

The Apocalyptic Dimensions of Climate Change and Fluctuating Environments in Scientific Models and Cultural Discourses

An Interdisciplinary Workshop organised by the Chairs for Cognitive Literary Studies, Biblical Theology, and Physical Geology and Climatology at RWTH Aachen

RWTH Aachen University
15 – 16 November 2018

Call for Presentations

Fluctuating, dynamic environments have always impacted human and non-human life, not just since anthropogenic climate change has become a pressing concern. As the scale and speed of climate change are drawing attention to our interaction with and perception of the physical world and the concept of the Anthropocene has taken root in critical discussions of humanity's impact on the planet, the relevance of investigating how science and culture make sense of environmental developments is becoming increasingly apparent as well. With apocalyptic imagery and narrative to draw on, people tend to use certain frameworks and schemata to comprehend and come to terms with natural phenomena with (potentially) disastrous consequences.

The purpose of this workshop is fostering an interdisciplinary exchange about how people address the challenges posed by environmental variability – practically, in terms of adapting to changes or attempts at counteracting developments, as well as cognitively and culturally, for instance regarding the ways in which fluctuating environments might shape worldviews or policies. A transdisciplinary perspective based on a dialogue between sciences and humanities enables a thorough exploration of common questions concerning human reactions to the dynamic nature of our environments. Such questions may include, but are not limited to:

- How are phenomena like climate change represented and discussed in society?
- Which images or narrative forms are used in these cultural discourses and to what ends? How are scientific insights communicated? How are they made comprehensible, how do they become accepted, and possibly instigate change?
- What is the relationship between fact and fiction in contemporary literature / journalism / media communication /etc. about environmental fluctuations?
- In how far do scientific models and cultural discourses influence each other and draw on established concepts such as 'apocalypse' and their various connotations?
- How has climate (and potentially climate catastrophes) been perceived throughout history? What are the traditional connections between climate and the apocalyptic?

We welcome presentations from a variety of disciplines that address how current concerns about climate change and fluctuating environments are expressed across scientific and cultural discourses, in different models, media, and artefacts.

Proposals of about 300 words for 20-minute presentations should be sent to Judith Eckenhoff (judith.eckenhoff@ifaar.rwth-aachen.de) no later than October 1, 2018. Please include your affiliation and a short biographical note. There is also a limited budget for travel expenses, inquiries are welcome.