT

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Against the backdrop of a relentless assault on the humanities, a consensus has emerged that the humanities should not be assessed based on utility. Usefulness alone misses too much of what makes humanistic study valuable. The same is said of affect theory. At the same time, as intertwined environmental, economic, and political crises unfold, we have to ask: is affect theory useful? Should it be? Put another way: does affect theory work?

Does affect theory give us insight into the workings of power? Does it shed light on how certain political factions, leaders, ideologies, and systems gain and hold power? What does it tell us about the nature of both bottom-up and top-down political processes? Can it help us explain contemporary dynamics around misinformation and disinformation? What does affect theory contribute to the making and unmaking of activists, critics, citizens, and educators?

In *Poor Queer Studies*, Matt Brim writes that “mainstream Queer Studies likes to pretend that its job is not to prepare students to be workers or part of the working class.” Can affect theory make workers? What does affect theory imagine (or pretend) is its job? Since affect theory is multiple, do different affect theories correspond to different domains of utility? Or are these the wrong questions to be asking? Is affect theory fundamentally inutile? And is its uselessness necessary?

Finally, affect theory’s reception in different academic disciplines—humanistic, social scientific, and scientific—has been uneven. What should we understand about affect theory’s varying levels of success and failure across different academic contexts? Is there an affective approach to archives, to fieldsites, to laboratories, to classrooms, to libraries, to administration, to mentoring? Is there something in the orientation of affect study that determines its degree of play within different ensembles of intellectual concerns?

The papers and panels in this stream will stage this conversation. All participants (speakers and audience members) will bring their own ideas, perspectives, and questions on the relationship between affect and its laborings (its utility?) into dialogue to work toward an increased self-reflexivity in affect theory spaces.

Proposals are invited for short papers that directly respond to the questions of how we can work with affect. Unlike the standard panel session, these short papers will be presented roundtable-style at the beginning of the session in order to set the stage for a full-participation conversation among presenters and the audience to follow. Final papers should be 5-7 minutes long and consider specific thinkers, situations, and/or case studies illustrating affect at work. Proposals should reflect the limited duration that will be made available to speakers along these lines.

