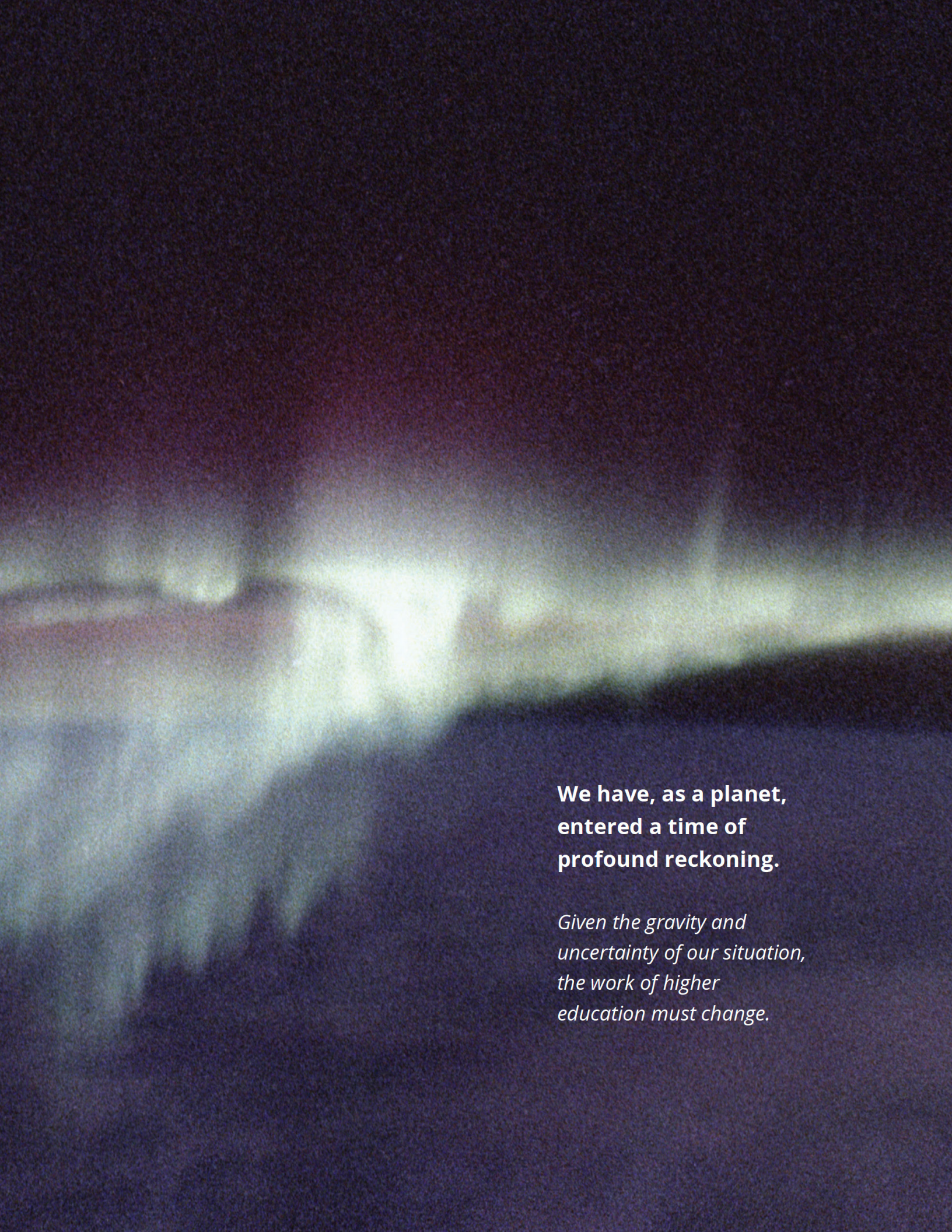


A blurred night scene of a city skyline reflected in water. The lights from the buildings are out of focus, creating a bokeh effect with streaks of yellow and white light against a dark, deep blue background. The reflection in the water is soft and distorted, mirroring the lights above.

**We have, as a planet,
entered a time of
profound reckoning.**

*Given the gravity and
uncertainty of our situation,
the work of higher
education must change.*



A new Earth conversation

*is a campus-wide climate
initiative at Clark University*

*In this time of reckoning and
upheaval, NEC creates a
transformative community—*

*a community that sees
the ecological crisis, racism,
political upheaval and the
pandemic as deeply
interdependent*

*and one through which
the possibilities inherent in
A new Earth conversation
may emerge*

newearthconversation.org

***The world faces
unprecedented challenges...
so does higher education.***

Our ecosystem and the climate on Earth have been de-stabilized by its human inhabitants and the expansion of an extractive industrial economy, powered by fossil fuels and premised on the exploitation of people of color. The underlying political, economic and social tenets of our world have been revealed, and have become increasingly volatile, destructive and untenable.

***How do we educate in a time of increasing
uncertainty, instability and injustice?***

Given what we know, how do we best serve now, and for the future?

A fundamental conversation about the role of higher education in these times underlies the work of ***A new Earth conversation***. The NEC sees the University as a site of creative endeavors producing deeper understandings of the past, contributing to life-affirming projects in the present and sharing responsibility for the future.

Clark has a deep history of integrative thinking and action on the human/ environment relationship, and an established culture of dialogue and community-building. Drawing from those, we are committed to the unique work of the University in society—that of encouraging its members to be awake and engaged, to vision and act with intelligence, empathy, and creativity, and to stand on the side of justice and in affirmation of our interdependence.

Since 2016, catalyzed by the first faculty *Councils on the Uncertain Human Future*, a significant number of Clark faculty have been part of a deeply-rooted conversation on the climate crisis and its social justice, political and economic dimensions—in both small settings and more public activities. In considering the impact of this existential challenge together, we had to address the question: What do these profound changes mean for our responsibility as educators?

A new Earth conversation is our response to these questions.

Since its inception, NEC continues to grow into a creative community, defined and realized through an intentional process of *reflection, discernment and action*. This central process is embodied in a number of NEC’s core practices, activities and spaces—*Council on the Uncertain Human Future*, *the Collaboratives*, and *Listening in Nature*, as well as its public programs, TRIOS and Teach-ins.

NEC draws from Clark’s long-term strengths and commitments, but brings them together for new levels and kinds of impact.
It is a vital and empowering new path through a Clark education, and a timely model for other institutions of higher education.

NEC CORE PRACTICES

*Council on the
Uncertain Human Future*

The Collaborative

Listening in Nature

Programs and Teach-ins



NEC Fellow Dimitri Koufis '22 convenes a Collaborative CUHF, winter 2020

A highlight for me was the first night of the CUHF—an experience of truly and honestly slowing down that shifted the way I view my own life. For the first time I could articulate many of the concerns and truths I never had time for.

DIMITRI KOUFIS

Undergraduate Student

Council on the Uncertain Human Future

A Portal

The Council on the Uncertain Human Future is the beginning of the NEC experience for every student who joins it, and an opening to the conversation. Council-type conversations are then an ongoing practice and resource for the program.

While the scientific consensus on climate disruption and its wider contexts is clear, as a society we fail to fully acknowledge those threats, address their implications and consider how we might respond. The *Council on the Uncertain Human Future* (CUHF) creates an opportunity for such a reckoning, individual and collective, to take place in an environment of trust.

The UHF Council is the foundation practice of *A new Earth conversation* (NEC); the work of Collaboratives and other curriculum and programs draws from this experience and the depth of insight it engenders.

Council members consider: *What is the political and social context in which we gather? What is taking place on the planet, and why? What are the implications for humans, the Earth and all living things? How do we choose to conduct ourselves in the face of grave danger and uncertainty? Given what we know, how do we live now?*

Through the *Council on the Uncertain Human Future*, we acknowledge and stay with what we come to see about our planetary situation, including the experience of grieving what has been and is being lost. New insight, vision and action may emerge from that place of reckoning. In a gradual collective way, new creative insights and collaborations become possible.

The Council on the Uncertain Human Future is:

an intentional practice through which we acknowledge the climate and ecological breakdown underway, and the socio-political forces driving (and being driven) by it

through the process, we experience and stay with the implications of what we learn, and consider the question of how we live now, individually and together

*We can no longer afford the
deep-seated tendencies in academic
life to isolate and fragment, when we
need cooperation and integration;
to separate mind and heart,
when we need embodied wisdom
and compassion to guide us
through perilous times.*

DIANA CHAPMAN WALSH
*Former President, Wellesley College
NEC Advisory Board*

we listen for the collective wisdom that may arise between us

**initiatory in nature, Council offers members a series of questions /
prompts** without preconceiving the outcome/s of the exchange, thus
allowing new possibilities to emerge

we build—through shared witness, reflection and discernment—new
levels of presence, solidarity, compassion, empowerment and engagement
we strengthen capacities for collaboration and self-governance through
the time-honored Council practice

together, we incubate insightful, creative and skillful responses as we
reckon with the deep changes underway and ahead

LEARN MORE

*The CUHF began at Clark in 2014
with a national circle of environmental
leaders; it is now an international
network. Learn more and use our
resources and readers here:*

councilontheuncertainhumanfuture.org



An NEC Collaborative led by Denise Humphreys Bebbington (NEC Lead Convener) meets for the Council on the Uncertain Human Future in fall 2019.

The Collaboratives create interdisciplinary spaces of discernment from which action might arise—allowing for students to learn to appreciate and integrate different forms of knowledge, and to link inquiry and discernment to action.

ED CARR
Professor and Director, IDCE

The Collaborative

A new way of learning

The Collaborative is the primary and distinctive curricular process of NEC.

A different kind of learning experience, the Collaborative engenders a collective search for insight among students, faculty, and community partners in regard to challenges posed by global climate disruption and the social justice, cultural, psychological, political and economic realities on which it is based.

From the common ground of the Council, members of a *Collaborative* explore the issues, questions, and dilemmas that surround special challenges in the human environment, ask *what more they need to learn and know now*, and *what they choose to do or be, given what they come to understand*.

A *Collaborative* experience encourages students to explore the intersections of race and social inequality, climate change, and the global environmental crisis, and to think about ways forward that foster broader environmental and social well-being. The work is dynamic, emergent, iterative and based in dialogue; the direction of inquiry, process of discernment, and arena of action or intervention grows and takes shape.

Collaboratives depend on horizontal relationships of teaching and learning between faculty and students and among students, as they grapple with issues of collective concern. *Collaboratives* are unique spaces where students can engage deeply with complex and difficult issues in ways that traditional classroom settings and existing program structures do not always allow. They may lead to creating or joining initiatives on campus, locally, regionally or beyond, and to on-going relationships between students and faculty.

Each *Collaborative* is a credit-bearing course. Interested students are encouraged to take a range of *Collaboratives* and NEC-affiliated courses, and to engage with existing campus, community and regional groups involved in related work. Students may choose to continue working under directed study with faculty or pursue internships. They may also serve as NEC fellows, who train to become conveners of the *Council on the Uncertain Human Future* or to lead other collective NEC activities.

The attributes of a Collaborative are:

An initial experience of the Council on the Uncertain Human Future (CUHF) creates a foundation of deeper awareness and shared insight from which questions emerge and a direction for collective work is defined.

*The work of NEC brings
a renewed sense of being
in community, and better still,
a community of trust and
purpose—even hope.*

JENNY ISLER
Sustainability Director

*For me, NEC is a reminder
to look up, stay awake,
not get distracted by
inconsequential stuff.*

ELLEN FOLEY
Professor, IDCE

The work among members of a Collaborative (faculty, students and community members) then takes shape through a process of inquiry and discernment over a semester which may lead to shared action or intervention that can extend into future semesters.

Through horizontal relationships between faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate students, they build a multi-level learning community in which questions, reflections, insights and actions are co-produced.

As they encourage a process of reflection and discernment from which action may arise, *Collaboratives* are flexible interdisciplinary spaces with a quality of open-endedness that responds to the creativity of students.

In brief, Collaboratives are:

- a novel, cross-cutting organizational form for higher education
- flexible, exploratory learning communities
- focused on the crucial questions of our time
- draw from a process of reflection through the Council process
- organized horizontally
- question-centered, producing creative and emergent responses
- fluid, extending beyond the classroom into the campus, neighborhood, and world

RECENT COLLABORATIVES *partial list*

Fall 2020

Water and the City: A Socio-Hydrology of Worcester and its Environs, Rinku Roy Chowdhury

Emerging Issues in Climate Change Science, Karen Frey

Critical Pedagogy for Social and Environmental Justice: Liberal Arts Education in Practice, Jude Fernando*

Mega Development: Exploring the nexus between natural resource extraction infrastructure development and environment, Denise Humphreys Bebbington*

Spring 2020

Painting II: States of Being, Amy Wynne

Food Security and Climate Change, Morgan Ruelle

Creative Writing: Nonfiction, Michael Carolan

Cities, Regions, Climate Change and Health, Timothy Downs

Introduction to Peace Studies, Jude Fernando

Fall 2019

The Arctic in the Anthropocene, Karen Frey

Development and Environment in Latin America: Difficult Questions, Creative Responses, Anthony Bebbington

Climate Praxis: Reflection and Action for the Unthinkable, Tim DeChristopher

**Courses that have been taught as a Collaborative for multiple semesters*

Now more than ever, we have
to educate ourselves and our peers
in a time of uncertainty and instability.
A new Earth conversation helps
to build students' connections
to the planet and with one another.
It provides a toolkit with which
to architect change on the
personal, local, or global level.

COLLEEN FALCONER
Undergraduate Student

The Collaboratives allow
us to bridge out of the
academy, and seek
broader partnerships.

RINKU ROY CHOWDHURY
Professor, Geography

Affiliated Courses, growing network

Each semester, many other courses across the curriculum choose to affiliate with the NEC. The affiliates provide another interdisciplinary opportunity for students to engage in reflection on the climate crisis. While more traditional in their structure, our affiliate courses create space for students to engage in some of the fundamental elements of NEC.

Within the affiliates, students may be encouraged to:

- Reflect about the implications of climate change for the key questions and learning objectives of the course
- Attend NEC programming and reflect on the experience through relevant course assignments
- Participate in or lead *Listening in Nature* activities on campus
- Incorporate Council practice as a dimension of the course, whether as a full or abbreviated version of the *Council on the Uncertain Human Future*

AFFILIATED COURSES partial list

Fall 2020

- Marine Biology*
Deborah Robertson
- Discovering Environmental Science*
Timothy Downs
- Imagining Place: Writing Health, Science and the Environment*
Michael Carolan
- Environmental Science and Policy*
Morgan Ruelle
- Conservation GIS*
Florenca Sangermano
- Philosophy of Death*
Wes DeMarco

Spring 2020

- Fictions of Empire: Studies in Global English Literature*
Steve Levin
- Taste, Culture, Power: Historical Geographies of Food*
Youjin Chung
- Urban Ecology: Cities as Ecosystems*
Rinku Roy Chowdhury
- Geographies of Poverty and Inequality*
Jessa Loomis
- Political Ecologies of the Anthropocene*
James McCarthy

Fall 2019

- Art and Meditation*
Amy Wynne
- Exploring the Universe*
Charles Agosta
- Gender and Environment*
Youjin Chung
- International Climate Negotiations*
Elisabeth Gilmore
- The Good Life*
Wes DeMarco



Molly Gurney MA '19 unfurls the labyrinth she helped construct, Day of Listening in Nature, spring 2019

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

While *Listening in Nature* continues to grow, some of our regular programming highlights include:

- *Fungal Foray in the Hadwen Arboretum*
- *Walking Meditation*
- *Yoga on the Green*
- *Nature Art and Poetry*
- *Talking to Trees*
- *Sacred Fire*
- *Labyrinth*

Listening in Nature

Times of slowing

At the heart of *A new Earth conversation*, the *Listening in Nature* program embodies our understanding that practices of slowing down, listening, becoming observant and available, and awakening to the magic of living eco-systems are vitally important as we navigate the realities of a warming world.

Events and activities within *Listening in Nature* are designed to cultivate appreciation and exploration of the natural world and to remind ourselves of the interdependence of all living things.

Each semester *A new Earth conversation* organizes a *Day of Listening in Nature* with a variety of opportunities for faculty, students, staff, and community members to slow down and experience the natural world with renewed attention.

We also support faculty who seek to incorporate immersive experiences in nature into their teaching. As part of her Collaborative course, Jessica Bane-Robert invited students to the Barred Owl Retreat for an edible week and folklore walk. Other courses have integrated outdoor experiences at the Quabbin Reservoir, Broad Meadow Brook and Donker Farm, among others.

Days of Listening in Nature have included Fungal Forays in the Hadwen Arboretum, walking meditation and yoga on the Green, art projects around campus, poetry readings outside, building a labyrinth in Alden Quad, and sacred fires.



Top to bottom, left to right:

Ellen Foley, Melissa Hoffer and Mariama White-Hammond keynote *All Together Now*, fall 2018

Jacqui Patterson, fall 2017

Co-habiting with the Devil event, winter 2019

Kathleen Dean Moore and Rachelle McCabe, fall 2018

Roy Scranton, fall 2019

Tim DeChristopher, 2018-19

Naomi Klein, winter 2016

Denise Humphreys Bebbington and others, *Co-habiting with the Devil*, winter 2019

Sherri Mitchell, winter 2020

Programs and Teach-ins

Community gatherings

Encouraging Clark and Worcester community engagement with these pressing concerns through public forums, conversations and explorations has been a priority of *A new Earth conversation* since its inception.

The first programs offered by what became *A new Earth conversation* were two major *Climate Change Teach-ins* (spring 2015 and spring 2016). They each drew on the contributions of nearly fifty faculty members, and attracted between 500 and 700 members of the Clark community. Another major campus-wide event, *All Together Now* / politics, economy, social justice and the climate followed in the fall of 2018.

Through its history, a wide range of NEC-sponsored public programs have enriched the collective life of the University and the larger community. They include talks by and conversations with exceptional thought leaders and activists, including Naomi Klein, Jacqui Patterson, Terry Tempest Williams, Roy Scranton, Susi Moser and others.

Those major events were supplemented by TRIO conversations between members of the faculty and staff around shared questions (open to the faculty as a whole), and panels on the Paris Climate Accord (Ed Carr, Chris Williams, Deb Robertson, Chuck Agosta) and extractive industries (Tony Bebbington, Denise Humphreys Bebbington, John Rogan and Laura Sauls).

In 2020, NEC is developing an online presence to continue and expand its work of engendering community conversations around these critical concerns.

LEARN MORE

For further details on both past and upcoming events, please check the website at:

newearthconversation.org

INVITED SPEAKERS partial list

Naomi Klein	Tim DeChristopher	Roy Machonachie
Camille Seaman	Kathleen Dean Moore	Roy Scranton
Jacqui Patterson	Rachelle McCabe	Christian Parenti
Erica Mackie	Jade Sasser	Sherri Mitchell
Mariama White-Hammond	Terry Tempest Williams	Elizabeth Lindsey Rogers
Melissa Hoffer	Susi Moser	

NEC Team

Creative community

NEC ADVISORY TEAM

Chuck Agosta, Physics
Tony Bebbington, Geography
Denise Humphreys Bebbington, IDCE
Lead Convener 2020-
Sarah Buie, V&PA
Founding Convener
Ed Carr, IDCE
Rinku Roy Chowdhury, Geography
Ellen Foley, IDCE
Past Convener
Jenny Isler, Sustainability
Steve Levin, English
Jessica Bane Robert, LEEP
Deb Robertson, Biology
Morgan Ruelle, IDCE
Rachael Shea, Goddard Library
Walter Wright, Philosophy
Amy Wynne, V & PA / Studio Art
Michelle Sayles, CUHF/NEC
Assistant Director

COLLABORATIVE FACULTY

through 2020; affiliated courses also +

Chuck Agosta +
Tony Bebbington +
Denise Humphreys Bebbington +
Ramon Borges-Mendez
Sarah Buie
Michael Carolan +
Cynthia Caron+
Rinku Roy Chowdhury +
Tim DeChristopher +
Tim Downs +
Jude Fernando
Karen Frey +
Steve Levin +
Jessica Bane Robert +
Morgan Ruelle +
Rachael Shea
Walter Wright
Amy Wynne +

ADDITIONAL AFFILIATED FACULTY

through 2020

Youjin Chung
Valerie Claff
Wes DeMarco
Patrick Derr
Anita Fabos
Ellen Foley
Elisabeth Gilmore
Jessa Loomis
James McCarthy
Deb Robertson
Florencia Sangermano

NEC STUDENT FELLOWS

Dimitri Koufis '22
Emily Braddock '21 (Summer intern)
Aswira Pasha MBA/MA '20 (2019-20)
August Welles MA '20 (2019-20)
Priscilla Ahn Visual Media; MS '21

*NEC matters now because
it is a re-invigorated notion
of liberal education, one that
addresses the needs of a
world in crisis.*

STEVE LEVIN
Professor, English

*To slow down, and to sit
with others and to share an
understanding of the reality
that we exist in together—
that's the essence of it.
And I think that has a
power to really make one
feel awake and alive and
at the same time.*

HELEN PERHAM
MA '19



A new Earth conversation

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Images of Aurora Borealis, Northern Aurora,
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