

Proposal for a Special Issue of *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, on Climate Change

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## **Narrative**

There is an urgent need for an issue of *Hypatia* devoted to feminist philosophical and theoretical analyses of climate change, and we would like to serve as co-editors of such an issue. Thus far philosophers' attention to climate change has been rather narrow in focus—concerned primarily with the ethical responsibilities of developed nations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions—and limited in perspective. For example the recent book *Climate Ethics: Essential Readings* (Oxford, 2010), edited by ethicists Stephen Gardiner, Simon Caney, Dale Jamieson, and Henry Shue, consists of 18 chapters on topics such as “Global Environment and International Equality” and “Adaptation to Climate Change: Who Pays Whom?,” but not one selection by a female or nonwhite author. While the collection is permeated with recognition that climate change is a global problem that was created by inequality and that is likely to exacerbate existing inequalities, economic inequalities and resulting differences in “capacities” are the only injustices of interest; there is a complete neglect of the significance of gender, race, or colonialism.

Even in the literature focused on questions about ethics and global justice from the perspectives of developing nations and those living in poverty, there are significant gaps that call for feminist philosophical attention. *Climate Change, Ethics and Human Security* (Cambridge, 2010), edited by Karen O'Brien, Asuncion Lera St. Clair and Berit Kristoffersen, includes essays on topics such as “The Framing of Climate Change: Why it Matters,” “Ethics, Politics, Economics and the Global Environment,” and “Global Poverty and Climate Change: Towards the Responsibility to Protect,” but only one essay includes attention to the disparate impacts of ecological disasters on women. Equally importantly, feminist analyses of the various historical and present dimensions of climate change are conspicuously absent.

Nonetheless, there is a growing appreciation of the fact that climate change has gender-differentiated causes and effects (Dankelman 2010). In contrast to philosophical approaches, in the social sciences and the worlds of international policy and development studies increasing attention is being directed to the gendered dimensions of climate change. Often the focus of that work is to motivate “gender mainstreaming” and “pro-poor” ethics in international negotiations and development policies by conveying more accurate information about current experiences of climate change in developing nations, and the disparate impacts of the impacts of climate change on already-vulnerable populations, including women, girls, and those living in poverty. This approach is found in *Social Dimensions of Climate Change: Equity and Vulnerability in a Warming World*, edited by Robin Mearns and Andrew Norton, published by the World Bank in 2010 as part of a series entitled “New Frontiers of Social Policy,” and *Distributional Impacts of Climate Change and Disasters: Concepts and Cases*, edited by Ruth Mattias and Maria Eugenia Ibarraran (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2009)

While it is important to be clear about the real impacts of climate change, the current approach is seriously limited. Little attention has been paid to the complex way in which

dominant conceptions of femininity and masculinity are implicated within the institutional frameworks of climate policy, such as mitigation and adaptation, as well as the societal discourses that structure our understanding of the problems of and the solutions to climate change. There is also a tendency, noted by various theorists (e.g. MacGregor 2010, Cuomo 2011), for studies of gender-differentiated impacts to over-focus on poor women from underdeveloped countries in the Global South, and to frame discussions of these women around their vulnerabilities. This gives the misimpression that only women and only women from poorer countries are at risk, while too often leaving the impression of these women as victims rather than as agents.

In addition, the current Western construction of climate change renders it a problem that requires the kind of solutions that are the traditional domain of men and dominant conceptions of masculinity, such as military responses and exceptional measures that too often downgrade issues of equity or attention to environmental justice. Furthermore, the dominant instruments of climate policy decision-making, including economic models and risk assessment, are themselves based on values and assumptions, many of which have a gendered component, but which have largely gone unquestioned (Broome 2008; Nelson 2008).

The “feminist lens” of policy-oriented work in the social sciences is too often limited to attention to the disparate impacts females and other “Others” have suffered, or will suffer, when local communities are impacted by extreme weather events and other economic and ecological disasters. Feminist analyses are usually completely absent, even when the central matter at hand is the relevance of gender. In the essay “Gender and Climate Change Vulnerability: What’s the Problem, What’s the Solution,” by Anthony G. Patt, Angie Dazé and Pablo Suarez (*Social Dimensions of Climate Change* 2009), the authors describe gender as a “cross-cutting issue” with relevance concerning a plethora of questions about climate change mitigation and adaptation. But their perspective on the significance of gender is disappointingly one-dimensional and centered on victimhood: “Women are usually subject to cultural norms and practices that differentiate them from men, such as poverty and marginality. Gender can play a major role in people’s ability to prepare for, and respond to, climate-related threats.” In this literature, ubiquitous in the spheres of policy and international diplomacy, considerations of “gender” too often focus on attention to female vulnerabilities, and female vulnerabilities are attributed to “different valuations of men and women,” while existing gender roles are rarely investigated or criticized.

There is also a tendency in this work to naturalize gender and sexual difference, as well as cultural difference, and to characterize poor women of color in strictly opportunist terms, as the crucial cogs that will enable economic uplift, literacy, and the proliferation of new green values and technologies. Patt, Dazé and Suarez (noted above) draw upon what they describe as “a growing body of research in psychology and economics (which) shows that women and men make decisions differently, in ways that are important for sustainable development and climate change adaptation.” Because of the lack of a critical or feminist lens, development is praised as sustainable even while it relies on oppressive divisions of labor. What is too often missing, and what we believe would be included in a feminist critical approach is a *new framing of climate change* that does not juxtapose development and climate change adaptation as two separate and competing objectives, nor view women and the poor as victims in need of rescue. A feminist social/political lens provides the resources needed to understand that

climate change is a symptom of misguided development pathways, linked to processes that produce and perpetuate poverty and inequalities

In spite of the disappointingly low profile of feminist philosophical investigations concerning climate change and related issues thus far, there is an important and ready audience for a *Hypatia* special issue on the topic. A growing literature is emerging that looks at the data on the significance of female decision-makers in a more critical light, and that does not shy away from asking questions about privileged women's historical roles in the creation and propagation of the industrial greenhouse effect. A recent issue of the Danish academic journal *Women, Gender and Research* dedicated to the topic "Gendering Climate Change" presents sophisticated analyses from an international and interdisciplinary group of theorists. Feminist approaches to gender-sensitive studies of climate change have been at the center of a small but significant circle of influence in the world of international treaties, primarily through the work of international non-governmental organizations such as Women's Environment and Development Organization and GenderCC: Women for Climate Justice. Feminist philosophical attention to climate change is crucial, for there are important missing dimensions of analysis that require the perspectives of feminist ethics, feminist science studies, and feminist political philosophy.

In order to fully understand the gender and power-laden dimensions of climate change, feminist philosophical approaches should go significantly beyond the current focus on impacts, and should counter the presumption that "gender mainstreaming" is an adequate feminist strategy for dealing with climate change. A comprehensive appreciation of the gender-differentiated causes and effects of climate change must be placed within the more general context of the conceptual and epistemological components of the gender dimensions of climate change. The call for papers for this special issue will therefore encourage investigations of the ways in which gendered understandings and concepts *shape the very discourses* of climate change, impacting how we both understand the phenomena and how we respond to it. That is, we need fuller attention to how particular conceptions of masculinity and femininity are imbricated within both scientific and policy discourses. Climate change is certainly a physical phenomenon, but it is also one built on complex social and political understandings and responses. Approaches from feminist science studies, for example, can help us appreciate how our policy approaches and even our scientific framings of climate change themselves are saturated by gender concepts and politics. Questions concerning how we know as well as what we do not know in the domain of climate science would also benefit from bringing feminist epistemological resources such as the lens of epistemologies of ignorance (Tuana 2007) to bear on what Naomi Oreskes (2010) has labeled the production of doubt regarding climate change.

The issue of climate change will only continue to increase in significance in the coming decades. We hope that an issue of *Hypatia* dedicated to the topic will be a catalyst for the production of more robust feminist approaches that will positively influence knowledge, politics and practices.

## Feminist Philosophers and Theorists Who Might Contribute and/or Review

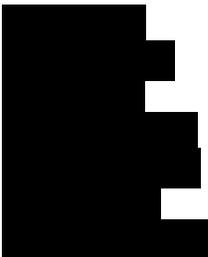
Our work on this issue will benefit from an international conference, “Gender and Climate Change: Women, Research, and Action,” for which Tuana is co-organizer. This international conference to be held in Prato, Italy in September will bring together the latest research in key areas of gender and climate change, to highlight impacts of climate change on women, and to draw together a body of knowledge for input into the 2011 United Nations Framework Convention (COP 17) and the Earth Summit 2012. In addition, Tuana is PI of a Worldwide Universities Network (WUN) research initiative on Gender and Climate Change that includes feminist philosophers and theorists from Australia, North America, Brazil, the EU, and South Africa.

We have received over one hundred submissions for this conference including from a number of feminist philosophers and feminist theorists. We will solicit papers from conference participants as well as widely advertising the special issue via our call for papers. Feminist philosophers and theorists who are part of the WUN initiative will also be encouraged to submit papers for consideration.

*Feminist Scholars involved in the WUN Conference:*



*Other Potential Authors/Reviewers*



*Hypatia Special Issue on Climate Change*  
Call for Papers (draft)

*Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy* seeks papers for a special issue on Climate Change. We welcome new feminist philosophical scholarship on the scientific, ethical, epistemological, economic, and cultural dimensions of current global climate change, as well as case studies that critically engage specific causes and impacts in local, regional, national, and/or global contexts. In addition to essays in feminist philosophy of science, ethics, and political philosophy we encourage investigations of the ways in which gendered and other power-laden frameworks shape the discourses and power flows that influence various parties' understandings of and responses to climate change.

There has been a great deal of work in the natural and social sciences on present and likely future impacts of climate change, and there is increasing acknowledgement in the literature that extreme weather events and ecological disasters tend to have greater negative impacts on women, girls, and communities who lack social and economic power. Nonetheless, little attention has been given to the complex ways in which hegemonic conceptions of gender, race, nation, and knowledge are implicated within institutional frameworks of climate policy, media representations of scientific knowledge, and suggestions of planetary redemption through profit-generating green technologies.

As we consider possible responses to climate change, feminist philosophy has much to offer, for it encourages forthright attention to the ethical and power-laden dimensions of an issue, and helps clarify the difference between trustworthy and untrustworthy information. In addition to critical case studies, some questions and issues that might be considered in this special issue include (but are not limited to) the following feminist analyses:

Climate science and modeling from the perspective of feminist science studies  
The intersections of development ethics and climate ethics  
Epistemologies and ethics of climate modeling  
Critical analyses of industrial, scientific, policy and activist discourses  
Climate change denial and epistemologies of ignorance  
Neo-liberalism, neo-colonialism and the geopolitics of the climate change treaty process  
The naturalization of fossil fuel dependence  
Climate change and the resurgence of reactionary population concerns  
The role of the media, from misinformation to education

Deadline for submission: *To be determined*

Papers should be no more than 8000 words, inclusive of notes and bibliography, prepared for anonymous review, and accompanied by an abstract of no more than 200 words. For details please see *Hypatia's* submission guidelines  
[http://depts.washington.edu/hypatia/submission\\_guidelines.html](http://depts.washington.edu/hypatia/submission_guidelines.html)

Please submit your paper to: <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/hypa>. When you submit, make sure to select "Climate Change" as your manuscript type, and also send an email to the guest editor(s) indicating the title of the paper you have submitted:  
Chris Cuomo: [cuomo@uga.edu](mailto:cuomo@uga.edu) Nancy Tuana: [ntuana@la.psu.edu](mailto:ntuana@la.psu.edu)

## Editor Qualifications

**Nancy Tuana** is DuPont/Class of 1949 Professor of Philosophy, Women's Studies, and Science, Technology, and Society at Penn State. She is the founding Director of the Penn State Rock Ethics Institute, where she leads the Ethics and Climate Change Initiative, an interdisciplinary research collaboration which aims to better understand the ethical dimensions of climate change science and policy. Her publications include a number of articles on ethics and climate change, including the ethics of solar radiation management and the ethical dimensions of climate modeling, as well as the forthcoming book, *Climate Change and Human Rights*. She has been involved in the UN Frameworks Convention on Climate Change for the past six years where she has held side-events and workshops on the ethical dimensions of climate change. She is PI of the Worldwide Universities Network Gender and Climate Change Research Group. She is working on a new book on Gender and Climate Change for Zed Books. Tuana has extensive editorial experience including serving as co-editor (with Laurie Shrage) of *Hypatia*.

**Chris J. Cuomo is Professor of Philosophy and Women's Studies at the University of Georgia, and she** has been working at the intersections of feminist and environmental ethics for over twenty years, and has written on a range of philosophical questions that are directly relevant to the issue(s) of climate change. Since 2004 she has been involved as a co-principal investigator on an NSF-funded project integrating local indigenous knowledge into scientific studies of landscape changes on the North Slope of Alaska. She attended the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties in 2009 and 2010 as part of an observer organization focused on outreach and education concerning the ethical dimensions of climate change. Her essay "Climate Change, Responsibility and Vulnerability," to be published in the Fall 2011 issue of *Hypatia* (Volume 26, Issue 4), provides an overview of the ethical dimensions of climate change, and will be among the first feminist philosophical works published on the topic.

For the 2009-2010 academic year Cuomo was a senior Copeland Fellow in Global Sustainability at Amherst College, where she conducted research on climate change, gender, and social justice. From 2008 through 2010 she presented eight invited lectures on climate change, feminist ethics, and the importance of local and indigenous knowledge, three of which were keynote or plenary addresses at prominent national feminist conferences. She is also a member of the Worldwide Universities Network's Gender Justice and Global Climate Change Working Group, an ongoing international multidisciplinary seminar of researchers looking at the gendered and economic dimensions of climate change.

Cuomo's editorial experience includes two anthologies and one journal issue (*Ethics and the Environment: Special Issue on Art*), and from 2004-2009 she was editor of the Society for Women in Philosophy Newsletter.

### *Our Interest in this Special Issue*

We are both passionate about the need for a special issue of *Hypatia* on climate change. We are committed to publishing excellent scholarship that will help strengthen the progressive global-justice perspective regarding climate change debates. The need for more, and more diverse, philosophical work on climate change is essential. This volume will illustrate the

importance of feminist philosophical scholarship on these important topics and we are confident that the international conference will provide us with authors who examine these concerns from an international perspective. We also hope this work by feminist philosophers will, thanks to this special issue, become part of the debates within the scholarly as well as the policy domain. Peer reviewed publications are the basis for the IPCC reports (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) as well as international policy. Feminist philosophical work should be part of this scholarship. And who should publish that work but *Hypatia*?