

POSTGRADUATE FORUM
**ENVIRONMENT
LITERATURE
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Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia



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Call for Applications

5th Annual Workshop of the Postgraduate Forum Environment, Literature, Culture

Working-class Environmentalism:

Reframing the Interface between Society and Nature

9-10th November 2017

Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, Venice, Italy

"Labour deserves the critical attention of green thinkers because it is both integral to the functioning and reproduction of our environmentally rapacious economy, and a fundamentally formative influence on the individual's subjectivity, intellect and worldview".

Martin Ryle & Kate Soper, *Introduction: the Ecology of Labour*

Manual labour has been defined as the main interface between society and nature (e.g. R. Williams and L. Conti). The current ecological crisis (ongoing since several decades in spite of palliatives such as the "sustainable development" and "green growth"), overlapping with the umpteenth economic and financial crisis underway, represents – following Barca (2012) – an opportunity to rethink production so as to imagine a labour culture that is socially and ecologically sustainable.

An increasing interest has been shown in the past few years for what has been defined as "working-class environmentalism" (Barca): albeit particularly marginalised after decades of neoliberalism, working classes are the first to suffer the damages of unlimited growth and work-oriented existences (e.g. risky and insalubrious neighbourhoods, unhealthy food, etc.) for which they unconsciously become co-responsible under the constraint of their salary. Maybe not so immediately detectable yet perhaps more sincere than a bourgeois environmentalism, the working class ecological consciousness shows specific features, since it directly and explicitly interlinks the means of production, the finalised products, the protagonist subjects of the productive process, and the places where production happens and where workers and their families live. Focusing on the potential of the cultural transition suggested by working class environmentalism, this workshop welcomes contributions in, but not limited to, the multi-disciplinary area of the environmental humanities. Proposals may involve e.g. analyses of artistic representations, historiographical inquiries, and theoretical discussions on the relation between labour and environment. Possible topics can address:

- working class environmentalism in literary representations, biographical and autobiographical narratives and stories;
- working class environmentalism in various artistic representations (e.g. movies, theatre, photography, music, performances, graffiti);
- working class environmentalism in the urban culture and in the use of urban space;

- the idea and the experience of nature as a form of ecological consciousness of the working-class communities;
- Political Ecology & the Environmentalism of the Poor (cf. Martinez-Alier).
- material connections of work, environment and public health (trans-corporeality, “workscape”/workplace and chemicals);
- the corrective role of culture in reframing ideas of progress, prosperity, human well-being and ultimately economic models (“alternative hedonism”);
- utopian visions of liberating transformation of labour and ecological restoration;
- environmental justice struggles.

Topics should be addressed by adopting one or more of these perspectives: ecocriticism, material ecocriticism, feminist ecocriticism, and environmental justice ecocriticism.

Students can participate by submitting an excerpt of their dissertation thesis or MA thesis, or a research poster presenting their PhD project. The workshop language is English. For any request and if you are interested in participating, please send an email to docforum.elc@gmail.com by **July 15th**, 2017 and let us know in which form you would like to contribute (excerpt of own work/poster). Please state your current project topic and include a short biographical note (200 words). Selected participants will be notified by July 31th. We might be able to offer travel grants for participants without university or third-party funding - please state if you would need funding in your application email.

Workshop Format and Programme

The workshop is organized by the Postgraduate Forum Environment, Literature, Culture, which brings together young researchers from the EASLCE membership countries to share and discuss their research with other young scholars in the environmental humanities.

The workshop will open with a keynote speech by Dr. **Stefania Barca** (Coimbra University, Portugal). Her respondent will be Prof. **Serenella Iovino** (Università degli Studi di Torino). There will also be a lecture by an expert from the **CDCA** (Documentation Centre on Environmental Conflicts). A field-trip to Marghera is offered to participants by Dr. **Gilda Zazzara** (Università Ca' Foscari Venezia) to explore the specificities of Venice's industrial area, one of the major industrial parks in Europe in the 20th century and at the same time a contaminated working-class urban settlement, with workers mobilising to preserve their health. The texts for discussion will be made available beforehand (by October 7th) and need to be read by all participants in advance.

Organizers

Maria Pia Arpioni, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

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Silvio Cristiano, Università Luav di Venezia & Università Ca' Foscari Venezia

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