

Michael GARDINER

megardin@uwo.ca

University of Western Ontario, Canada



Make the Holocene great again! Or, why is climate change boring?

This talk will address the conundrum: if climate change is an ‘existential threat’ to our species and the integrity of our entire planetary ecosystem, why is climate change boring for even informed, well-meaning individuals? Three main areas will be addressed. First, climate change’s ontological status as what Timothy Morton calls ‘hyperobjects’ – entities so complex, and extended across almost limitless time and space, they cannot be comprehended by our usual analogies, perceptions, and metrics – is crucial. Boredom looms here as affective and libidinal disengagement protecting the psyche from unsettling effects of cognitive overreach and dissonance. The second theme is ‘climate apocalypticism’. Endless reiterations of our dystopian future, it’s argued, evince a monotonous similarity, resulting in emotional exhaustion, melancholia, and morose resignation – and ultimately boredom. The final topic addresses how our attention and communicative exchanges regarding the climate crisis are sequestered algorithmically by ‘platform capitalism’. This encourages a ‘post-truth’ society of ubiquitous, commodified information overload, hence meta-boredom. The talk’s conclusion will focus on some of the ways in which, from a sociopolitical standpoint, ‘climate boredom’ might be examined more productively.