

[Public Lecture and Masterclass by Professor Elizabeth Wilson](#)

June 2017

Report

With the support of the Gender Institute and the Research School of Social Sciences we were able to host a visit by Professor Elizabeth Wilson, from the Emory University Department of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies from June 4-9 2017.

Professor Wilson delivered a public lecture on June 5, *Adverse Events - On bad affects and the antidepressant wars*. It was attended by about 40 people and received very positive feedback.

She held a full day master class on June 7 on *New Feminist Materialisms*. The class was attended by 12 ECR and HDR students from the School of Sociology, the School of Philosophy and the School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics. A student from the University of Sydney also attended. The morning session was based on discussion of New Feminist Materialism, including Professor Wilson's recently published book *Gut Feminism*. In the afternoon session each participant presented on their own work. Feedback from participants about this event was very positive, with several HDR students highlighting the way the reading and discussion had contributed to their thinking in their doctoral work. Professor Wilson also had several informal meetings with staff and students to explore collaborative possibilities. She is hoping to return in the near future to further develop these collaborations.

New Feminist Materialisms: A Master Class by Professor Elizabeth Wilson
June 7 2017 10am - 5pm
CASS Meeting Room 2, Beryl Rawson Building

In recent years there has been growing attentiveness to questions of materiality or ontology in feminist/queer theory. This scholarship (perhaps erroneously labelled "new") has been interested in a number of problematics: signification and materiality; the politics of epistemology and ontology; the agency of objects; the politics of the posthuman or inhuman; the cogency of vitalism.

This master class will provide participants with a conceptual framework for reading, engaging, using, and critiquing the so-called "turn to materialism" in feminist and queer theory. In particular, it seems important to think critically about what these theories of materiality can, and cannot, do for feminist and queer inquiry. Special attention will be paid to the claim by Barad that "language has been granted to much power" (801), and to the relation between materiality and language/signification in this new feminist/queer work.

The Alaimo and Hekman reading offers a clear overview of what was at stake, a decade ago, when this turn to materiality began to cohere as an identifiable set of intellectual concerns in feminist theory. The Barad reading is now a widely read and cited article: what theory of language and performativity does Barad promote? How successful is her critique of representationalism and her advocacy for an agential realism? The Schrader and Wilson pieces are examples of how feminist theorists have (in quite different ways) been thinking about materiality.

Readings:

Alaimo, Stacy and Susan Hekman. 2008. Introduction: Emerging models of materiality in feminist theory. In S.

- Alaimo and S. Hekman. Eds. *Material feminisms* (pp. 1–10). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Barad Karen. 2003. Posthumanist performativity: Toward an understanding of how matter comes to matter. *Signs* 28(3): 801–831
- Schrader, Astrid. 2010. Responding to *Pfiesteria piscicida* (the Fish Killer): Phantomatic ontologies, indeterminacy, and responsibility in toxic microbiology. *Social Studies of Science* 40(2): 275–306.
- Wilson, Elizabeth. 2015. Underbelly. In E. Wilson, *Gut Feminism* (pp. 21-44). Durham: Duke University Press.

Schedule

- 10-11.00 Discussion (led by Professor Wilson)
- 11.00-11.15 Morning Tea
- 11.15-12.00 Discussion (led by Professor Wilson)
- 12.00-1.00: Presentations 1 (Davies, Wade, Ihar)
- 1.00-2.00: Lunch
- 2.00-3.00: Presentations 2 (Killen, Mathew, Orr)
- 3.00-3.45: Presentations 3 (Zapasnik, Copland)
- 3.45-4.00 Afternoon Tea
- 4.00-5.00: Presentations 4 and closing comments (Davis, Chouinard)

Presentations

- James Chouinard, School of Sociology, ANU: Vegan anti-dairy campaigns and human/animal relations.
- Simon Copland School of Sociology, ANU: “Let’s talk about sex, baby. How sex was removed from sexuality, and why it should return.”
- Emma Davies, School of Philosophy, ANU: “On Butler’s Grievability.”
- Jenny Davis, School of Sociology, ANU: Technological Affordances.
- Zsuzsanna Ihar, Department of Sociology and Social Policy, University of Sydney: “Injurious Lives: The Bio-Exposure of Refugee and Migrant Bodies within the Australian Meat Slaughtering and Processing Industry.”
- Gemma Killen, School of Sociology, ANU: “Manifesting authenticity: Selfies as queer ephemera.”
- Imogen Mathew, School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics, ANU: “Educating the Reader in Anita Heiss’s Chick Lit.”
- Ashley Orr, School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics, ANU: “Deviant Women: Neo-Victorian Madwomen and Embodied Resistance.”
- Matt Wade, School of Sociology, ANU: “Moral Spectroscopes and Synaptic Ledgers: On trolley problems, fMRI, and reconfiguring the ethical subject.”

Jonathon Zapasnik, School of Literature, Languages and Linguistics, ANU: "Intimate Ordinarity in AIDS Life Writing: Monette and Conigrave."