



From Creationism to Climate Change Denial: An Affective Approach to Science Scepticism

Public lecture Donovan Schaefer (University of Pennsylvania)

THE LECTURE

In crucial political and scientific controversies like contemporary climate debates, many deny well-established scientific findings. So how does such denialism emerge, gain strength, and eventually establish itself as orthodoxy in particular groups? Some argue that denialism comes from a failure to understand science. Others think misinformation spread by industry lobbyists might be to blame. Both these views assume that people are essentially making good decisions with the information that they have, and that more and better information will reduce denialism.

This public lecture takes a different approach, exploring the role that emotion plays in causing and consolidating denialism. Connecting contemporary climate denialism to the Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925, Schaefer develops his claim that rather than simply

being a matter of lack of information, denialism is about how feeling organizes information to produce beliefs that are highly resistant to contradiction.

THE SPEAKER

Schaefer's research focuses on the role of embodiment and emotion in religion and secularisms. His first book, *Religious Affects: Animality, Evolution, and Power* (Duke 2015) challenges the notion that religion is inextricably linked to language and belief, proposing instead that it is primarily driven by affects. His *The Evolution of Affect Theory: The Humanities, the Sciences, and the Study of Power* was published earlier this year by Cambridge University Press. His current project explores the intersection between New Materialisms, science, and secularisms.

This public lecture is presented in partnership with Melbourne University and the ARC Centre of Excellence for the History of Emotions.

DATE AND TIME

Wednesday 14 August,
6.00pm – 7.30pm

LOCATION

Philippa Brazill Lecture
Theatre, Daniel Mannix
building, ACU Melbourne
9 – 18 Brunswick St, Fitzroy

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