

"Ethical orientations toward repair in climate change"

A digital presentation by Professor Alexis Shotwell (Carleton University, Canada)

Alexis Shotwell describes the outline of the talk as follows: “Human-caused climate change is a complex problem that no one can solve alone. I argue that individual purity narratives put the locus of moral and political action in the wrong place – people’s personal actions and views – and predict or produce bad organizing. If we begin from the idea being implicated in complex and distributed harms, the questions becomes, What forms of implication will we take up as points of connection for anchoring our activities? With whom will we become complicit? Whose side are we on? I will trace possibilities for feeling implicated as a ground for building solidarities with futures that do not yet exist. I draw on Elizabeth Minnich’s distinction between intensive and extensive evil, Elizabeth Spelman’s account of repair as a creative form of destroying brokenness, and recent science fiction focusing on climate change. I’ll outline practices of relationality and collectivity that offer moral traction for choosing which side we’re on, recognizing that we are frequently complicit without our own will or intent, but resolving to act anyhow.”

Alexis Shotwell is a professor at Carleton University, on unceded and unsundered Algonquin land. Her academic work addresses impurity, environmental justice, racial formation, disability, unspeakable and unspoken knowledge, sexuality, gender, and political transformation. She is the author of "Knowing Otherwise: Race, Gender, and Implicit Understanding" (Penn State Press, 2011) and "Against Purity: Living Ethically in Compromised Times" (Minnesota University Press, 2016).