

Call for Participation

The virtual event, ***Witnessing and Worlding Beyond the Human***, May 28-29, 2021 (Times TBD), aims to push against the boundaries of the human sensorium and anthropocentric forms of knowledge production. Here, we follow the provocations of James Hatley in thinking with a mode of storytelling enhanced by the art of witnessing, which carries with it an irreducible fleshiness and an ethical obligation to those with whom we share our stories (2000). In this respect, the act of becoming-witness is defined just as much by the testimony it puts forth as it is by the actual experience of having witnessed (van Dooren and Bird Rose, 2016). To this end, we invite submissions exploring novel, dynamic, and unorthodox methods for relating to, connecting with, and narrating other and more-than-human worlds. To be clear on the notion of “representation,” we seek to generate a critical dialogue about other animals and the more-than-human that aspires to portray, with fidelity (however partial), their lives and experiences as individuals or material forces, not just as they are deployed as symbols, metaphors or cultural tropes.

As multispecies and more-than-human studies readily lend themselves to interdisciplinary and genre-bending conversations and collaborations, we encourage those from all academic disciplines (the social sciences and humanities but also physical and material sciences, fine arts, law, geography, design, musicology, botany, agricultural sciences, etc.), theoretical inclinations, and graduate career stages to submit. All participants will share a 5-minute lightning talk followed by a large community conversation between panelists and the audience. This format is designed to invite widespread participation, within and beyond the academy, and emphasize the many interdisciplinary connections across fields. Finally, while recognizing the many limitations of a virtual event, we wish to call attention to how the remote format could allow for creative presentations, even those that potentially incorporate nonhuman collaborators and interlocutors.

To galvanize multispecies and other-than-human imaginations and incite innovative, idiosyncratic, and strange avenues of investigation, we offer the following ten subjects as guiding themes for submissions and welcome additional ideas from participants.

1. *Spectrums: Wild/Domestic/Feral/Habituated/Liminal/Invasive/Endangered*
2. *Care/Violence, Sanctuary, Refuge, & Conservation*
3. *Agency/Consent/Ethics; Species Hierarchies/Power Matrices*
4. *Animal Capital/Industrialized Animals, Commodification, Extraction, & Nonhuman Labor*
5. *Decay/Grief/Mourning/Dystopia/Hauntings/Monstrosity*
6. *Navigating Intersubjectivity and Interspecies Communications across Ecosystems, A/biotic Life*
7. *Scales & Geographies of Being*
8. *Responsibility*
9. *Racialization, Policing/Surveillance/Biopolitics, Gendering, & Coloniality of the nonhuman*
10. *Abolition, Rights, Solidarities & Justice(s)*

If interested, please complete the short form at the following link: t.ly/MFQv (Due by Midnight CST, April 11, 2021). Selected speakers will be notified in late April. Any questions and/or concerns may be directed to co-organizers Austin Hoffman (he/they) at adh5@illinois.edu, or Jesann Gonzalez Cruz (she/her) at jesannng2@illinois.edu.

This event is sponsored by the Human-Animal Studies@Illinois Initiative, Professor Jane Desmond, Center for Advanced Study Resident Director. Additional Sponsorship by "The Animal Turn" Research Cluster, Humanities Research Institute, Jamie Jones co-convenor.