



Sea Change:
Lifeworlds & Ecological Upheaval
39TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
MARCH 12-14th, 2021
Online Program

“How do people imagine the landscapes they find themselves in? How does the land shape the imagination of the people who dwell in it? How does desire itself, the desire to comprehend, shape knowledge?”

—Barry Lopez, Arctic Dreams

WELCOME

We welcome you to our very first virtual conference. With this conference, it is our intention to reimagine the way that conferences happen and what it means to participate in a conference. We aim to provide the maximum amount of accessibility and a high degree of collaboration. Our conference theme “Sea Change” speaks to our most pressing issues: climate crisis, political turmoil, and collective psychological and spiritual upheaval. And we cannot ignore the devastating impact of COVID-19, which has forced all of us to become creative in the way we connect and move through life. We hope that this conference might be a meditation on the various ways we struggle, seek justice, celebrate, and ultimately heal through existential threats.

We are grateful for your presence and co-collaboration and look forward to experiencing this worldwide event with you. We are making history together.

—Mark Flanagan (2021 Program Chair)

COVER IMAGE

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NOTE: This information is to inform you of the content and times of all sessions. Please access all sessions at the appropriate time on the Conference [Communities](#) page.

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Andy Gurevich

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Visit our website: <http://ac.americananthro.org>

Visit our community: <https://www.facebook.com/anthropologyofconsciousness/>

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SEEKING BOARD MEMBERS! - For more information please contact agingprophet@gmail.com or torres.ni@gmail.com

PRESIDENT'S WELCOME

Welcome to the 39th Annual Spring Conference of *The Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness* (SAC). We have been holding annual section meetings for close to 40 years, but this will be our first fully online conference! Thank you for joining us as we pivot the organization towards a volatile and uncertain future where the study of consciousness, and its foundational influence on human agency, is only growing in academic, social, and psychological importance. SAC is an inter- and trans-disciplinary organization dedicated to the study of consciousness phenomena in cultures around the world. We reflect on how consciousness and human transformation are relevant to the challenges of our age. We value ethnographic, experimental, experiential, expressive, and discursive ways of understanding consciousness. We aim to provide a welcoming space for persons who question orthodoxy. SAC seeks to be a home for indigenous knowledge and direct anthropological practice. Many of our members have deep experience in cultures that emphasize the importance of consciousness. Consequently, SAC members often have the desire and ability to apply knowledge gained from ethnography to meditation, psychotherapy, community organizing, design and urban planning, social work, bodywork, medicine, law, advocacy, writing, and many other practices.

This year, our conference theme focuses on how we engage with communities around ongoing concerns of ecological change. The title “Sea Change” points to the context and social climate in which we currently live: a time in which drastic social, political, and environmental change is occurring. During these times of chaos and ecological upheaval, conflict and despair inevitably arise as responses to the ongoing precarity and uncertainty. As anthropologists and consciousness researchers, there are many ways to interpret and understand these changes. “Sea Change” also acknowledges that we live in a time in which all forms of life are experiencing radical changes on the planet (such as rising sea levels), and with such changes, suffering and conflict increases. Therefore, we will spend our time together reflecting and engaging with subjects related to change, embodied transformation, and ecological disruption. We consider this conference an opportunity to build networks for collective engagement, restorative practices, healing, and reconciliation.

We will be featuring works that explore indigenous and/or plant-based practices that might provide transformational learning and opportunities for collective action. It is our goal to elevate oppressed voices and wisdom that honor those communities and challenge the power dynamics of colonization. We will also engage in discussions related to exploring consciousness in *all* lived experiences, both human and non-human, while considering the social construct of “nature” itself; and reflecting on how consciousness permeates the boundaries of all categories of experience in both the inner and outer landscapes of our generative, co-creative encounter with the Other.

In his well-received ethnographic research with the Oglala Sioux medicine man Black Elk, Joseph Epes Brown noted, "We are still very far from being aware of the dimensions and ramifications of our ethnocentric illusions. Nevertheless, by the very nature of things we are now forced to undergo a process of intense self-examination; to engage in a serious re-evaluation of the premises and orientations of our society. The inescapable reality of the ecological crisis, for example, has shattered for many a kind of dream world, and has forced us not only to seek immediate solutions to the kinds of problems which a highly-developed technology has fostered, but also, and above all, to look to our basic values concerning life and the nature and destiny of man." (*The Sacred Pipe*, XV)

Black Elk represented a way of seeing, of relating, to all the living that constitutes an indigeneity of wildness. An experiential encounter with the Other that renders both "transcendent to transcendence," as the late mythologist Joseph Campbell would put it, and centers the regenerative mystery of "nature" at the heart of all contingent identities and conscious intention. A reclamation of this way of relating to the external world begins with a radical transformation of the self. A return to the deep connectivity of an integrated lifeworld. It is this very "rewilding" that will serve as the experiential basis of our theme.

Each annual conference is a gathering of old and new friends; a community of practice bound by related interests and open-hearted curiosity that holds the space for all ideas presented in the spirit of genuine collaboration. So many dedicated members and supporters of SAC have come together to make this conference possible. I wish to particularly acknowledge Nicole Torres and Joshua Falcon for envisioning and developing this year's theme. I also want to thank Mark Flanagan, Nicole Torres, and Sara Fischer for their help with planning this conference and producing the program. Special thanks also to the SAC Board for all of the tremendous work as we continue to reinvent our organization along more generative, diverse, expansive, and integral lines of inquiry.

During our time together, I encourage you to create new connections and friendships, and nurture old ones. If you are new to SAC, please consider becoming a member. If you are already a member, I thank you and invite you to increase your involvement with SAC. There is much to do and we cannot accomplish it without you. Be sure to check out our Zoom Happy Hours, Keynote events, and Asynchronous Media Gallery for more opportunities to explore, connect, and engage with the theme and with one another. On behalf of the entire organization, I welcome each and every one of you to this gathering.

Sincerely,

Andy Gurevich
President,
Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness

Student Paper Prizes

As part of our series of new initiatives, SAC is introducing two student paper prizes to be awarded annually to winning submissions in the following areas:

Octavia Butler/Ursula K. LeGuin Award for a student work of literary fiction that uses anthropological elements to envision a better world, or change consciousness regarding any of the manifold problems in the current one.



Stephan A. Schwartz Award for a student paper that contributes significant perspective/research to the discussion of the immaterial, or *nonlocal* aspects or “origins” of consciousness.



More Information on how to support these student awards on the Conference [Communities](#) page.

[DONATE](#) to our organization to support these prizes and other upcoming programs and events.

SAC 2021- Keynote Events

Tidal Changes through Spiritual Activism

Friday, March 12th (6:00 PM EST)

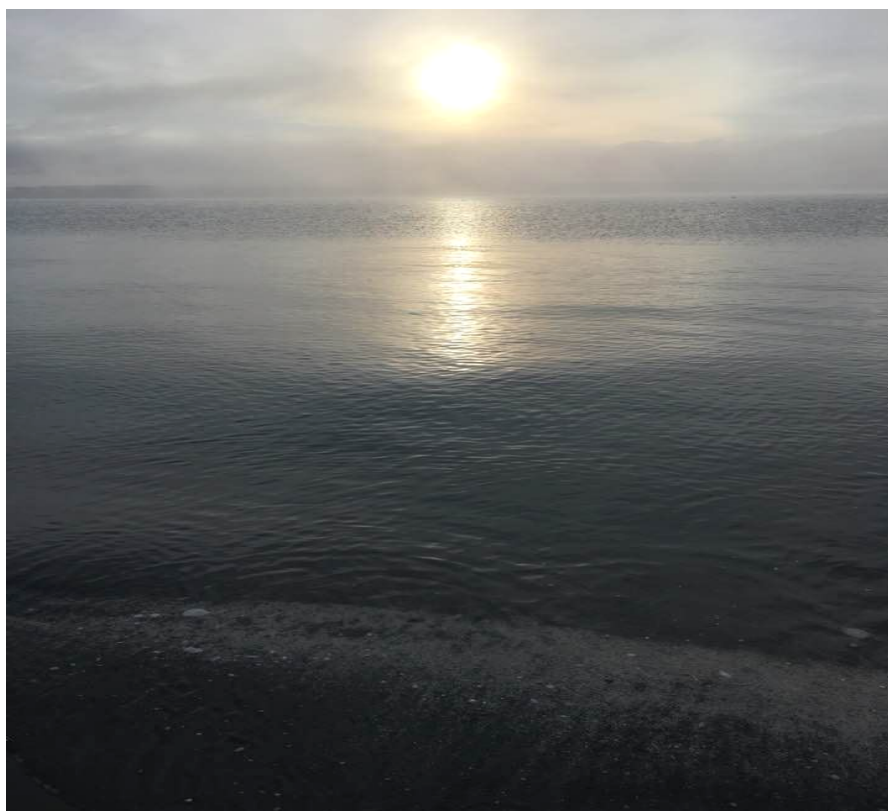


Photo taken by Nicole Torres - February 2021

Nicole Torres will host a roundtable discussion which focuses on the voices of community organizers and water activists who have committed themselves to recognizing the sacredness of all life. For the purposes of this conference, we will focus on the element of water. What does it mean to be a water protector, ambassador, or defender? How is working with the element of water a sacred practice that leads to the transformation of consciousness? Our panelists will share their experiences and perspectives.

Participants:

Roxana Pardo Garcia

Isabel Friend

Melina Juarez Perez

Anne Conrad-Antoville

Nicole Torres (Panel Chair)

Information on how to attend on the Conference [Communities](#) page

Gather

An Intimate Portrait of Indigenous Food Sovereignty

Saturday, March 13th (3:00 PM EST)



During the conference we will be hosting a virtual watch party of the award-winning documentary *Gather*. The film is an intimate portrait of the growing movement amongst Native Americans to reclaim their spiritual, political, and cultural identities through food sovereignty, while battling the trauma of centuries of genocide. A *New York Times* critics pick, the reviewers claimed,

“The film wonderfully weaves personal stories with archival footage that contextualizes the continued violence against Native Americans. Rawal covers a substantial amount of ground and deftly balances the dense material without losing sight of the mission driving the bigger story: Healing from generational trauma sometimes starts with just one person.”

Watch the trailer: <https://gather.film>

We will have a live Q&A with the director of the film and some of the film’s participants as well.

Information on how to attend the live screening and Q&A can be found on the Conference [Communities](#) page.

Meditation & Yoga **with Gurucharan Singh Khalsa**

Sunday, March 14th (11:00 AM EST)



On Sunday morning, Dr. Gurucharan Singh Khalsa will lead a meditation and yoga workshop centered on the ways we can integrate the overall themes of the conference. Helping us transform our ideas and conversations into embodied transformations.

After a short introduction to give context to the meditation, Gurucharan will guide us in a simple yet powerful breath meditation. It will bring us into the presence of stillness and joy, and connect us with our own heart, and with all of nature, of which we are always a small, but essential, part.

Then he will share ideas on personal embodiment, stillness, and the nature of Becoming that show we are deeply connected. Through his own experience, the experiences of others, and these meditative techniques, he will help us reach joy, stillness and

presence. And perhaps remind us how we need to connect to nature in a time when so many of us feel disconnected.

Gurucharan will do a second meditation and encourage a walking meditation after a simple three part activation using the Master Breath. We will do this then take a walk outside. A simple pattern described and immediately practiced. A space to explore the connections of inner and out landscapes. The discussion afterwards shares a perspective on the need for immersive experiences with senses wide open that let us connect, commit, and take action to steward our planet at this critical time.

Gurucharan understands this amazing ability we all have to connect and act from his own direct experience, from teaching over a million people around the world, and through the lens of breakthroughs in physics that reveal the flow of Becoming in ourselves, nature, and experience.

Gurucharan Singh Khalsa Ph.D., C-IYTA is an affiliated scholar at Chapman University in Orange, California. There he collaborates with their Institute for Quantum Studies on projects for leading edge applications of quantum foundations to the nature of consciousness and our capacity as human beings. He has worked with Chapman's Fish Interfaith Center since 2013. He contributes to original research in meditation, breath, and wellness. He developed several global training programs in meditation and its application to leadership, wellness, and personal transformation. He is the premier trainer for practitioners of the yoga of awareness since 1969. He authored and advocates for Breath Walk to integrate meditation, walking, eco-immersion, and engagement with nature.

Visit his site to learn more: <https://gurucharan.com>

Information on how to attend on the Conference [Communities](#) page.

Or at the following:

<http://ac.americananthro.org>

<http://ac.americananthro.org/event/ac-2021-section-meeting-sea-change-consciousness-lifeworlds-ecological-upheaval/>

<https://www.twitch.tv/abracadabra>

Email us: conferencesac@gmail.com

About Abracadabra

We need each other now more than ever, we need to be close, feel the vibrations and embrace the unexpected. Our community is built on dreams, some big and some small, each relentless in our pursuit to achieve a sense of closeness like never before.

Speaking of closeness, given the global situation we may not be physically close this time, but we feel you. Do you feel us? Our ethos of sustainability continues to ring strong, and we are uncompromising when it comes to organising eco-conscious parties in paradise locations. This year, our location has turned virtual as we bring you Abracadabra TV, an idea built from the necessity of keeping the party alive (and our wifi signal strong).

Instead of turning up, we're tuning in, as we bring you a magic-packed programme of music and self love streamed live on Twitch. Music knows no boundaries, as we make our ongoing Abracadabra TV part of your weekly routine. Join us in this new reality, if for no reason other than a good time.

And the best part about it? No one is left out.

Welcome to Abracadabra TV. Are you coming?

Abracadabra will be hosting parts of this conference on <https://www.twitch.tv/abracadabra>

They will also be hosting afterparties Friday and Saturday nights, after scheduled happy hours. Information on how to attend on the Conference [Communities](#) page.

<https://www.abracadabra.life/>



Friday, MARCH 12TH

9:00 AM (EST)	CONFERENCE OPENS (Moderators available for questions, etc.)
10:00 AM	PANEL: “Evocative Ethnographies of Florida’s Silver River: Biodiversity, Boundaries, Life Experiences, and Conservation”
11:30 AM	BREAK
11:45 AM	PANEL: “Buddhist and Feminist Approaches to the Climate and the Environment”
1:00 PM	LUNCH
2:00 PM	EXPERIENTIAL: “Ecological Grief Cafe”
3:45 PM	BREAK
4:00 PM	PANEL: “Altered States of Consciousness and Transcendent Change”
5:30 PM	BREAK
6:00 PM	ROUNDTABLE: “Tidal Changes through Spiritual Activism ” (Live streamed on Twitch.tv)
7:45 PM	DINNER
9:00 PM	HAPPY HOUR / NETWORKING
10:00 PM	CELEBRATE: Abracadabra

Saturday, MARCH 13TH

9:00 AM (EST)	CONFERENCE OPENS (Moderators available for questions, etc.)
10:00 AM	PANEL: “The Shape of Change: Addressing Possibilities and Limits to Transformation”
12:00 PM	LUNCH
12:45 PM	PANEL: “Resistance and Reclamation: Indigenous Peoples’ Responses the Changing Ecology”
2:45 PM	BREAK
3:00 PM	FILM: <i>Gather</i> (Live-streamed on twitch.tv)
4:30 PM	Q&A with <i>Gather</i> filmmakers
5:15 PM	BREAK
5:30 PM	PANEL: “Consciousness, Beliefs, and Perception: The Intersection of Inner and Outer Ecologies”
7:15 PM	DINNER
8:00 PM	HAPPY HOUR / NETWORKING
10:00 PM	CELEBRATE: Abracadabra

Sunday, MARCH 14TH

11:00 AM	EXPERIENTIAL: Meditation and Yoga (Live-streamed on twitch.tv)
12:30 PM	LUNCH
1:00 PM	READING: “An Engineered Tableau from the Spheres of Unintentional Agencies”
1:45 PM	BREAK
2:00 PM	PANEL: “Embodied Ecologies: Engaging the World through Self”
3:45 PM	BREAK
4:00 PM	EXPERIENTIAL: Contemplative Community Organizing
5:30 PM	DINNER
6:00 PM	Hippity Hoppity
7:15 PM	BREAK
7:30 PM	Anthropology of Consciousness Business Meeting

CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

(In order of appearance)

Evocative Ethnographies of Florida's Silver River: Biodiversity, Boundaries, Life Experiences, and Conservation

Panel Abstract

Water: a reflection, a surface, a substance, and a movement. A boundary that eludes, precludes and shapes form and life itself. A vessel that shapes its surroundings and where vessels float, feed, and folly. This live panel shares multimedia poetic experiments in conducting an ethnography with a river, specifically with the Silver River in North Central Florida where Asian monkeys, mastodons, Black Seminoles, self-identified rednecks in motorboats, Northern conservationists in kayaks, tourists in glass bottom boats, Tarzan movies, fungi, Paradise Park (the Blacks-only beach during segregation), manatees and alligators (from prehistoric times), migratory birds, algae, and conceptions of humaNature relationships collide as fragmented facets of the Silver River's identity.

Meryl Shriver-Rice's masters of Environment, Culture, and Media program's course called Nature, the Anthropocene and Visual Anthropology (University of Miami) is the milieu for this artistic-scholastic engagement with representations of lifeworlds, culturally specific experiences, and the policies that shape and are shaped by these meshworks. Students are guided by Amanda Concha-Holmes' pioneering work with Evocative Ethnography to integrate videos, texts, soundscapes, images, graphics, sensorial experiences, and poetry to interpret some of the layers of cultural and ecological history through a decolonial, feminist theoretical and methodological lens that examines the Silver River's entangled prehistorical, historical, and contemporary entanglements of environmental concepts, conservation policies, diverse peoples, animals and plants, climate changes, multispecies perspectives, and the meaning for being, belonging and becoming in Florida, and the world.

This 90-minute panel will feature multimedia presentations accompanied by the activists who made them for a discussion on decolonization, embodied transformation, healing, and learning with nonhumans. Presentations will examine multispecies ways of seeing and sensing, questions of belonging in emergent ecosystems, "invasive" species, habitat conservation, and ideological underpinnings of environmental policies, along with notions of change and deep time to negotiate the representations of some of the layers of identity formation that are fragmented, hybrid and emergent. These stories and the evocative ways they are represented are critical for excavating and interpreting consciousness from a deep historical and multispecies framework that highlight the contributions of the under-represented.

Buddhist and Feminist Approaches to Climate and Ecology

Panel Abstract

Since industrialization, our world has been subjected to forces of domination, patriarchy, extraction, and commodification. While advances in technology and commerce have raised the standard of living for many communities in the world, other communities have been exploited and oppressed. All the while, the natural environment has continued to suffer devastating effects of pollution, global warming, and ecological death. This panel explores alternatives to these destructive approaches by examining the sacred feminine and Buddhism in relation to ecology. This panel will explore how harmony, nurturance, interdependence, egalitarianism, compassion, and non-aggression can help guide communities to sustainable co-existence with our world.

List of Papers:

- Sharon Mijares, *Ecology Nature and the Feminine*
- Dhardon Sharling, *"Buddha would be green": The Dalai Lama's interdisciplinary approach to addressing climate change*

Paper Abstracts

Ecology, Nature, and the Feminine

Sharon Mijares, California Institute for Human Science, sharon.mijares12@gmail.com

Nature is abundant with diverse expressions. The Earth is often considered to be feminine, known as Mother Earth, Pachamama, Gaia, and many other feminine names. The patriarchal regime figuratively and metaphorically has raped her—taking riches of water, oil, precious metals, and more. During its hierarchical era, women were relegated as second best with primary roles to serve the men and children. The imbalance is evidencing itself in dis-ease and death on all levels. New traditions valuing both women and Nature will usher in the creativity needed to birth a new era. Healing means connecting and flowing in harmony with all of life. Together, we can create change!

“Buddha would be green”: The Dalai Lama’s interdisciplinary approach to addressing climate change

Dhardon Sharling, dhardonsharling@gmail.com

The Dalai Lama’s vision of the world in which the different approaches to understanding the self, universe, and one another can be brought together in the service of humanity, combines “science and spirituality, darwinism and karma, quantum mechanics and philosophy” (Gyatso, 2005b: 111). In this presentation I will employ an interdisciplinary approach to addressing ecological changes premised on the understanding that interdisciplinarity’s goal is to “solve problems of the real world” (Klein, 1990; Moran, 2010; Graff, 2015). I will explore the Dalai Lama’s commitment to environmental conservation efforts best expressed by his advocacy for greater human action to combat climate change. This presentation will delve deeper into the interdisciplinary aspect of the Dalai Lama’s remark, in particular the imbrication of science, spirituality, and humanity’s call to action. I will also make a critical analysis of the Dalai Lama’s remarks within the framework of the concept of ‘Buddhist ecology,’ a term premised on the the Buddhist recognition of interrelation, and employed by ecologists to not only explain ecology as the study of the interrelations between organisms and their environments, but to also emphasize the fundamental identity of subject and surroundings. This presentation will further investigate the understanding of Buddhism as an ‘ecological religion’ or a ‘religious ecology,’ based on its advocacy for a nonaggressive attitude toward nature.

Ecological Grief Café

Facilitator: Julie Raymond-Yakoubian, The Ritual Bough (TheRitualBough@gmail.com)

Description:

Join a conversation about *ecological grief* at this gently-facilitated café-style discussion. ‘Ecological grief’ describes the senses of loss and mourning that we experience as a result of actual or anticipated ecological degradation, climate change, and other events that impact places and ecosystems that we both cherish as individuals, and which we value as a global community. As a participant, you will have the opportunity to voice natural places that are meaningful to you and to engage in discussion with others about the meaning and importance of natural places, how traumas to those places impact us individually and collectively, the ways in which we process ecological grief, and other related topics. While active participation is not required, we encourage participants to join with a desire to engage (this is not a presentation). Participants are invited to bring a candle and an object that is from or represents the natural world to our virtual gathering.

Altered States of Consciousness and Transcendent Change

Panel Abstract

Humans have long used altered states of consciousness to help navigate and create change. Altered states of consciousness tap into particular cultural and social narratives, norms, and beliefs, allowing enhanced or “transcendent” change. This panel will explore how altered states create transcendent change through cultural mediation in various ways: Indigenous Western Amazonian belief and use of non-human agencies through ayahuasca consumption, healing persistent illness and transforming identity with psychedelic medicine through a “rites of passage” framework, and ritual mediation of transcendence and healing among Sufis in northern Morocco.

List of Papers:

- Christina Callicott, *Amazonian Shamanism and the Chemical Turn: Re-Engaging the Material in Ontological Studies*
- Elaine Dennis, *Sacred plant medicine, treatment resistant conditions, and transformation of identity*
- John Napora, *Healing and Trance in Morocco*

Panel Chair: Christina Callicott

Paper Abstracts

Amazonian Shamanism and the Chemical Turn: Re-Engaging the Material in Ontological Studies

Christina Callicott, Fort Lewis College, christina.callicott@gmail.com

It has become a trope of global ayahuasca culture that the best shamans learn their songs directly from the plants through a process known as “dieting” the plants (*dietar*). I have previously used the concept of *phytosemiotics* to suggest a means by which such “interspecies communication” might take place. In this presentation I further elaborate this framework using John Hartigan’s “chemical turn” as a preliminary framework for integrating data from anthropology and ecology. This presentation investigates the potential agency of other-than-human beings and how

Indigenous inhabitants of the Western Amazon interpret that agency and leverage it for their own purposes. Finally, this presentation responds to critiques of the ontological turn by demonstrating how the ethnography of esoterica can be used in support of Indigenous movements for social change.

Sacred plant medicine, treatment resistant conditions, and transformation of identity

Elaine Dennis, John F. Kennedy University, edennis@email.jfku.edu

Illness, healing and sacred plant medicine/psychedelic experiences can all have profound and significant effects on people's lives. There is a theme of 'rites of passage' in both illness and the psychedelic experience. Rites of passage traditionally have three phases: separation, liminality, and incorporation (or return). While illness is arguably a rite of passage, in illness there can be phases of rejection, engulfment, acceptance, and enrichment. In psychedelic journeys the key stages are preparation, engagement and integration. But how is identity transformed on this path?

In the presentation, I will discuss my relationship to the topic, review key literature and terminology, as well as discuss the qualitative research project I conducted exploring the role of sacred plant medicines in treating treatment resistant illness. In concordance with other research the study revealed that in the face of living with persistent health symptoms, individuals can undergo a process of identification with and engulfment by the illness, upending a sense of stability of the self. Lastly, I will discuss the unique findings of this study, that the journey of healing a persistent illness with psychedelics can manifest in a transformation of identity through three distinct and overlapping stages: the wounded, the healing, and the emergent self.

Healing and Trance in Morocco

John A. Napora, University of South Florida, jnapora@usf.edu

Based on two years of field research in Morocco, this paper explores the relationship between healing, altered states of consciousness, and acts of self-harm among Sufis in northern Morocco. I will describe acts of self-violence which I and other ethnographers have seen some Sufis perform while in altered states of consciousness during their ritual (Ar. *dhikr*), and also that they maintain they feel no pain during or afterward. Indeed, they stated they felt better. I will address such questions as how that might be the case, what the culturally constructed motives may be for going into trance and performing acts of self-harm, and how their rituals and actions within them may be seen as acts of healing related to their social status. I will argue that their ritual actions are deeply meaningful religious acts, and that there are cultural meanings and values associated with them which allow the participants to experience transcendence and a means to experience an enhanced and blessed sense of self which is psychologically rewarding and healing. This will add to our knowledge of humanity's ability to transcend pain through an altered state of consciousness, and to self-heal.

Tidal Changes Through Spiritual Activism

Roundtable Abstract

Dr. Nicole Torres will host a roundtable discussion which focuses on the voices of community organizers and water activists who have committed themselves to recognizing the sacredness of all life. For the purposes of this conference, we will focus on the element of water. What does it mean to be a water protector, ambassador, or defender? How is working with the element of water a sacred practice that leads to the transformation of consciousness? Our panelists will share their experiences and perspectives.

Participants:

- *Roxana Pardo Garcia*, Community Organizer and Owner, La Roxay Productions. Website: <https://laroxay.com/>
- *Isabel Friend*, Water Advocate: <https://www.waterislife.love/>
- *Melina Juarez Perez*, Assistant Professor of Political Science, Western Washington University. Website: <https://www.melinajuarez.com>
- *Anne Conrad-Antoville*, Activist for Ancient and Second Growth Forests, Wilderness, and Water
- *Nicole Torres* (Panel Chair), Water Steward, Medical Anthropologist, and Instructor at Western Washington University. Owner, Inner Tapestries Counseling: innertapestries.com

The Shape of Change: Addressing Possibilities and Limits to Transformation

Organizer: Daniel Lende, Department of Anthropology, University of South Florida, dlende@usf.edu

Panel Abstract:

This panel addresses what shapes change using a holistic, interdisciplinary approach grounded in anthropology. A central question this panel addresses is how humans relate to their environments – ecological, cultural, ontological – in ways that mutually impact the person and the place. These person-environment interactions both potentiate and limit change. To better understand these interactions, the papers embrace holistic approaches that integrate multiple types of scholarship, drawing diversely on cognitive science, evolution, psychology, narrative theory, and philosophy in conjunction with anthropology. This type of approach falls broadly under the rubric of neuroanthropology, which emphasizes both field-based research as a way to understand human variation and considering how brains and cultures come together to shape human phenomena.

Each paper tackles a different part of how we relate to local environments: stories, ontologies, landscapes, hallucinogens, institutions, and cultural constraints. Papers also look more

closely at why we continue to treat ourselves and our environments in the same ways, without taking into consideration the information and evidence of climate change and environmental destruction all around us. Finally, the papers also consider how forms of collective engagement and consciousness can better address the wave of social and environmental changes happening today, with a particular focus on the sociocultural landscapes in and around the Tampa Bay area.

List of Papers:

- Gabrielle Lehigh, *Unspeakable Pleasures of Psychedelics and Healing: How Recreational Psychedelic Use Reconfigures Social and Cultural Landscapes*
- Breanne Casper, *Ontology & Substance Use Triggers: Understanding Change through Recovery*
- Kaleigh Hoyt, *Meaningful Connections*
- John Pendygraft, *Lost Storytellers*
- Daniel Lende, *Culture, Constraint, and Climate Change*

Paper Abstracts

Unspeakable Pleasures of Psychedelics and Healing: How Recreational Psychedelic Use Reconfigures Social and Cultural Landscapes.

Gabrielle Lehigh, University of South Florida, glehigh@usf.edu

This presentation examines the potential to reconceptualize the therapeutic benefits of recreational psychedelic use through investigating the role of pleasure and recreational use in contributing to social and cultural change. Cultural perspectives often study the indigenous use of psychedelics as tools for healing those cursed with physical and spiritual illness. Early clinical studies used these substances to understand states of psychosis and treatment of addiction and mental health. A psychedelic renaissance of clinical examinations now investigates the potential of psilocybin, MDMA (ecstasy), ibogaine, LSD (acid), ketamine, and ayahuasca in the treatment of a variety of health conditions like anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), substance use disorders, and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). While many studies assess the therapeutic value of psychedelics in clinical and traditional healing practices, less research focuses on the value of these substances outside of these settings. Specifically, this presentation addresses psychedelic healing potential in non-clinical and non-traditional settings or essentially non-problematic recreational use. Recreational use is broadly defined as use in nature, social settings, and at music festivals. Studying these unique environments of use provides a nuanced understanding of the potential of psychedelics in creating social and cultural change. To understand these unexplored ideas, this presentation asks: what do therapeutic value and healing

mean in recreational psychedelic use, how does pleasure play a role in providing therapeutic value, and what can the perspective of pleasure as healing add to the clinical and traditional understandings of psychedelic use?

Ontology & Substance Use Triggers: Understanding Change through Recovery

Breanne Casper, University of South Florida, casperb@usf.edu

The ontological turn in anthropology implores us to consider life in the Anthropocene and reckon with the semiotic communication between humans and non-humans. This paper argues that one such area of interrogation is substance use triggers. Triggers are stimuli related to past use that “trigger” wanting/craving of drugs. These triggers are particularly important as people who intend to stop using must face/resist these triggers in order to change their lives. Understanding that triggers have biological, cultural, and environmental dimensions, this project presents a neuroanthropology of triggers. Pulling from theory in psychology and neuroscience this project highlights the biological interactions between the environment and humans. Further, anthropological and ontological theory help us understand the cultural and constructive dimensions of triggers. Finally, this work is framed within a broader understanding of personal change, that people who intend to stop drugs are encountered on a daily basis. Questioning conscious and unconscious assumptions, substance use triggers allow deeper investigation into how change happens in interactions between the smallest level neurological components and largest level environmental factors. Together, these factors shape the way humans walk through the world every day.

Meaningful Connections

Kaleigh Hoyt, University of South Florida, kaleighbhoyt@gmail.com

This paper explores how meaningful connections may work to expand interpretive approaches to heritage by shifting from discourse to dynamics. Though research is still ongoing, the African American Burial Ground Project provides a useful model for considering the dynamics underlying creative collaboration and mixed media storytelling in community-based research. By ‘calling in’ the Tampa Bay community to address the erasure of local African American cemeteries, the project illustrates how anthropology may be used to facilitate connections between people, places, and stories to form new meaning and, by extension, cultural heritage.

This paper focuses on heritage as dynamic engagement in three ways: (1) identify an authentic story, (2) combine art and abstraction, and (3) explore/expand engagement. The story

needs to both be grounded in the people impacted and do work to reach others – meaningful connections both ways. The past is often abstract; key points can make it accessible, but it is through art that the abstract can become engaging. That engagement needs a form, something that can bridge the gap between bodies and brains and our heritage. Hybrid forms of engagement – ones that combine the virtual and the physical – offer ways to bring people's stories and anthropology's abstractions into direct engagement with audiences discovering and rediscovering heritage. This paper will present ideas on how such hybrid forms can connect consciousness and environment.

Lost Storytellers

John Pendygraft, University of South Florida, pendygraft@usf.edu

In working as a local journalist and storyteller in one community for over twenty years, I have experienced the central theme of this panel - how humans relate to their environments in ways that mutually impact the person and the place – in personal and intimate ways. The media world has been in a state of constant seismic change for most of my career.

I have a book under review at the University of Florida Press that is tentatively titled *Lost Storytellers: And Ethnography of a Dying Newsroom*. In it, I examine the ancient role of storytelling in building cultures across time, from 40,000 years ago to my own experience today as a journalist in the information apocalypse.

When I joined the photo staff of the Tampa Bay Times in 1997, we had 49 full time staffers in our department. We comprehensively covered a four-county area. Today there are seven of us, based in one newsroom that we are currently not allowed to enter. We only print twice a week, have sold our printing presses, are working at reduced salaries and our attempts to build a digital model are flailing.

I began to consider the newsroom as a field site in 2015, and have since approached my workplace through many theoretical lenses. In this panel I would hope to open a discussion about the power of stories for shaping our relations with environments, and how an integrative theoretical approach is key to understanding those historic power dynamics.

Culture, Constraint, and Climate Change

Daniel Lende, University of South Florida, dlende@usf.edu

Addressing climate change is often cast as an individual or a structural problem. On the individual level, arguments are often made that people are not aware of global warming, and if they

knew more, they would do more. On the structural side, global warming is often seen as solvable only through changing global capitalism. Both offer partial answers to a central question: Why don't we do more to address climate change and global warming?

This paper will address culture as fundamental to understanding why people don't do more. It will use a novel understanding of culture derived from neuroanthropology – culture as constraint. This constraint approach is inspired by Marr's (1982) work in neuroscience as well as research on how constraints shape language, in particular the bottleneck effect (Christiansen & Chater 2016). The bottleneck effect indicates that culture must work in real time to be comprehensible to the brain; if brains cannot process culture effectively, then culture as a shared, intersubjective phenomenon simply does not happen.

Environmental problems are hard to understand in real time. Issues like climate change are often not immediately apparent in local contexts and can require complex cognition to understand. These features make environmental problems harder to appreciate via culture. Rather, easier shared techniques – such as dismissal or downplaying as well as alternative explanations and even conspiracies – can solve the cultural bottleneck, and thus keep the cultural appreciation of environmental problems from being easily accessible to human consciousness and action.

Resistance and Reclamation: Indigenous Peoples' Responses the Changing Ecology

Panel Abstract

The past few years have seen unprecedented changes in global and local environments. These changes, many caused by other humans, have impacted Indigenous Persons dramatically. This panel will explore a variety of indigenous responses to change, including Siberian shamanic responses to climate change, Native American resistance to the Dakota Access oil pipeline, Khmer rites and rituals designed to balance ecological disruption, and Indigenous reflections on disruption and chaos during COVID-19.

List of Papers:

- Majorie Balzer, *Climate Crises, Ecological Upheaval and Shamanic World Views in Siberia and Yukon*
- Lisa Arensen, *Cooling the Land: Environmental Solastalgia and Spiritworlds on the Kulen Plateau in Cambodia*
- Micah Morton, *Ancestral Presences: Indigenous reflections on the art of living and dying in the restorative age of COVID-19*
- Eugenie Clement, *Caretaking as Radical Resistance*

Panel Chair: Micah Morton

Paper Abstracts

Climate Crises, Ecological Upheaval and Shamanic World Views in Siberia and Yukon
Marjorie Mandelstam Balzer, Georgetown University Balzerm@georgetown.edu

In 2019 and 2020, unprecedented forest fires devastated Siberia and Alaska. Indigenous elders and Native anthropologists reminded researchers that controlled burns and interconnectedness to animate surroundings could have mitigated some of the worst disasters. Hunters and shamans in Indigenous homelands of the Far North have long told dramatic narratives of connectedness to their prey and their animal spirit helpers. Anthropologist Paul Nadasdy explains that a wounded animal he had released from a trap in Canada later appeared at his doorstep miles away, willing him to kill it. Siberian Sakha have described to me rituals of respect to send the soul of a just-killed animal away yet satisfied enough to return. In the Soviet period, a Sakha shaman was said to have secretly evoked a helper bear spirit to bring a localized downpour to a forest fire.

What do these cases have in common? In our uncertain times of climate crises, can they deepen our respect for Indigenous ecological knowledge? Does human-animal rapport remain meaningful? Is ethnographic striving for Indigenous Wisdom mere romanticism, straining for faith in an interconnected multiverse we fear we have lost? My essay, based on long-term fieldwork in the Sakha Republic (Yakutia) and with diaspora Sakha uses comparative narratives from the Yukon to explore shamanic worldviews. Such persistent cosmologies animate Northern hunters, whether they arrive in the taiga or forest on a reindeer sled, snowmobile or truck. They could animate Indigenous-scientific cooperation on climate change.

Cooling the Land: Environmental Solastalgia and Spirit Worlds on the Kulen Plateau in Cambodia
Lisa Arensen, Universiti of Brunei Darussalam, lisa.arsen@ubd.edu.bn

In less than twenty years, agrarian lifeworlds on the sacred mountain of Kulen in northern Cambodia have shifted from subsistence swidden agriculture to fixed farming, primarily of the cash crop cashew. The forested plateau has undergone successive waves of deforestation since the end of the second civil war and was reinstated as a national park in 1993, although established villages were permitted to remain. Post-war agricultural expansion, conservation mandates and economic development have caused massive upheaval in the entangled natural, political and social landscapes in which park residents live. This paper will explore the role of cosmology in countering the uncertainty and precarity of capitalist trends and disorderly development. Khmer

animism has traditionally been interpreted as rites and rituals enacted in order to appease spirits embedded within the forests, springs, and mountains. Despite widespread discourse around a loss of efficacy in the spirit world, subterranean powers and forest spirits continue to be invoked by mountain villagers to diagnose and reconcile human ills and disasters. I argue that on the plateau, environmental solastalgia is expressed indirectly through concerns about the fate of the spirit world. Rather than considering animism as the appeasement of potentially malevolent forces, cosmological practice on the mountain may be interpreted as an ethics of mutual care and its rites as a quest to restore balance between humans and the landscapes we so clumsily inhabit.

Ancestral Presences: Indigenous reflections on the art of living and dying in the restorative age of COVID-19

Micah Morton, Northern Illinois University, mmorton1@niu.edu

The current historical moment in the era of COVID-19 is only heightening the sense of urgency many have long felt in the West with respect to their neglected or discarded Elders and long forgotten Ancestors, even as their presences continue to be felt in subtle and not so subtle ways. Many of us are now more acutely aware of the need not only for each other, especially in facing “the end,” but also for ritual, for coming together collectively to variably celebrate and mourn while marking the passage of individuals from one social status to another, whether in the form of birth rituals, such as baptisms, or end of life rituals, such as funeral cremations and burials. The forced and abrupt absence of these communal rituals during the COVID-19 era has made us all the more sensitive to their importance. In the West, this heightened awareness of and concern for community and ritual further parallels a major resurgence in the search for Ancestral roots and genealogies. In the meantime, many Indigenous communities the world over continue to find meaning and strength in their sustained yet dynamic relations with the Ancestors.

In this paper, I reflect on the meanings and significances of Ancestral presences more broadly with respect to the interwoven art of living and dying in a cross-cultural perspective. I especially draw on Indigenous perspectives and my own life experiences as a teacher and student in considering the great potential for the broader cultural movement of Ancestral resurgences to restore balance and sanity to the human and more-than-human world. As the Indigenous Dagara healer Malidoma Patrice Somé eloquently argues: “Unless the relationship between the living and dead is in balance, chaos results.”

Caretaking as a radical resistance

Eugenie Clement, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, eugenie.clement1@gmail.com

In 2016, Standing Rock happened to stop the DAPL pipeline passing through Indigenous land. Thousands of people from all over the world joined and became water protector's and land defenders. The caretakers of the land ground their practices in Indigenous socialism. That is using the tools of the revolutionary left to get rid of the ongoing colonization and theft of resources in order to have their sovereignty back. Since 2016, I have worked on the Navajo Nation with different groups involved in environmental justice: farmers, water and land activists, academics, NGO, anticapitalist political organizations and so on.

In this presentation, I will detail how the Diné environmentalists use both Diné fundamental laws and socialism to live dignified lives. For that, I will first introduce the key concepts of k'é and Hózhó, as the moral compass my interlocutors use to reach the horizon of freedom. They propose a change from an extractive economy to a just transition where care is at the center. Secondly, I will present Indigenous socialism via the material conditions and the structures of power happening in Diné Bikéyah. For that, I will highlight how laws like Dawes Act of 1887 destroyed communal ownership of the land and created the conditions for private property and accumulation of capital on the back of Indigenous peoples via the theft of their land. The last part of my presentation will focus on my practice as a white anthropologist working with Indigenous peoples. First, by looking at how we have to build relationships of trust, where we are held accountable. How do we build knowledge based on a care practice that acknowledges feelings? What are the new practices we should put in place that disrupt structures of power? How can we share and spread crucial knowledge that highlights that capitalism is not a universal concept, but a forced one?

Gather

On Saturday, March 13th, we will be hosting a virtual watch party of the award-winning documentary *Gather*. The film is an intimate portrait of the growing movement amongst Native Americans to reclaim their spiritual, political, and cultural identities through food sovereignty, while battling the trauma of centuries of genocide. A *New York Times* critics pick, the reviewers claimed, "The film wonderfully weaves personal stories with archival footage that contextualizes the continued violence against Native Americans. Rawal covers a substantial amount of ground and

deftly balances the dense material without losing sight of the mission driving the bigger story: Healing from generational trauma sometimes starts with just one person.”

Watch the trailer: <https://gather.film>

We will have a live Q&A with the director of the film and some of the film’s participants as well. Information on how to attend the live screening and Q&A can be found on the Conference [Communities](#) page.

Consciousness, Beliefs, and Perception: The Intersection of Inner and Outer Ecologies

Panel Abstract

Consciousness is both individually experienced and socially and culturally mediated. A central question of psychological anthropology is: What influences what we perceive and how does that affect our beliefs and experience? This panel examines how outer and inner worlds interact with, and shape one another by discussing psychology, brain behavior, and contemporary politics in the United States, cognitive science and anthropological approaches to belief in relation to human rights, and how COVID-19 has disrupted immersive sensory experiences in aquariums and absorption of ecological knowledge.

List of Papers:

- Stephan Schwartz, *Politics, consciousness, psychology, psychiatry, and brain behavior*
- Jordan Kiper, *Global Upheaval and the Convergence of Human Rights Claims*
- Lawrence Ramirez, *Between Mimesis and the Deep Blue Sea: Perspectival Givenness and Virtual Aquariums*

Panel Chair: Lawrence Ramirez

Paper Abstracts

Politics, consciousness, psychology, psychiatry, and brain behavior

Stephan Schwartz, Saybrook University, saschwartz@earthlink.net

In the United States we are facing economic collapse, the failure of our health care system, White supremacy animosity and violence unseen in almost half a century, increased police brutality, and recent years of governmental corruption. All happening in the context of a growing existential climate crisis. The American culture over the past four years has undergone a

transformation of historic proportions. Now that we are safely out of the Trump era, putting aside political partisanship, I suggest that the American experience during the Trump era should be seen as a case study of consciousness, psychology, psychiatry, and the manipulation of brain-behavior worthy of the most serious attention by anthropologists.

Global Upheaval and the Convergence of Human Rights Claims

Jordan Kiper, University of Alabama at Birmingham, jkiper@uab.edu

With ever increasing ecological upheaval and political instability, communities from around the world are embracing rights claims and advancing human rights discourses to challenge power, corruption, and longstanding injustices. For many in the human rights community, these developments are evidence of universal support for human rights, which is often characterized as a shared set of beliefs about the dignity and respect deserving of all humans. Yet, what does it mean for people from different cultures to believe in human rights and to what extent can we say that those beliefs are universal? This is a vexing question for anthropology, because the very topics involved—belief, human rights, and universals—are fraught with difficulty for the discipline. And yet, the question is important for numerous fields, including human rights law, and cognitive science. Thus, in this working manuscript, I consider the question by engaging in a transdisciplinary dialogue that integrates recent studies and cross-cultural findings. After examining the nature of belief in cognitive science, I turn to various conceptions of belief in anthropology, ranging from psychological anthropology to cultural anthropology and its recent ontological turn. I then show how these conceptions can shed light on the so-called belief(s) in human rights as fragmented but overlapping discourses with distinct but arguably comparable practices. Based on these analyses, I suggest that anthropology can serve a unique disciplinary role in understanding human consciousness as communities worldwide address injustices by making human rights claims and engaging human rights law.

Between Mimesis and the Deep Blue Sea: Perspectival Givenness and Virtual Aquariums

Lawrence Ramirez, University of California, Riverside, lrami070@ucr.edu

Contemporary exhibition practice in public aquariums emphasizes the role of sensory experience in enhancing visitor engagement with the animals and plants on display. The sense of place creates an immersive environment that contextualizes the educational experience. By

designing the perspectival givenness of the visitor, a feeling of intersubjectivity towards the biorepository is cultivated. This situates viewers as participants within the aquariums' overarching narratives of eco-futurities, from the apocalyptic to the utopic. However, such immersive spaces are lost when the aquariums are under COVID lockdowns.

This presentation explores attempts by public aquariums to foster virtual places of engagement. The experiential quality of exhibited information becomes "recoded" through online modes of mediated engagement. Consciousness of this distance impedes the situated interaction with aquarium features. Applying a phenomenological critique to the representational practice of aquarium exhibits and their mimetic simulation on the internet, this research explores how intersubjectivity between humans and aquatic lifeforms is attempted. As sites of scientific ecological knowledge and environmentalist advocacy, public aquariums struggle to make their messages "real" under the disembodied gaze of their virtual visitors.

Meditation & Yoga with Gurucharan Singh Khalsa

On Sunday morning, Dr. Gurucharan Singh Khalsa will lead a meditation and yoga workshop centered on the ways we can integrate the overall themes of the conference. Helping us transform our ideas and conversations into embodied transformations.

After a short introduction to give context to the meditation, Gurucharan will guide us in a simple yet powerful breath meditation. It will bring us into the presence of stillness and joy, and connect us with our own heart, and with all of nature, of which we are always a small, but essential, part.

Then he will share ideas on personal embodiment, stillness, and the nature of Becoming that show we are deeply connected. Through his own experience, the experiences of others, and these meditative techniques, he will help us reach joy, stillness and presence. And perhaps remind us how we need to connect to nature in a time when so many of us feel disconnected.

Gurucharan will do a second meditation and encourage a walking meditation after a simple three part activation using the Master Breath. We will do this then take a walk outside. A simple pattern described and immediately practiced. A space to explore the connections of inner and out landscapes. The discussion afterwards shares a perspective on the need for immersive experiences with senses wide open that let us connect, commit, and take action to steward our planet at this critical time.

An Engineered Tableau from the Spheres of Unintentional Agencies

*Stephanie C. Kane, Professor, Department of International Studies, Indiana University
Bloomington, stkane@indiana.edu*

Getting the lay of the land: Tracking the Assiniboine River upstream, I drive west out of Winnipeg across the prairie along Trans-Canada Highway 1 to the Portage Diversion.

In continuous motion, water rushes through the giant concrete walls of the reservoir's spillway and falls into the churning riverbed below. A pelican squadron floats in a little side swirl of water between base and bank. Long orange bills plunge down, then up into air, throat pouches full of deranged fish. Just downstream, a man fishes with a rod. Where line meets surface, a barely perceptible circle. On the grassy hill adjacent, a woman with small children plays on a blanket. A stranger-ethnographer stands apart, her camera silently shooting the engineered tableau.

I see now as I write: pelicans, man, family—my fellow spillway visitors—teach me an early lesson: monumental infrastructures of concrete and steel unintentionally offer sustenance and connection in ways that exceed engineers' intentions. Creating an excellent fishing spot is surely not an intentional effect of this multi-million-dollar node in Manitoba's flood control system.

An impulsive entity, the Assiniboine buoys up floating pelicans, parting its surface and splashing around them when they dive into the water between base and bank. Currents carry fish downstream to meet the hook a man knots to the end of a line: together, river (unintentionally) and man (intentionally) may trick fish into biting. Out of range of touch, families will cook and eat caught fish, absorbing river into their collective bloodstream. . . .

Embodied Ecologies: Engaging the World Through Self

Ethnography, use of self, and participant-observation are unique anthropological approaches that employ subjective experience as a tool for both interpreting a changing world and for changing the world itself. The inner experience is a rich environment that provides interpretive depth and practical cues for how to navigate outer spaces. This panel engages self in different contexts to make sense of and shape outer environments. Topics include embodied wisdom in understanding Tenrikyo religion in a Parisian suburb, personal experiences in navigating teaching “nonempirical phenomena” in a positivist, hegemonic academic environment, and how Deep Ecologies of the self can provide guidance of how to address ecological crisis in the world.

List of Papers:

- Margaret Brady, *Being an observer while being a participant, when one's analysis includes the thinking, feeling, embodied experience of the researcher: reflections from a study focused on a center of the new Japanese religion of Tenrikyo located in a Parisian suburb*
- Cassandra White, *Decolonization and Personalization in Contemporary Teaching about Religious Practice and Experience*
- Mark Shekoyan, *Every Star in Its Orbit: Ecological Selfhood and Practice in Thelemic Magic and Mysticism*
- Susuan Grimaldi, *Ethnographic Research and Pastel Paintings*

Paper Abstracts

Being an observer while being a participant, when one's analysis includes the thinking, feeling, embodied experience of the researcher: reflections from a study focused on a center of the new Japanese religion of Tenrikyo located in a Parisian suburb.

Margaret Brady, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, margaret.alice.brady@gmail.com

The boundary between who is an “insider” and an “outsider” is often somewhat unclear and unfixed in ethnographic studies. Even when the researcher is clearly an uninvolved “outsider” at the start of their research, commonly over time, the researcher’s position merges into being, at least partially, that of an “insider.” One important aspect of how this merging of positional categories occurs is through the experiences with and internalization of their field site. Although the researcher’s experiences may not be identical to those of complete “insiders,” they can provide intimately illuminative insights.

One fruitful means through which these insights can be acquired is by being mindful of one’s own thoughts and feelings while engaged in fieldwork, including how shared stimuli are experienced and what they show us in relation to how they may be experienced by members of one’s research population. In my research focused on a center for the new Japanese religion of Tenrikyo located in a Paris suburb, although I did not consider myself a Tenrikyo follower and maintained that I was first and foremost a researcher, my own experiences were informative to how various aspects of this research context were experienced by others. Important elements for this included, for example, the religion’s central ritual composed primarily of music and dance, promoted and shared emotional states, and collectively experienced physical engagements. In this paper, I will explore multiple aspects of how this multi-layered method of conducting research can create an enriching bridge between the etic and the emic.

Decolonization and Personalization in Contemporary Teaching about Religious Practice and Experience.

Cassandra White, Georgia State University, cwhite@gsu.edu

Many courses on comparative religion or the “anthropology of religion” have focused on discussion of the structure, function, and practice of religion, magic, and ritual in different societies, as considered from a field that was traditionally dominated by white, European/North American scholars. Drawing on my own recent experiences in developing courses on “nonempirical beings” and religious phenomena, as well as on interviews with other contemporary anthropologists who teach on these topics, I will discuss some of the ways that teaching about the “anthropology of religion” might shift to include a broader range of perspectives and become more engaging to students. Some anthropologists teaching courses about religion today have already taken steps to decolonize syllabi by incorporating research and literature from ethnographers from diverse backgrounds; in addition, designing assignments in which students are asked to reflect and write about examples of how nonempirical beliefs and practices impact them and their families in their daily lives is way to both engage students and for instructors and scholars of religion to learn more about the complexities of culturally-informed spiritual practices and perceptions of the non empirical world.

Every Star in Its Orbit: Ecological Selfhood and Practice in Thelemic Magic and Mysticism

Mark Shekoyan, UserTesting, mshekoyan@usertesting.com

Arn Naess, the Norwegian founder of Deep Ecology, believed that the root cause of our ecological crisis was a superficial understanding of the self and its relationship to nature. Many anthropologists have looked to indigenous peoples for examples of more holistic concepts and practices of selfhood, but there exist such examples within the Western Hermetic tradition as well. In this presentation, I will show how the writings and rituals of Thelema derived from Hermetic Magician Aleister Crowley, can be read in service of such ecological selfhood. Analyzing textual sources, and my own auto-ethnographic experiences, I will discuss how Thelemic magic and mysticism can reorient the self towards deep ecological understanding and behavior.

Ethnographic Research and Pastel Paintings

Susan Grimaldi

Susan Grimaldi's interest in Ethnographic research stems from her personal commitment to preserving and protecting cultural heritage. Her particular area of focus has been on the shamanistic traditions. This quest has led her to record ethnic groups in Northeast China, Mongolia, Tuva, the Amazon Basin of Brazil, and native people in North America. In this presentation you will see examples of her passion for pastel painting as she combined art with her field research and shamanism.

Contemplative Community Organizing

Participants will engage in a highly interactive workshop around contemplative community organizing, rooted in context and place. Leveraging the Tree of Contemplative Practices, <<http://www.contemplativemind.org/practices/tree>> and a variety of interfaith and secular resources, we will explore the following topics and work to weave them into your settings, whether you're strengthening an existing project, vocational direction, or focus in life, or starting another:

- contemplative practices and the inner-outer journey,
- asset based community development and appreciative inquiry,
- watershed stewardship and bioregional re-inhabitation,
- solidarity economics,
- restorative justice, and
- nonviolent social action

Ideally, everyone will evaluate and strengthen their spiritual practices, learn about new issues, and creatively apply new strategies and approaches to place-based work and organizing. Workshop facilitator, John Dempsey Parker, is a community organizer, applied anthropologist, and consultant focusing on civic engagement and community organizing, collaborative and cooperative leadership, spiritual activism and cultural healing, and community-based economic development for cultural survival, integrity, and resilience. More on John can be found here:

johndempseyparker.org

Hippity Hoppity

Kari Miller, JFK University, kmiller@email.jfku.edu

Embodiment Story and Practice

- Short Story/Poem - *HIPPITY HOPPITY* ➤ Personal Connection to Short Story
- Meditation - Grounding

HIPPITY HOPPITY

Amongst the trees and the bees

Over the hills and within the tills

Atop the peaks to anywhere I might seek I wandered and often pondered

Sometimes day

sometimes night

in the black

and through the white

Walking and often talking,

with what may appear here,

and trying to take it there

It all seemed clear

Holding everything so near

After all, it was so dear

When I came upon a ridge

I was unsure of how to bridge

Where I seemed to be

to a place far in front of me

Scheming up a plan

with thoughts and retroban

My brain quite in a twist

The only thing left was to fist... but suddenly spewed amidst

No time to think, all in such a blink

I was no longer walking, nor frolicking Not trying, nor denying

Aware, faded my despair

Completely set free,

there I was to be

It all falling in front of me

And as I fell, a part of me could tell Without thought, not being fought Let alone to be,

my legs knew what to do with me

With no end in site

I gave up all spite

Quietly fading into the white night

Personal Connection to Short Story

This short story/poem was inspired by my personal journey from a possessive, oppressive and fear based mind and experience of life, to a free, open, and allowing engagement with my body's wisdom. In 2016 I was thrust into a process of meditation, personal review, letting go, healing and cultivating my connection to intuitive knowledge that all beings unfold from. This process seemed to begin without even trying, at the peak of my personal and emotional suffering. It led me to an at home yoga practice, sound healing meditations through YouTube, a collection of "healings" and "spiritual guides." I went to Costa Rica, lived on the beach and connected with the locals and the land. It all seemed clear, when and where to go. Each thing helped with my healing and showed me new parts of myself and the world. This entire process is continuous and never ending. The intergenerational aspects of re-incarnation. The forever unspinning and respinning of evolution. The greatest gift that it has brought me to and that I continue to work to maneuver, is the trusting of my connection to a collective wisdom that is an accumulation of all humans and sentient beings, all planets and cosmic consciousness.

The main current battle is to not be overcome with the "knowledge" and suppression of the mind's thoughts and beliefs. To continuously check-in and move from the wisdom of the body. On a personal level, this has made me more aware and led to healing in all its forms. As an individual I am part of a collective that is interwoven and no one consciousness is isolated from any other. We are but a web, tied together. One healing leads to another. This process of awakening has the capacity to bring about great change to us all. So let's try a little body meditation, shall we?

Asynchronous Media Gallery

All content is also available on the [Communities](#) page in the event space on the AAA website.

Stories and Sounds of Sea Change

Written, composed, and performed by Hillary S. Webb

Mix and additional production by Nick Phaneuf

This audio narrative series offers pre-recorded narration paired with music, interview clips, and sound cues. Each piece represents a different interpretation of the conference theme: “Sea Change.”

NAME: [“The End of Dreaming”](#)

LENGTH: 5:00

SUMMARY: In the summer of 1969, a young man undergoes a radical psycho-spiritual transformation after coming upon a group of young men and women gathered around a bonfire to honor the last virgin full moon before the Apollo 11 landing. “The End of Dreaming” reflects a sea change in the sense of the individual undergoing an emotional healing through shared community grief. As the young man recounts, “This was the moment I realized I loved the world and that it meant something to me.”

NAME: [“Currents”](#)

LENGTH: 2:30

SUMMARY: A brief meditation on the idea that perhaps there is no distinction between life and death, and that we human beings are essentially children deciding in each moment whether or not to swim against the current, or to lay back and allow the sea change to carry us along.

NAME: [“The Mind Is a Brittle Object \(Letter to Amelia\)”](#)

LENGTH: 5:48

SUMMARY: In 1980, linguists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson published the book *Metaphors We Live By*, an exploration of how the English language contains comparisons between two or more unrelated things which, consciously or unconsciously, influences our relationship to the world around us. This audio narrative explores how attempting to shift our linguistic attachments requires a transformation of consciousness of which we are not always capable.

AUTHOR BIO:

Hillary S. Webb, PhD is an anthropologist and mixed-media storyteller with a focus on theater anthropology and cross-cultural perspectives on human consciousness. She is the former Managing Editor of *Anthropology of Consciousness*, the peer-reviewed journal for the Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness. She has earned a BA in Journalism, an MA in Philosophy of Mind, and a PhD in Existential-Humanistic Psychology. Webb is the author of *Yanantin and Masintin in the Andean World* (University of New Mexico Press, 2012), *Traveling Between the Worlds* (Hampton Roads, 2004), and *Exploring Shamanism* (New Page Books, 2003) as well as numerous books, articles, and essays pertaining to her subject matter.

Ethnographic Research and Pastel Paintings

Susan Grimaldi

Susan Grimaldi's interest in Ethnographic research stems from her personal commitment to preserving and protecting cultural heritage. Her particular area of focus has been on the shamanistic traditions. This quest has led her to record ethnic groups in Northeast China, Mongolia, Tuva, the Amazon Basin of Brazil, and native people in North America. In this presentation you will see examples of her passion for pastel painting as she combined art with her field research and shamanism.

Billionaire Wilderness

<https://www.climateone.org/audio/billionaire-wilderness>

What happens when wealth meets wilderness? For many of us, the story of the American wilderness begins when Europeans arrived on these shores and began conquering it. The wide open spaces of the American West loom large in our country's mythology. But what often gets written out is the history and culture of those native societies who were here to begin with - and whose relationship to this land is very different. "From an indigenous perspective, the land is a relation and all the things on the land are relatives, explains American Indian Studies expert Dina Gilio-Whitaker. Rather than a U.S.-based "rights-based society," native societies are responsibility-based. "Because when you see the natural world and all the things in it as relations

as relatives; you are then responsible to them. So that sets up an entirely different kind of way that you engage with the land.”

Climate One

<https://www.climateone.org>

Climate One from [The Commonwealth Club](#) offers a forum for candid discussion among climate scientists, policymakers, activists, and concerned citizens. Our live programs are recorded and distributed to a global audience. By gathering inspiring, credible, and compelling information, we provide an essential resource to change-makers looking to make a difference.

Cosmo Sheldrake

<https://www.cosmosheldrake.com>

Cosmo Sheldrake is a London-based multi-instrumentalist musician, composer and producer. Cosmo released his first single ‘The Moss’ in 2014, which was followed by the ‘Pelicans We’ EP in 2015 and his debut album *The Much Much How How and I* in April 2018.

Cosmo collaborated with Bernie Kruase at *The Great Animal Orchestra* exhibition at Foundation Cartier in Paris and in 2019 he released a series of *Wake up Calls*, pieces composed entirely from recordings of endangered British birds. Son of the infamous author, biologist, and philosopher Rupert Sheldrake, Cosmo's music provides a fascinating, organic soundtrack for a civilization that finds itself facing the end of the Anthropocene. His music resonates with those who experience deep connectivity with the embedded music of the Cosmos. Of particular interest are the collections entitled "Performances to Places." These are a series of videos made in collaboration with Gallivant Film. They are performances to places (and sometimes animals) rather than to people.

Desert Foreigners

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMyyUVXKOrl&t=2s>

In the vacancy of the vast wilderness of the Egyptian Desert, Coptic Christian Monks seek solitude and peace. They renounce worldly pleasures and struggle to overcome their internal

weaknesses and numerous extreme physical dangers with the objective of forming a deeper connection with their creator.

Oaxaca Film Festival Official Selection, 2016 ©

Beverly Hills Film Festival Official Selection, 2017 ©

LIFE'S SACRED MATRIX: HOW TO BE A TRULY HYDRATED WATER KEEPER - ISABEL FRIEND (Mythic Medicine Podcast)

<https://mythicmedicine.love/podcast/isabel-friend>

“Water is life’s matter and matrix, mother and medium.”

—Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, Nobel prize winner

We return to the endlessly fascinating and enormously important subject of water, exploring the fractal edges of H₂O and beyond. From its ability to generate free energy to how to structure your own drinking water into a liquid crystalline state to the interplay between water, climate change, and economics- this conversation covers some of the most fascinating and crucial topics regarding the substance that generates all life and that holds our collective future.

LIQUID CRYSTAL: WATER, MEMORY, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND HEALTH - DR. CARLY NUDAY (Mythic Medicine Podcast)

<https://mythicmedicine.love/podcast/carly-nuday>

“Ultimately, a theory that could adequately explain the existence of structured water would also explain the connection between mind and matter.”

—Dr. Marcel Vogel, IBM scientist and crystallographer

We’ve all heard that we’re about 70% water by weight, but we are almost 100% water by molecular count. Water is the most abundant *and* the most mysterious substance on the planet. It is the source and the mediator of all of life and consciousness, and the single most important metric in the health of individuals and the earth as a whole. The difference between structured (liquid crystalline) water and bulk water is imperative to understand at this moment in planetary history.

Upcoming Events



THE NEW SCHOOL FOR
ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY



*The New School for Analytical Psychology and The Society for the Anthropology of
Consciousness*

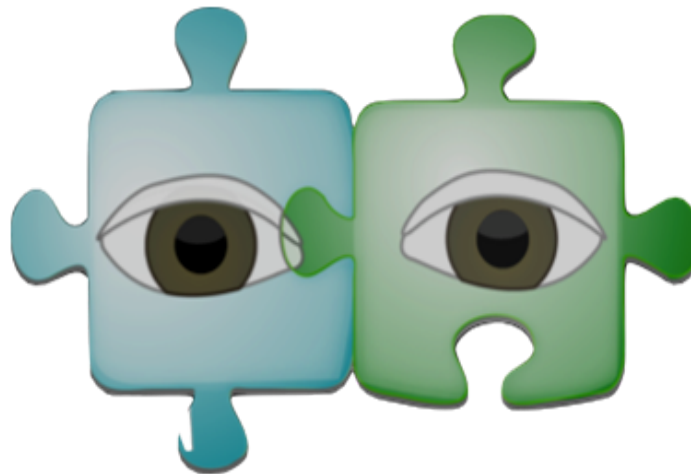
invite you to attend our Spring seminar series.

Neglected Perspectives

Two-Eyed Seeing: Indigenous Approaches to Healing Trauma

Dr. Lewis Mehl-Madrona and Barbara Mainguy

Saturday, March 27th from 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM



Two-eyed seeing” is a concept that was originated by Elder Albert Marshall of Sydney, Nova Scotia, and Cape Breton University to give indigenous epistemology and knowledge equal status with mainstream scientific perspectives and knowledge. In M’iqmaq, the word is *Etuaptmunk*. In English, it means the idea of explanatory pluralism. Within most indigenous cultures, the mind is not considered separately from body, community, and spirituality, unlike the silos created in the dominant culture. Healing must involve the body, the community, and the spirits.

In this lecture, we are going to introduce the two-eyed seeing concept to explore how to work with trauma from both an indigenous perspective and contemporary neuroscience and psychological research. We are especially interested in the role that trauma plays in addictions and in the so-called “severe mental illnesses,” and how our approach to people in distress must also be trauma informed.

This introductory lecture is designed for practitioners who provide counseling in indigenous communities. It is also open to those providing counseling in other communities who want to see how indigenous practices could enrich their work, as well as to others who are just curious about Indigenous cultures and mental health.



About the Presenters

Lewis Mehl-Madrona, MD is the author of "Coyote Medicine", "Coyote Healing", and "Coyote Wisdom", focusing on what Native culture has to offer the modern world. He has also written "Narrative Medicine"; "Healing the Mind through the Power of Story: the Promise of Narrative Psychiatry"; and his most recent book, with Barbara Mainguy, "*Remapping Your Mind: The Neuroscience of Self-Transformation through Story*". He graduated from Stanford University School of Medicine and completed his residencies in family medicine and in psychiatry at the University of Vermont College of Medicine. He has been on the faculties of several medical schools, most recently as associate professor of family medicine at the University of New England.

Barbara Mainguy, LICSW studied psychology and philosophy at the University of Toronto and received her master's degree in Creative Arts Psychotherapy at Concordia University in Montreal. She has co-written *Remapping Your Mind: the Neuroscience of Self-Transformation through Story* with Lewis Mehl-Madrona. Currently she is completing her MFA in documentary filmmaking at York University, Toronto, and working with Lewis in Orono, Maine. She is the Director of Education for the Coyote Institute in Orono.

CEU Learning Objectives (2 CEUs offered)

- To learn how indigenous perspectives on health and health care have wide, cross-cultural applications.
- To learn how narrative approaches to psychotherapy is an ethical necessity when working with disenfranchised communities who have experienced severe trauma.
- To further promote cross-cultural dialogue and therapeutic understanding.

Date and Learning Objectives

Saturday, March 27th from 10:00 AM to 12:30 PM

Cost: \$65.00 for the practitioners and \$30.00 for students/candidates.

Please register at our website: <https://nsanpsy.com/>



THE NEW SCHOOL FOR
ANALYTICAL PSYCHOLOGY



The New School for Analytical Psychology and The Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness

invite you to attend our Spring seminar series.

***Ominous Transitions:
Violence, Trauma and the Making of Racial Identity***
Dr. Sheldon George
Saturday, May 22nd from 10:00 AM to 12:15 PM

The tone of collective discourse has rapidly degenerated, damaging the forms and rituals that give coherence to our lives, cultures and professional disciplines contributing to a sense of communal and global unrest. In these intimate Saturday morning seminars our desire is to nourish a spirit of reflection rather than repeating the sounds of panic and alarm, or pretend hopes. Stepping back from the present situation, we will reflect on the current moment through trans-disciplinary lenses including philosophy, theology, history, psychoanalysis, neuroscience, and anthropology. Together we will seek new perspectives that may help us move into an open future.

In a historical moment when the news media has repeatedly displayed the wanton killing of black men and women, the connection between African American identity and trauma seems especially salient. This talk will work through Lacanian psychoanalytic notions of subjectivity to ground an understanding of African American identity as mediated by social trauma. It will address, in particular, the 2012 Florida shooting of 17-year-old Jordan Davis by Michael Dunn, a white male whose excessive response to the loud rap music played by Davis and his friends demonstrates a Lacanian understanding of *jouissance*, or the other's mode of enjoyment, as a root-source of notions of racial alterity. Moving through a series of Lacanian concepts relevant to race and racism (from hainanomoration, to aggressivity, invidia and Atè), the talk will discuss how this *jouissance*, bound to fantasies of race, often structures both racism and racial identity around acts of violence and trauma, inducing African Americans to embrace willfully the very racial identities against which this violence is directed.



Sheldon George is Professor of English and Chair of the English department at Simmons University in Boston, Massachusetts. His scholarship centers most directly on Lacanian psychoanalytic theory and applies cultural and literary theory to analyses of American and African-American literature and culture. He is author of *Trauma and Race: A Lacanian Study of African American Racial Identity* and co-editor, with Jean Wyatt, of *Reading Contemporary Black British and African American Women Writers: Race, Ethics, Narrative Form*. He is currently completing a collection, co-edited with Derek Hook for Routledge press, that is titled *Lacan and Race: Racism, Identity and Psychoanalytic Theory*.

CEU Learning Objectives (2 CEUs offered – including ethics):

- To increase critical thinking skills in order to apply interdisciplinary knowledge into clinical work and practice.
- To increase understanding of the dynamics of historical foundations behind racialized thinking and current forms of political violence.
- To better understand how we as clinicians can identify how race and racism may serve as tools that produce psychic pleasure for clients and how that function relates to contemporary manifestations of discontent, social suffering, and ethical dilemmas.

Date and Learning Objectives

Saturday, May 22nd from 10:00 AM to 12:15 PM – via Zoom

Cost: \$65.00 for the practitioners and \$30.00 for students/candidates.

Please register at our website: <https://nsanpsy.com/>



The Society for the Anthropology of Consciousness is dedicated to the study of consciousness and its practical application to contemporary issues. To realize this vision, the SAC seeks to:

Publish the peer-reviewed journal *Anthropology of Consciousness*; convene an Annual Spring Conference that consists of individual papers, panel discussions, and experiential sessions; and host sessions at the Annual Meetings of the American Anthropological Association.

Value interdisciplinary perspectives, respect diverse traditions, and prioritize inclusiveness and open dialogue in the study of consciousness.

Support rigorous and empirically based inquiries into consciousness that utilize diverse methodologies – including ethnographic, scientific, experiential, historical, and alternative ways of knowing.

Reflect on how consciousness and human transformation can be made relevant to the challenges of our age, with the aim of a praxis to catalyze a shift toward a more just world.

Our Interests:

States of Consciousness and Consciousness Studies

Dreams, possession, trance, dissociation, theories of mind/cognition, epistemology, methodology, evolution of consciousness, biosocial, psychophysiology, psychotherapy, cultural psychology.

Shamanic, Religious, and Spiritual Traditions

Ethnographic studies of shamanism; modern and core shamanism; Eastern, Western, and indigenous religions; healing practices; ritual; mediumistic, mystical, and transpersonal experiences; magic and witchcraft; music and dance.

Psychoactive Substances

Studies of psychoactive plant use in traditional and contemporary settings, ethnopharmacology, psychopharmacology, healing, addiction and recovery.

Philosophical, Symbolic, and Linguistic Studies

Myth, oral traditions, language, archetypes, body and mind, comparative studies, visual anthropology.

Anomalous Experience

Psychic phenomenon, reincarnation, near-death experiences, mediumistic communication, divination.

Thank you for coming. See you next year!



I regard consciousness as fundamental. I regard matter as derivative from consciousness. We cannot get behind consciousness. Everything that we talk about, everything that we regard as existing, postulates consciousness.

—Physicist Max Planck, 25 January 1931

NOTES