

Doing research in an epoch of ecological unravelling

A masterclass in the Environmental Humanities
with Dr. Sophie Chao

22nd May 2024, Prague



The Environmental Humanities is an interdisciplinary field that engages with contemporary environmental issues and examines the cultural and political dimensions of life in a more-than-human world. In an epoch of ecological crisis, this field is of timely and critical importance, challenging human exceptionalism and nature-culture divides, examining our entanglement with and ethical obligations to more-than-human beings, and attuning us to emerging lively connections and alternate socio-ecological futures.

This Masterclass hopes to deepen engagement with the concerns of the Environmental Humanities in the Czech Republic and the broader region. We are inviting interested students to a one-day program to foster a community of like-minded researchers, as well as offer an interactive session with a prominent scholar who can provide feedback and guidance on doing empirical and theoretical work.

We invite early career researchers (masters, doctoral and postdoctoral) interested in the environmental humanities to attend a one-day masterclass with Sophie Chao on May 22nd in Prague. To register your interest, an abstract of 250 words and a short bio must be submitted by 15.04.2024 (for more details, see below). The masterclass will be held in English.

Dr Sophie Chao



Sophie Chao is an environmental anthropologist based at the University of Sydney. Chao is interested in the intersections of capitalism, ecology, Indigeneity, health, and justice in the Pacific, and her research is inspired by and speaks to core questions in Anthropology, Environmental Humanities and Science and Technology Studies, as well as by Indigenous, Postcolonial, and Critical Race Studies. She is the author of *In the Shadow of the Palms: More-Than-Human Becomings in West Papua* (Duke University Press) and co-editor of *The Promise of Multispecies Justice*.

A prolific author, Chao produces exciting, ground-breaking research informed by her long-term ethnographic engagement with West Papuan communities and her previous indigenous rights work in the region. Her research explores more-than-human living, dying, and becoming at the frontier of capitalism, which helps foreground indigenous critique of and theorisation in contemporary times and remains sensitive to justice in emerging multispecies worlds. For more information, please visit www.morethanhumanworlds.com.

The masterclass

The masterclass will be divided into two sessions: Dr Chao will deliver a short introduction to her work, followed by a closed workshop with masters, doctoral, and postdoctoral students.

For the first session, Chao will reflect upon the places, institutions, communities, and concerns that played a role in her development as a scholar, highlight problems and questions that currently move her, and offer some thoughts on the place of the environmental humanities and what they need to become in this time of environmental crisis.

The latter session allows participants to present a work in progress to peers, receive feedback and discuss their work with Chao. This workshop will help participants develop their research questions

and methods, scrutinise puzzling elements of their research, cultivate curiosity about unconsidered aspects, and generally appreciate their work through an environmental humanities lens. In particular, the masterclass invites students to learn/experiment with approaches which attend to the inclusions and exclusions they produce in their research projects, to think them through the possibilities/perspectives of violence, grief, care, and difference in contemporary worlds, and importantly, to understand that the stories we tell about our (research) subjects matter.

Submitting a proposal to participate

There is a **maximum of 12 slots available** for the masterclass. To register your interest, we ask potential participants to submit an abstract of no more than 250 words for a presentation of 5 to 8 minutes. The abstract can be about something the participants find challenging, puzzling or interesting, but it can also be a question they would like to share and develop. It could develop around an ethnographic observation, an incident, an interview, a material object, or anything else you think would be a relevant point of departure for your current work. Explain to an unfamiliar listener what you are bringing to the masterclass and why—and where it fits within the larger framework of your research project, whatever stage you are at. Accompanying the abstract should be a short 100-150 word bio and institutional affiliation. If you have completed your PhD, please note the date of completion. Please submit your abstracts and other details by 15.04.2024 to Darmanto (darmanto@orient.cas.cz) or Paul Keil (keil@eu.cas.cz)

The organisers

This event is organised by researchers from the Oriental Institute and the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Science, and The Culture and Communication Research Centre (CULCORG) of the Institute of Communication Studies and Journalism at the Faculty of Social Sciences at Charles University in Prague. The Strategie AV21, The Czech Science Foundation (GACR, Grant no. 24-13058S) and the European Research Council (ERC) funded the masterclass under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Program (Grant agreement no. 866350). For further information, please send your questions to darmanto@orient.cas.cz or keil@eu.cas.cz

Place

The masterclass will be held at the Hollar Building, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University. The Hollar locates at the historic place in the heart of Praha (Smetanovo nábřeží 6, Praha 1)

