

CFP: Enclosing the Commons: Resistance and Rebellion in Late Medieval and Early Modern England – Oecologies @ ASLE/AESS 2023

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Call for Papers

Date:

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Location:

Oregon, United States

Subject Fields:

Animal Studies, Early Modern History and Period Studies, Environmental History / Studies, Literature, Law and Legal History

Enclosing the Commons: Resistance and Rebellion in Late Medieval and Early Modern England

Call for Papers - Sponsored by the Oecologies Research Group

Between 1066 and the nineteenth century, the practice of enclosure transformed the economy and ecology of England, as lands traditionally held in common were, through a variety of processes both formal and informal, transformed into private property. Implicated in the development of capitalism and the Agricultural Revolution, the enclosure movement has had a profound influence on how land use is conceptualized and practiced in the modern world.

Spurred in part by the wool trade, the process of enclosure intensified between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries, engendering significant resistance as it transformed the cultural and material landscape. The literature of this period was shaped by the practice of enclosure, from Thomas More's famous account of human-devouring sheep in *Utopia* (1516) to Shakespeare's depiction of Jack Cade's rebellion in *Henry VI, Part 2* (ca. 1591) to the relentlessly ironic pastoral poetry of Andrew Marvell, with its oblique commentary on the Levellers and Diggers. Enclosure's contested status during this period is also recorded in a substantial body of political and agrarian writing including such works as Arthur Standish's *The Commons Complaint* (1611), John Norden's *The Surveyor's Dialogue* (1618), and Gerrard Winstanley's *The True Levellers Standard Advanced* (1649). As the textual

record makes clear, late medieval and early modern enclosure prompted tension, ambivalence, resistance, and rebellion even as it came, in subsequent centuries, to enjoy hegemonic status as a paradigm for modern land use.

For this ASLE/AESS panel, the Oecologies Research Cluster invites papers that explore the ecopolitical dimensions of resistance to the enclosure movement between the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries. Panelists might consider:

- how past forms of resistance to enclosure can inform present attempts to reclaim the commons;
- the role of nonhuman actors (plants, animals, soil, rivers, rocks, microbes, etc.) in bolstering and resisting the enclosure movement (e.g., what was the botanical and lithic makeup of hedges?);
- the roles of gender, sexuality, class, race, and religion in the enclosure movement;
- the relationship between enclosure and biodiversity;
- enclosure as metaphor as well as material practice;
- alternative futures and ecopolitical paradigms (anarchy, agrarian communism, etc.) imagined by resistance movements such as the Levellers and the Diggers;
- how enclosure was experienced from a nonhuman perspective;
- the relationship between enclosure and literary form (pastoral romance, the seventeenth-century country house poem, the history play, the georgic, etc.);
- how the English enclosure movement illuminates other analogous cultural and historical events.

We welcome global, regional, and local approaches to the medieval and early modern periods, and we encourage proposals by BIPOC scholars, international scholars, and scholars at all stages of their careers.

Please send abstracts of 250 words and a short bio by December 9, 2022 by email to both:

- pcremien@lcsc.edu, Peter Remien, Lewis-Clark State College, Oecologies Co-Director
- snjacks@mail.ubc.ca, Sarah Nelle Jackson, University of British Columbia, Oecologies Advisory Council Member

Please note that this panel will be entirely in-person without the option for virtual or hybrid conference talks.

For more information regarding the Oecologies Research Cluster and its affiliated programming, see <https://oecologies.com>.

Contact Info:

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