

THE UTRECHT NETWORK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HUMANITIES
in collaboration with
THE NETHERLANDS RESEARCH SCHOOL OF GENDER STUDIES (NOG)
proudly presents:

“Multispecies Futures: Justice, Hope, & Possibility”

A Masterclass with Eben Kirksey (Oxford University)
organized by Kári Driscoll (Utrecht University)

Thursday September 14, 2023
10.00–13.00
Grote Zaal, Kromme Nieuwegracht 20
(enter via Muntstraat 2A)

Global markets are expanding, undermining the conditions of life on earth. As the privileged few create cosmopolitan refuges in growing deserts, other peoples and creatures are living with slow violence and ongoing war. Industrial processes are uncoupling life from death, diminishing death’s capacity to channel vitality back to the living. Life is becoming non-life on a planetary scale. Even still, the future is an open field of possibility. People are gardening in the ruins of colonial and carceral geographies—working within and against logics that isolate people from each other and other species. Generative forms of justice are emerging with composted soil, as fungi, microbes, and as people become involved in local cycles of matter and meaning. Plants are helping people ground concrete hopes, as they extend relations into the future with their slow growth and fruit. Some endangered animals are finding recognition justice as they are elevated within cultural, legal, and institutional regimes, other disregarded critters are finding justice—as fugitives—within fragmented patches that allow for feral proliferations and counter-hegemonic hopes.

This masterclass will build on the long legacy of the environmental justice movement. We will consider distributive justice that is concerned with the equitable sharing of resources as well as renderings of new infrastructures that might protect vulnerable communities from toxic exposures. At the same time, we seek to open up the idea of “the environment” with discussions centered on other creatures who are recognized as dignity-bearing subjects and world-makers with their own relational aesthetic sensibilities.

The masterclass is open to all postgraduate students (MA, RMA, PhD) studying at a university in the Netherlands. Participating RMA & PhD students can earn a total of two credits (2 ECTS): one credit for attendance and active participation in the masterclass, and one additional credit for attending Dr Kirksey’s *Environmental Humanities* lecture on “Chemopower and Chemosociality” in the afternoon and writing a short paper (ca. 1,500–2,000 words), in response to the texts and topics discussed. Please see the assigned readings below.

To register for this masterclass, please contact Dr Kári Driscoll (k.driscoll@uu.nl) via email, indicating your university/institutional affiliation and degree programme, and whether you intend to write the paper for additional credit or not.

Compulsory Readings:

On Multispecies Justice:

Kirksey, Eben & Sophie Chao. “Introduction: Who Benefits from Multispecies Justice?” *The Promise of Multispecies Justice* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022), pp. 1–17.

https://www.dukeupress.edu/Assets/PubMaterials/978-1-4780-1889-6_601.pdf

<https://multispeciesjustice.space/>

On Grounded Hopes and Multispecies Futures:

Kirksey, Eben. “Possible Futures.” In *Emergent Ecologies* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), pp. 190–216.

On Recognition Justice:

Kirksey, Eben. "Queer Love, Gender Bending Bacteria, and Life after the Anthropocene." *Theory, Culture & Society* (2018): 197–219. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276418769995>

On Living in the Ruins of Industrial Manufacturing:

Kirksey, Eben. "Chemosociality in Multispecies Worlds: Endangered Frogs and Toxic Possibilities in Sydney." *Environmental Humanities* 12, no. 1 (2020): 23–50. <https://doi.org/10.1215/22011919-8142198>

On Hope and Toxic Justice:

Kirksey, Eben, Maria Brodine, and Nick Shapiro. "Hope in Blasted Landscapes." In *The Multispecies Salon*, ed. Eben Kirksey (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 29–63.

Readings will be made available upon registration.

Utrecht Network for Environmental Humanities Lecture

"Chemopower and Chemosociality"

Eben Kirksey

Thursday, 14 September, 2023

15.30–17.00

Drift 23, room 113

Synthetic chemicals have engendered new kinds of human subjects. The molecular products of modernity have produced emergent collectives, novel sexual proclivities, chemical dependencies, and altered states of historical consciousness. Shared experiences of euphoria come with many mind-altering substances, as well as fractured identities and cracked mental states. As the pharmacopeia of psychiatry promises to normalize the heterogeneous diversity of humanity's mental interiority, an even wider array of industrial synthetic chemicals are producing monstrous genetic mutations and erratic epigenetic signatures. Transformations to the human condition catalyzed by modern chemistry have been profoundly uneven. Chemical waste and toxic byproducts of industrial processes are accumulating in shadowlands—unrecognized places that provide material and ecological support to market economies and modern dreamworlds. Chemopower can reinforce hegemony, or alternatively produce anarchic political potentialities. This disruptive force is often chaotic, disorderly, without purpose or direction.

Eben Kirksey is Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of Oxford where he is also a Fellow of St Cross College. Duke University Press has published his first two books—*Freedom in Entangled Worlds* (2012) and *Emergent Ecologies* (2015)—as well as two edited collections: *The Multispecies Salon* (2014) and *The Promise of Multispecies Justice* (2023).

Eben is perhaps best known for his work in multispecies ethnography—a field that situates contemporary scholarship on animals, microbes, plants, and fungi within deeply rooted traditions of environmental anthropology, continental philosophy, and the sociology of science. Questions related to science and social justice animate his most recent book, *The Mutant Project* (2020), which offers an insiders account of the laboratory in China that created the world's first children whose genes were edited with CRISPR-Cas9.

Eben was a British Marshall Scholar at the University of Oxford, before he went on to earn his PhD at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He has taught at some of the most selective and innovative higher education institutions like Princeton University, Deep Springs College, and New College of Florida. In Australia he helped found the Environmental Humanities program at UNSW Sydney, and he maintains ongoing collaborations with colleagues at the Alfred Deakin Institute in Melbourne, Australia.