The climate predicament is demanding that higher education radically change. If we are in a womb, not a tomb, as the poet Valarie Kaur stated in a speech in 2016, how are educators to help midwife what’s to come?

It is no longer morally or strategically appropriate to berate students with dire forecasts and reports of the sixth great extinction, to teach case studies of slow violence and ecological destruction, or present problems so deep and entrenched that solutions appear elusive. With students coming into the classroom already aware of how bad things are, the old model of scaring them into caring is no longer working.

Even worse, the doom and gloom model is backfiring, as shown by a growing body of scholarship on the role of emotions in climate action. In *Living in Denial*, Kari Norgaard demonstrates that the “information deficit” assumption of most environmental messages, which maintains that people and systems will change when enough climate facts are heard, is a myth. Instead, apathy is the most likely result of these doom-focused change messages, as climate psychologists like Renee Lertzman have demonstrated. Even if pro-social, pro-environmental, and activist behavior are the initial responses to the fear and urgency peddled in most climate messages, the longer-term costs (to the planet and to our students) of climate anxiety are well documented. Indeed, Haltinner and Sarachandra have shown that skepticism is actually a reasonable way to cope with being overwhelmed by such messages. Environmental melancholia, eco-phobia, degradation desensitization, and other emotion-focused terms are emerging to explain how the apocalyptic approach to climate messaging simply doesn’t work. If psychologists and climate communication experts know that piling on the doom makes us feel powerless, despairing, skeptical, and apathetic, why are so many of us still teaching this way?
One fundamental premise of this collection arises from the insight that many educators have come to: emotions shape not only students’ capacity for learning, but also their ability to respond meaningfully and effectively to what they’re learning. Most environmental educators want students to feel inspired to engage in sustained, lifelong action in service of climate justice, environmental protection, and both personal and societal healing. And most educators are aware that we are at a turning point in education, requiring enhanced skills to respond to these times. But few are aware of what psychologists, affect theorists, narrative experts, and students of most wisdom traditions and social movements all know—that the key to these outcomes is not logic, information, data, or facts, but (as much, and relatedly) emotion. This book seeks to bring the most up-to-date research on climate emotions to bear on college-level pedagogy.

Further, learning how to best teach “difficult knowledge” has long been necessary in fields such as gender, sexuality, and women’s studies, critical race theory, ethnic studies, Native American and Indigenous studies, history, social work, child development, and other fields where trauma and violence characterize the central human experience, both in the content and for the students in the room. Learning trauma-informed pedagogy to facilitate healing conversations with students is essential for educators in these fields.

Yet climate educators have mostly viewed their subject matter as technological, ecological, physical, atmospheric, or at best, only distantly related to human systems, much less to trauma, injustice, and oppression. This approach reflects the relative insulation of most faculty and institutions of industrialized nations from the worst effects of climate change. The pedagogy of climate studies has primarily emerged from a Western, Eurocentric, positivist epistemology, often failing to engage in pedagogies of power and injustice—much less offering support to traumatized students.

As climate education has become enshrined as a topic of the sciences, some experts exert their privilege in part by remaining oblivious to the ways climate change is changing higher education, how student demographics are shifting, and the fact that climate change is directly and indirectly harming students and their communities. Yet it is no longer effective or ethical to teach climate topics without some training in trauma-informed pedagogy and without an analysis of white supremacy, heteronormative patriarchy, and Indigenous epistemology—lenses which are the domain of fields typically not in the sciences. In this collection, we aim to move climate pedagogy in these directions, bringing other frameworks to bear, in addition to the insights of psychology, on our awareness of how climate information works on and through students.

Another argument for centering emotions in climate pedagogy is that educators themselves are exhausted, overwhelmed, and often wrestling with climate emotions like despair, anger, apathy, and hopelessness. The coronavirus pandemic has made matters worse. It revealed in stark relief that the working conditions of educators, including at the college level, are precarious and exploited. This was worse for female faculty, and more so for female faculty of color, faculty with disabilities, and any faculty who were also relied upon for caregiving of children or elders. The absence of a social safety net, the conditions for social
reproduction, and access to technology and medical support profoundly affected educators and their students, turning spaces of education into spaces of survival where basic needs for food, shelter, and medicine took precedence over academic learning, much less content acquisition, career advancement, and skill development. Many environmental studies courses already highlight the larger failures of capitalist society, but the pandemic further forced this analysis to the fore. More than ever, students are ready to imagine, desire, and build a different world. They don’t want to “go back to normal,” and they often see how “normal” was already bad for people and the environment. Abolition, mutual aid, intentional communities, new definitions of kinship, public banking, and taking governance, education, and infrastructure into their own hands—these are the skills students desire, since they have lost faith that existing systems will fix what ails us.

So what is the role of the climate educator in this context? How, in good faith, can we train students for careers in a world where the current economic system is unraveling? We are teaching in an existentially pivotal moment. What does pedagogy for a just transition look like? What is the task of higher education in what the famous eco-Buddhist social activist Joanna Macy calls “the Great Turning”? As we see in ongoing global youth activism, and as many of us feel in our classrooms daily, students barely have the patience to go through the motions of getting an education as a means to an individualist, career-oriented end. They are waking up to the fact that their time on this planet is limited, and that what they—and we—do now will significantly shape the future of life for all beings on this planet. Students want something different from their education than what their professors studied. How will we as educators—often exhausted, burned out, and despairing, too—rise to this moment?

**CENTERING JUSTICE IN CLIMATE EDUCATION: IT GETS EMOTIONAL**

The climate movement has only recently started to learn from and integrate insights from transnational environmental justice movements. For the most part, climate educators have been teaching in the same way—from a dominant, positivist, settler-colonial set of assumptions about how social change works. With political changes bringing together the climate and justice movements, a powerful new moment—often dubbed *climate justice*—is shaping a whole generation. Social movements such as Idle No More, Standing Rock, and Black Lives Matter all demonstrate that the climate movement is pivoting toward a justice orientation. In this historical context, many of our college-aged students, who are coming to consciousness and coming of age, are bringing this lens to our classes. Moreover, in many higher-ed contexts, the “traditional” student is changing. What does this mean for intergenerational conversation, and how can we stage it effectively in our classrooms?

Out of these shifting forces, the climate movement—and sometimes education—is finally focusing on the disproportionate costs and benefits of climate change: the ways that disposability, racism, patriarchy, and extraction are at the root of both social injustice and environmental degradation. It is suspicious of climate policy that doesn’t also address
inequality. Following the work of thinkers like Julie Sze and Lindsay Dhillon, David Pellow, Rob Nixon, Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò, adrienne maree brown, and Mary Annaise Heglar, for example, the climate justice movement connects the *ability to breathe* to both the spectacular violence of police brutality and the less visible, long-term pollution of living in neighborhoods targeted for toxic siting. These systems-level analyses locating the root of the problem not in emissions but in injustice have become mainstream. Climate *justice*, not just the climate movement, has arrived.

Yet many educators struggle to teach from this insight, to meet students where they are. Some of the challenges educators report in their efforts to bring climate justice to the classroom are:

**Challenge 1: Cancel culture and the politicization of climate justice.** In our classes, the culture wars do play out and we, as well as our students from all political parties and backgrounds, and the institution of higher education itself, are often getting “canceled.” Many conservative students feel their very identities are under attack when the word “justice” is added to conversations about climate change (climate topics seem “safer” than conversations about race). Meanwhile, students coming to climate change with a robust justice lens express frustration and harm by repeatedly hearing climate and the environment uncritically discussed in privileged ways. Without skill, educators risk reinforcing the same dynamic of the culture wars at large.

Identity politics have everything to do with climate emotions and they will dictate where we go from here. This signals the shift from climate *change* as a central focus to climate *justice* and is a necessary part of teaching climate change in this moment. Student positionality—background, race, assumptions about nature and science, their relative position to power, etc.—all shape how they will respond to both the projects of climate change and social justice. They also shape which emotions are available to different students, and how different students will feel in relationship to different themes. These conversations are not “academic” nor are they just about “identity politics” as has been co-opted by dominant politics; they touch students’ intimate lives. We shouldn’t want it any other way—students learn best when they feel “relevance” between the topic and their lives, and when they have an emotional connection to the material they’re studying.

An older problem with teaching climate was to make it relevant, touchable, imminent, because it was framed in dominant climate spaces as distant, abstract, and uncertain; this is no longer the case—a majority of students feel climate change is relevant to their lives right now. This is both a cause for concern (climate change is happening to us, *now*) and celebration (such intimacy engages students in the subject much more readily). Thus, pedagogies that take identity as their primary concern (in fields such as ethnic studies, queer studies, disability studies, gender/sexuality studies) have much to teach climate educators. Climate concern is emotionally potent not just for scientific reasons (reports from the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, etc.); it is also emotional because it is complexly overlaid with politics, identity, power, race, gender, geography, privilege, and proximity to climate effects, for example.
Moreover, we contend, students’ emotional assumptions about identity, climate, and power ought to be a subject of analysis to begin with. These differences otherwise are likely to involve significant conflict in the climate classroom, which will in turn affect students’ emotional capacity to engage in the content. How can climate justice educators create conditions in their classrooms for these difficult conversations? How can these conversations become the generative force that helps students build new worlds? How can we harness our classes as labs for precisely the social healing that is required to move where we need to on climate justice, at the scales of both the interpersonal and the political?

It is naive for educators to assume that all students come into their classrooms with neutral or no emotional connection to any of these issues, and that they will all develop them together, uniformly, over the course of the class, with the educator directing this arc. Emotions, trauma, and violent communication patterns are absorbed from the culture we all marinate in, and are in the classroom before we even sit down to pen a syllabus.

The challenge for educators is this: How can we create the conditions in the classroom for these conversations to be productive, and not just repeat the culture wars we see everywhere in mainstream media and that threaten to undermine the very democratic system we need to leverage to mitigate climate change? Might climate justice educators need training in nonviolent communication, deliberative dialogue, trauma-informed pedagogy, and compassionate facilitation?

**Challenge 2: Climate and justice sometimes don’t get along.** It’s easy to teach case studies where the solutions to climate change are the solutions to social justice as well. It’s easy to show that climate change is a matter of social justice. We can see the ways climate change is a poverty-multiplier everywhere—in our medical systems, in extending colonial-capitalist extraction, in geographical marginalization . . . the list goes on. But what about when the frames and solutions of climate and justice don’t agree with each other? What if a particular climate mitigation strategy (such as carbon taxes or wind farms) disproportionately impacts an already marginalized community? Or if a major triumph for social justice comes at the expense of faster climate mitigation? We often hear students say “we can’t have social justice if we don’t have a planet” or claim they’re happy to dispense with democracy and inclusion if it means we can move faster, more unilaterally, and even violently in favor of climate protection.

On the other hand, some students “choose” social justice over climate, because they worry their limited resources for mobilization will be diluted if “shared” with the climate cause. And, tired of being sidelined in the dominant political discourse for white, privileged environmental causes, they understandably hesitate to build coalitions or join mainstream environmental spaces. Even with all of the systems-thinking, intersectional environmental analyses that many students learn before they get to college, a battle of single-issue politics often plays out in the classroom, and it can get heavy, heated, and hurtful.

Are we prepared to navigate the messiness of some students thinking that justice can be sidestepped to do what they think is needed to mitigate climate, or vice versa? How do we
facilitate those conversations? Can we bind together the means and the ends for our students, that is, are we prepared to teach climate change as rooted in inequality, and are we prepared to do the slow work of cultivating relationships and equitable processes required to address inequality on the way to addressing climate change? Solidarity is aspirational and easy to theorize, but we can feel its challenges play out in our classes and institutions. For climate education to become climate justice education, educators will need to move beyond the politics of representation and integrate pedagogies much more familiar to those who center justice. Among climate educators trained in colonial systems of education, this requires humility and collaboration, which arguably are also the core of our climate justice solutions.

**Challenge 3: The content may be triggering.** We no longer can teach about climate change as if it were an abstraction, distant in time or space. The closer our students are to the frontlines of environmental injustice, the more climate change is affecting them—and there is nowhere that climate change hasn’t touched. Do we know what to do when these climate traumas are triggered in our classrooms? While it has never been considered required training in climate classes to teach what is termed by pedagogy experts as “difficult knowledge,” that is changing. The relative privilege of the climate movement and climate classrooms is crumbling, and therefore, we contend, climate educators must become trauma-informed.

**Challenge 4: Climate content is often taught as depressing and debilitating.** Doom and gloom in general make people shut down, as discussed above. Moreover, weaving a story for students in which the apocalypse is inevitable creates a self-fulfilling prophecy where the “pseudo inefficacy effect” predisposes students to give up rather than try to fix this flurry of problems. Andrew Bryant describes this phenomenon of doomism and the pseudo-inefficacy effect in his essay in this collection:

When we experience fears or anxieties, or see something in the world that needs changing, a common impulse is to jump into a new activity, hoping to ease our difficult emotions by trying to make a difference. If we haven’t processed our underlying emotions, we often choose actions that are not in alignment with our strengths, capacities, and resources, and we can end up feeling disillusioned, deficient, or burned out. In other cases, we have trouble identifying any action that feels worthwhile. Nothing seems like enough, so we throw up our hands, feeling despondent or deficient. We blame ourselves, or decide that no action is worth doing because it won’t be enough.

If we want students to do their part in a collective effort to reduce harm in the world, we have to help them live in a story where that is a possible, likely, and desirable outcome. We also could examine the doom-and-gloom narrative from a justice lens: For whom is that nar-
rative compelling and persuasive? How does privilege shape the stories we live in? In what ways is despair a luxury or hope a survival strategy?

Challenge 5: Educators are burned out and not trained as therapists. One of the primary push-backs we hear from educators is that they don’t want to become therapists. As Jessica Pratt notes in her essay in this collection, “science faculty, including me, are not trained to confront psychological distress among their students, let alone support them through it.” Most educators are not trauma experts, and they do not want to do harm to students by inviting emotions into the classroom.

While we are not suggesting that all educators must take care of their students’ emotional lives (and this is of particular relevance to gendered and racial analyses of cultural taxation and emotional labor for females, and female faculty, of color), our hope is to convince skeptics that students are already bringing their emotional lives into college, and that it may in fact be more ethical, effective, and generative for educators themselves, too, to collectively address students’ (and to some extent, our own) emotional experiences in the classroom in more explicit ways, so that these responses aren’t stigmatized, shamed, shunted, or suppressed. In this latter case, educators are more likely to be asked for their time and energy outside of the classroom to support students anyway, often in individualized ways that just reiterate the atomism at the root of both our climate and mental health crises. At a minimum, as most contemporary pedagogical research shows, we should pay attention to emotions in our classrooms because emotions are essential to learning, knowledge retention, and decision-making.

We offer the possibility that gaining tools for centering emotions in the classroom supports both students and educators, especially for those who have long been expected to serve as emotional supports to an increasingly despairing population. In treating students as whole people, enabling them to find support in each other (not just from their instructors) as an explicit part of our work during class time, and leveraging current psychological research, we can meaningfully transform our classrooms to respond to this moment.

At the very least, as Ashley Reis reflects in this collection, even if she herself cannot (and should not) become an overnight therapist, she is “equipped to establish an accessible and inclusive classroom, wherein students feel secure and valued to the extent that they are prepared to face and interrogate the emotions that will inevitably arise as we navigate the affective landscape of ecological degradation and social injustice in the age of climate disruption.”

We see these as the central challenges and opportunities for integrating emotions, climate, and justice in higher education. To summarize, this project takes up the following questions, even if our collection itself is only an initial response:

- How can climate justice educators create conditions in the classroom for these conversations to be productive, and not just repeat the culture wars we see everywhere in mainstream media these days?
• Are we prepared to do the slow work of cultivating relationships and equitable processes required to address inequality on the way to (and as fundamental to) addressing climate change?

• What would it take to help climate educators become trauma-informed?

• How can educators help students imagine thriving in a climate-changed world? How can we help students desire, rather than fear, their future?

• How can educators do this work without doing further harm to themselves or to others? Or even better, how might this work enhance educators’ well-being, and increase planetary flourishing?

**BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT**

While this collection hardly offers a comprehensive or definitive toolkit for all of climate education, it points in some useful directions and gives a flavor of how different educators are reinventing their climate pedagogy for these times. This is a moving field, with new research and new pedagogical approaches pushing the edges at every turn.

In 2020 we hosted a three-day online workshop supported by the Rachel Carson Center in Munich on the topic that was to evolve into this book, “An Existential Toolkit for Climate Justice Educators.” Many participants hailed from our networks in the environmental humanities and the fields of climate emotions and psychology. That gathering ultimately launched a website and a two-year-long discussion series with educators from at least nine different countries.

As the network expanded in the years that followed, we learned that participants were keenly interested in a book project that curated existential tools for the climate classroom. The resulting book represents a snapshot of the kinds of experiments in teaching that people in our network have been exploring. It reflects conversations that emerged between clinical practitioners and climate educators. And instead of putting this collection forward as a “canon” of best practices, our intention is to draw attention to the necessity of bringing these themes of climate, emotion, and justice together in the classroom and elsewhere.

There is so much work happening at the interface of human healing, climate injustice, and social movements, and that work is increasingly shaping climate education. The social movement backdrop of our own engagement with these ideas is Joanna Macy’s the Work That Reconnects, adrienne maree brown’s *Emergent Strategy*, and ideas of pleasure activism, Movement Generation, Project Drawdown, and the Just Transition, the pedagogical tools from the All We Can Save project, the Practical Handbook for Climate Educators and Community (titled “Climate Doom to Messy Hope: Climate Healing and Resilience”) published by Meghan Wise for the University of British Columbia’s Climate Hub, the teaching tools of Movement Generation, and, as ever, the liberatory pedagogy of figures such as Paulo Freire and bell hooks. In the realm of climate pedagogy scholarship, we are thinking in relationship with Jo Hamilton’s “emotional methodologies,” Panu Pihkala’s “taxonomy of ecological
emotions,” and their implications for environmental education, such as Audrey Bryan’s “dif-

ficult knowledge” and Daniel Suarez’s ongoing multimodal project, “A Clear and Present
Pedagogy.” Others we have learned about in this work are Education Ecologies Collective,
the Bard College’s World-Wide Teach-in for Climate Justice Education, and the mindfulness
approach to climate justice pedagogy emerging from the Garrison Institute and Mind & Life
Institute. And there is certainly more, as the field of climate pedagogy is evolving faster than
the time it takes to produce a book.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK AND HOW TO USE IT

In our call for submissions, we encouraged all kinds of tools—short ones, long ones, easy
ones, difficult ones, quick ones, deep ones. We wanted to include tools that could be used in
non-higher educational settings, and ones that could be used across disciplines. We wanted
the collection to be like a cookbook: a variety of options for people looking for different
things, to inspire the chef when they’re feeling unmotivated, or to help them dip their toes
in the water of a new recipe. We also wanted to hear the voices of students and educators who
are bringing emotions into their climate work.

We got a wide range of tools and voices from a variety of spaces. We organized the book
primarily by theme, and within each theme, you will find an assortment of types of pieces—
longer theoretical essays, shorter assignments, quick modules, and testimonies.

Part One offers an introduction to “Getting Started with Emotions in the Climate
Classroom.” It includes two essays by mental health providers, other pieces demonstrating
why climate emotions matter in higher education, and a few assignments for those
looking to dip their toes into this realm, which we call “sample assignments for getting
started.”

Part Two, “Justice as Affective Pedagogy,” collates pieces that focus on how we teach as
itself a practice of justice and liberation. For Ashley Reis, inclusion and healing can happen at
the level of what may otherwise seem to be the most prosaic domains of our teaching: syllabus
policies. Content gets all the attention, but the policies communicate as much or more. The
theoretical essays and assignments in this section put environmental justice at the center of
their arguments, explore what it would mean to decolonize climate education, and center par-
ticipatory action research as a justice-based methodology. Michelle Garvey’s piece, which
offers a checklist for such justice-centered methods, explains that such methods are decolo-
nial to the extent that they are “relevant to stakeholders on the frontlines of climate injustice;
inclusive of community ways of knowing, including cultural and spiritual considerations; par-
ticipatory at every stage of development; transparent about researcher bias; accountable to the
community within which knowledge is acquired; and inclusive of more-than-human needs.”

Part Three, “Embodied Pedagogies,” challenges the dominant Western European educa-
tion model that divides mind from body and asks that students bring only the former into
our work together. Similarly, educators tend to devalue students’ embodied knowledge
and rarely if ever consider what an overemphasis on the cerebral teaches students about the
corporeal wisdom, traumas, and knowledges they already bring or might need to cultivate for the turbulence we are living through. How can we begin to bring the body, and the robust scholarship on embodied knowledge, into our teaching? Might an embodied approach to the climate crisis also be a more justice-oriented one? How can we balance intelligences of heart, body, and mind?

Part Four explores “Futurity, Narrative, and the Imagination,” because the call for submissions on emotions and climate justice resulted in many contributions focused on the emotion of hope and its temporal partner—the future. If it is true, following Fredric Jameson and others, that it is easier for most people to imagine the end of the world than it is for them to imagine a post-capitalist or post-fossil fuel society, then the lack of imagination about what we desire surely will become a self-fulfilling prophecy. The contributions in this section support educators who want to facilitate students’ radical imagination for a just transition toward climate justice. For April Anson, for example, cultivating a radical imagination is a “practice” that has to be taught. Only the fossil fuel industry benefits from all of us living in a story of apocalypse,11 and so cultivating muscles of storytelling that move us in other directions is a kind of resistance.

Part Five, “Unsettling Pedagogies: Discomfort and Difficult Knowledge,” intervenes in the conversation about the classroom as a “safe” space and the more justice-oriented move to consider classrooms as “unsettling.” This is a play on words that illustrates how necessary discomfort is for the work of racial justice and also brings the often “invisible” power of settler-colonial, white supremacist privilege into the light. What is the role of emotional discomfort in the classroom, and how might it be harnessed for climate justice? When is discomfort generative, and when is it triggering? How do we navigate these various “stretch zones” for different students?

Part Six, “Joy and Resilience as Resistance,” complicates the assumption that all climate education and all climate emotions are dreadful, negative, and unpleasant. On the contrary, as contributions in this section show, the work of climate education often involves more pleasant emotions like joy and humor. The neuroscience of resilience shows that our brains are pleasure-seeking machines, and so we will keep coming back when the work is pleasurable on some level. And justice movements inform this move toward what adrienne maree brown calls “pleasure activism” as well; fiercely protecting joy and vitality has long been understood as a methodology of resistance, while uncritical despair can serve as complicity in the status quo.

Casey Meehan’s essay poses the question this way: “Where in our work and teaching do we build space for surprise, humor, celebration, laughter, and the time to connect with each other? This isn’t time wasted: it is a recognition that we must nourish our whole selves when engaging with the emotionally fraught topics we teach.” In this sense, joy and pleasure are strategies for keeping engaged and resilient, and forms of resistance in themselves. Social movements and wisdom traditions show that the emotions of social change are seemingly paradoxical—we feel anger because we feel love, and vice versa, and we feel joy because we feel grief, and vice versa.

The emotions of climate justice education are similar: How can we create space for “both/and” in our classrooms? How can we more explicitly leverage the pleasures of partici-
pating in collective liberation for climate justice, making it both a pedagogy in our classes and a practice in our lives?

Part Seven, “Community, Collaboration, and Kinship,” theorizes that the foundation of climate justice is solidarity and training in skills for collectivity and collaboration, and offers case studies of what happens when several educators prioritize community over content in (and outside) their classrooms. If we are going to get to agreement on climate justice within democratic societies, it will happen at the level of interpersonal relationships, one conversation and one bridge built at a time. Following two of adrienne maree brown’s principles of emergent strategy, “less critical mass, more critical connection” and “move at the speed of trust,” this section experiments with skill-building around community. Spaces of education must follow what are referred to in activist circles as “movement spaces.” This ought to be a no-brainer, yet higher education is designed to prioritize knowledge acquisition, content delivery, and career-building at the individual level, often at the expense of interdependence and relationality. Care-giving, mutual aid, humility, and nonviolent communication have typically been the domain of movement politics, not pedagogy. Yet, as Magdalena Mączyńska writes in her essay in Part Three, quoting from Cavanagh’s Spark of Learning, “Community and affective engagement are—as great educators have always understood, and the neuroscience of learning confirms—fundamental to successful learning.”

Finally, our last section is about the prickly issue of “career building” in the apocalypse: “These Skills Are Needed in the World.” Yes, as the Department of Labor can tell you, there will be many careers in sustainability and climate over the next few decades. And in a historical moment where neoliberalism has turned higher education into a commodity rather than a social good, it is now arguably the job of higher education to help students ensure that they are trained for those vocations.

And yet, much of what environmental studies teaches is that the existing, dominant systems of governance and economics are not working, and that graduates of this area of study will be part of the movement to dismantle those systems and build better ones. Thus, if “we are in a womb, not a tomb,” what does that mean for vocationalizing this content? Can we in good conscience train students to get jobs in a dying system? The emperor has no clothes. Should we still be teaching as if it were otherwise, with our heads in the sand, modeling our own form of denial and possessive investment in the status quo? What would it look like to train students for jobs in a world that is being born but not yet here?

Although, admittedly, the pieces in this section do not adequately answer these pressing lines of inquiry, we want to raise such concerns in the introduction, and note that more discussion is worth having, if not in this book, then in all of the spaces where educators are working with students to build the world they desire.

We have sought to organize contributions according to the larger argument we are advancing that underlies the book’s purpose—that a new pedagogy is needed for climate justice, and that these themes are some of the central ways to invite that new pedagogy into being.
INTRODUCTION

However, readers may come to this book with other aims, and so we offer alternative groupings for readers looking for different categories, as well as for those who might like to conceive of the contributions in a more expansive organization. The appendix at the back of the book sorts chapters by the following themes, if you want to explore this book through other lenses:

- **Discipline-specific** (for readers looking to filter for authors or assignments that are in a particular discipline)
- Pieces that are about **students leading** the direction of the course/material (for readers looking to center student problem-solving, wisdom, or existing assets as a kind of climate justice pedagogy)
- **Experiential** (for readers looking to integrate field, embodied, or open-ended pedagogies)
- **Type of text** used in the assignment (for readers looking to integrate a particular genre or type of text, such as poetry, cli-fi, games, news media, etc.)
- **Type of affect** (for readers looking to focus on a particular emotion)

Our intention for including these alternative groupings is to make the book accessible to a wide variety of readers and to facilitate their diverse uses of these tools. Like a cookbook, we seek in this organization to invite creativity and to try to avoid being dogmatic about how to use them. Many of the chapters could go in other categories, and there may even be other, more useful groupings for users we haven’t yet imagined. In this sense, there is some level of arbitrariness and assumptions we are making about you, dear reader, and we appreciate your grace in allowing us to guide you through the materials in the (admittedly limited) ways our own minds have organized them.

NOTES

2. See, for example, Ogunbode et al.’s study of climate anxiety in 32 countries, which concluded that fear and anxiety were associated with action, but inversely with wellbeing and longer-term engagement.
3. Degradation desensitization is defined as the loss of sensitivity to difficulties, due to consistent exposure to that stimulus. See Alhadeff, “Numb to the World.”
4. See, for example, Cavanagh’s *Spark of Learning*.
5. A review of scholarship on pedagogy for uncertain times is beyond the scope of this introduction, but a few examples are hooks’s *Teaching to Transgress* and *Teaching Community*, Maniates’s “Teaching for Turbulence,” and Macrine’s *Critical Pedagogy in Uncertain Times*. Many syllabi have been created to support educators integrating recent historical events in their classes, from Standing Rock to Black Lives Matter to the COVID pandemic. Similar efforts have been made around the climate crisis.
6. The idea of difficult knowledge in pedagogy we refer to here comes from Britzman’s *Lost Subjects, Contested Objects*.
7. See Ray, “Who Feels Climate Anxiety?”
8. This is the subject of Táíwò’s book *Elite Capture*, which argues that an effective identity politics can in fact be deeply coalitional and organize across differences toward shared interests, such as climate justice (which he later takes up in *Reconsidering Reparations*). We use “identity politics” here in the same way he advances it, not as it has been captured by political parties to divide rather than forge those possible coalitions.

9. See, for example, Duncan-Andrade’s “Note to Educators.”

10. See, for example, Hickman et al.’s 2021 report, “Climate Anxiety in Children and Young People.”

11. See Nosak’s research on the legal strategy of the fossil fuel industry, as summarized in Britt Wray’s newsletter *Gen Dread*.


REFERENCES


