

DARK ECOLOGIES AND THE MONSTERS OF OUR OWN MAKING

“Monsters ask us to consider the wonders and terrors of symbiotic entanglement in the Anthropocene.”

(Tsing/Swanson/Gan/Bubandt, Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet, 2017)

Date: March 19, 2021

Time: 12:00 p.m. MT

Link:

<https://arizona.zoom.us/my/joelajacobs>

The times when it needed a mad scientist to sew together body parts and flip a switch to (re-)animate a monster are long gone. Today’s monsters are – if not invisible – hard to make out, or rather, they resemble their surroundings and their creators so much, it’s hard to call them monsters and not mean ourselves. Today’s monsters also rarely have an origin, that is, no one ever intended to ‘create’ them, yet they wreak havoc on human civilization. Indeed, Frankenstein’s monster and the hybrid human-animals from Dr. Moreau’s island seem much easier to deal with than a radioactive reptile like Godzilla, genetically modified killer plants, or, perhaps the most unsettling of all: global warming. With a growing human influence on global ecosystems and a seemingly uninhibited human drive to control ‘nature’ by all means, catastrophe and monster enter an uncanny relationship that implicates humans.

In my talk, I will look at contemporary monsters in fiction and beyond and ask how their particular form and capabilities (or lack thereof) form what we perceive as our environment or even world. I will confront Timothy Morton’s concept of “dark ecology” with Donna Haraway’s “sympoiesis” and probe how they inspire modes of co-existence with ‘our’ monsters.

*This event is taking place in the context of **SCCT 510**, a course on “Monstrous Ecologies” co-taught by Chris Cokinos (English) and Joela Jacobs (German Studies) for the Social, Cultural, and Critical Theory GIDP.*

Solvejg Nitzke

Solvejg Nitzke is a postdoctoral researcher of literary and cultural studies at TU Dresden where she leads the research project “Making Kin with Trees,” funded by Fritz Thyssen Foundation. She has published on monsters, catastrophes, ecological storytelling, (post-)apocalyptic narratives, village stories, the theories of scaling and the cultural significance of “whole earth” imagination; her research focuses on human-plant relationships, especially arboreal metamorphoses.



Program in Social, Cultural,
and Critical Theory