

Call for Contributors: An Edited Collection of Essays

Forgotten Spaces: Ecocriticism, Social Justice, and the U.S. South

The U.S. South is often a forgotten space within ecocritical discussions, yet it provides fruitful ground for thinking about environmental issues. In 2019, in the first edited collection of essays on the topic, Zachary Vernon notes that focusing attention on this bioregion might help “provide a way out of the limitations of thinking too locally or too globally,” and it might inspire a group of stakeholders to come to the table as well (7). One problem with ecocritical approaches is the long history of representing the U.S. South as an “internal other in the national imagination: colonized, subordinate, primitive, developmentally arrested, or even regressive” (Watson 254). Another issue is that both the environmental humanities and Southern studies have frequently been white spaces. This proposed anthology convenes a conversation about the U.S. South and environmental issues with an eye towards social justice. We seek theoretically-sophisticated essays attentive to intersections between race, class, gender, and sexuality within the U.S. South to round out our proposed collection. Interdisciplinary environmental research from a variety of frameworks and disciplines is welcome, including literature, film, art, history, popular culture, public memory, sociology, political science, and geography.

Questions to consider:

- Why does the U.S. South seem like a forgotten space within ecocritical discussions?
- How do we reach across entrenched divides and academic silos to engage in cross-disciplinary engagement with ecocritical concerns about the South?
- What entanglements might we find between race, environment, gender, sexuality, class, and social justice?
- How have artists, writers, activists, and cultural workers of color engaged with representing the environment, and what might their creative labor contribute to wider discussions beyond the academy?
- How are rural and urban environments represented in the U.S. South? How are they represented from outside?
- What constitutes the commons in the South? Was there ever really a Southern commons?
- How are public parks, museums, and recreation areas curated in the South, and what might we learn about entanglements between race and the environment through attending to these spaces?
- What is the history of traveling southward or leaving the South? What kinds of cultural constructions represent the region as a place to return to or escape from?
- How might we interrogate Donna Haraway’s phrase “the plantationocene” to consider the vexed history of work, nature, and captivity in Southern spaces?

- How might we consider Settler colonialism, genocide, and Indian Removal within an ecocritical framework? How has a legacy of Settler colonialist violence in the South impacted the environment?
- Can indigenous practices, beliefs, and cultural production be mobilized towards a Southern ecocriticism?
- What are the many varieties of experience within different souths?

Other possible topics:

- Climate change and its impact on southern spaces. Southern climate diaspora.
- Hurricanes, floods, tornados. Natural disasters and social justice.
- Disaster capitalism and southern spaces.
- Sacrifice zones. Industrial pollution.
- Carceral, military, and/or institutional Southern spaces.
- Queer ecology and queer ecological souths.
- Global approaches to environment and the U.S. South.
- Animals and animality in southern cultural productions. Domestic/wild/wilding.
- Southern megacities and the built environment in the U.S. South.
- Race and nature in the South.
- White supremacy and public spaces.

We seek MLA-formatted essays from 4,000-7,000 words. Please submit abstracts of 250-500 words by July 15, 2024. Notification of acceptance will be made by Aug. 1, 2024. And final essays will be due October 15, 2024. We will be submitting the proposal, table of contents, and sample essays to academic presses by Aug. 1, 2024.

Send abstracts and questions to: Katie Simon, Georgia College and State University, katie.simon@gcsu.edu and Catherine Bowlin, Elon University, catherinebowlin@gmail.com

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