

Environmental Humanities Active Learning Activity: Locality and Risk Discussion

Intended Audience: Undergraduates, all disciplines

Materials: Sticky notes and board

Time: 20 minutes

Description and Learning Objectives:

This activity provides an opportunity to explore risk through the lens of personal history. Through reflecting on their lived experiences of changing environments, students consider the social, industrial, and environmental impacts of change and think through long-term consequences of risk. A dialogic space will be created to increase students' awareness of the intersectional relationship between place, experience, and risk. Students will also be asked to theorize how decisions for risk reduction can and should be made, taking into account the roles of locality and ethics.

Instructions:

- Give students approximately three minutes to free-write about a place that they have lived in that has undergone significant change. Offer the following prompts for guidance:
 - How has this place changed since your earliest memory of it? Has it changed for better or worse?
 - What impacts may have instigated the change? Economic? Development? Climate? Migration?
 - Did the change happen to the natural environment of that area? If not, what risks do ongoing changes pose for that natural environment?
- Students should each take a sticky note to write the location that they wrote about and the biggest risk for that location changing negatively in the future, then place sticky notes on board.
- As a large group, read through the risks and sort the sticky notes into groups based on types of risk.

- Divide students into small groups based on the categories of risk. Discuss the following prompts in groups:
 - Share the locations that you wrote about. How does your group's risk look different in each of these locations?
 - Did the change that you wrote about impact your experience of the place? How?
 - Who, or what, would be most directly affected by the consequences of your group's risk?
 - Who, or what, would be indirectly affected?
 - How are community, industry, and natural environment affected differently by your risk? What steps can be taken to protect these areas against the risk?
- As a large group, discuss the following prompt:
 - What factors need to be considered in approaching a solution for reducing risk? How can we begin to make decisions that take these factors into account? What are the ethical stakes of making these decisions?