

## Candidate Statements for 2017 ASLE Election

### President

Members may vote for the solo candidate, or the co-candidates, or abstain. Members are not able to choose only one of the co-candidates separately as they are running as a unit.

### Jeffrey Cohen (George Washington University) and Stacy Alaimo (University of Texas at Austin)

#### STATEMENT FROM JEFFREY COHEN

I am honored to run for co-president. Over the years no professional organization has meant as much to me as ASLE. Its community has long been a welcoming home, and I am eager to serve the membership, intensify our strengths, and work to ensure a vibrant future. In these times of ecological peril, I look forward to increasing the visibility of its activism as well as our ability to work in tandem with other like-minded organizations to effect social change. I have enthusiastically participated in the ASLE Mentoring Program and am especially dedicated to ensuring that emerging writers, authors and theorists are adequately supported. With Stacy Alaimo, Stephanie LeMenager and Sharon O'Dair I am a founding member of the MLA "Ecocriticism and Environmental Humanities Forum". I am committed to collaboration and believe that ASLE offers a powerful structure for scholars and artists to work across fields and disciplines. My scholarship includes a trilogy of edited collections (two co-edited with Lowell Duckert) that gather more than 50 writers thinking about the future of the environmental humanities, and attempt to bring writers together across time periods as well as disciplinary training: *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory Beyond Green*; *Elemental Ecocriticism: Thinking with Earth, Air, Water, and Fire* (2015); and *Veer Ecology: A Companion for Environmental Thinking* (2017). With Stephanie LeMenager I co-edited a special issue of PMLA on "Assembling the Ecological Digital Humanities" (2016). None of this work would have been possible without the inspiration of ASLE conferences (where much of it began) and its congenial community of scholars, writers, artists and thinkers. With planetary scientist Lindy Elkins-Tanton, I wrote a book on *Earth* (2017) for a general audience. With Julian Yates, I am currently finishing a book on the myth of Noah's Flood and climate change. Finally, my book *Stone: An Ecology of the Inhuman* (2015) was awarded the René Wellek Prize for best book in comparative literature this year.

#### STATEMENT FROM STACY ALAIMO

I am honored to run for co-President of ASLE. The nomination provides the opportunity to give back to an organization that has long been such a vital intellectual community for me. There are few scholarly organizations with such a strong sense of community, comradery, mentorship, and shared ethical and political orientations. I became a member of ASLE soon after the organization was formed, participating in listserv discussions in the early 1990s, while writing my dissertation on topics that would become "ecocriticism," "ecocultural studies," and "the environmental humanities." I've served as the ASLE Liaison to the SLSA (the Society for Literature Science, and the Arts) from 2004-2009, organizing panels at both of their conferences to promote more cross-fertilization between environmental studies and science studies. I have also served on the Book Awards Committee and as an official Graduate Student Mentor from 2004-2008. It has been exciting to see the organization grow and the field flourish. With Jeffrey J. Cohen, Stephanie LeMenager and Sharon O'Dair I served as a founding member of the MLA "Ecocriticism and Environmental Humanities Forum," and as its first chair. At the University of Texas at Arlington, I served as the co-chair for the President's Sustainability Committee--working on everything from food services to landscaping to academic programs. I also established (with two colleagues) a

cross-disciplinary minor in Environmental and Sustainability Studies, which I then directed for five years. My own scholarship includes about 45 scholarly essays, as well as the books *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space* (2000); *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (2010), which won the ASLE book award for ecocriticism; and *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (2016).

### **SHARED VISION**

Among the issues we would like to work on as co-presidents: how to ensure that at time of dwindling institutional support our membership can still access ASLE conferences, events and resources; fostering more intense collaboration between ASLE's humanists and natural scientists; finding new ways for our artistic and scholarly branches create things together; ensuring that the work of our membership finds as wide a public as possible (because what we do matters); working with institutions to ensure that a diverse cohort of emerging scholars and artists is being cultivated so that the future of the field will be a more heterogeneous one; ensuring that the biennial conference is site-specific, meaning memorably and tangibly part of the place in which it is held. We share a strong ethical and political commitment to environmentalism, environmental justice, and social justice. Even as the environmental humanities are flourishing nationally and internationally across fields and disciplines, it is important to support ASLE as a vibrant and distinctive organization that has been invaluable for the development of environmental and environmental justice scholarship, practice, and activism.

### **Greta Gaard (University of Wisconsin-River Falls)**

Over the years I've watched those who served as ASLE Presidents and conference organizers, admiring their level-headed dedication, their expansive and interdisciplinary vision. ASLE contributes so much to its members and to the Environmental Humanities, so this opportunity to reciprocate is a pleasure.

If chosen to serve, I would build on this strong foundation of leadership that combines listening and vision, advancing transdisciplinarity and seeking more avenues for ecocritical employments. To start, I would continue the ongoing work of advancing liaison relations with organizations in the environmental humanities, arts and sciences, bringing my background in critical ecofeminism to ensure that diversity issues of race, gender, species, sexuality, nation and ability persist in ASLE's considerations around publications, conferences and event planning. We have more work to do in collaboration with fields like ecomusicology, climate justice arts, narrative and street theater activism. Second, I would turn attention to the material aspects of our field as it affects graduate students: what can ASLE do to help launch these young scholars into academe or other intellectual, creative, and activist positions where they can put their ecocritical skills to use? Third, I'd explore ways that ASLE might advance communication channels with merit equaling the scholarly book publication, channels that more immediately address diverse interdisciplinary and popular publics, linking ecocritical perspectives with local, regional, or international climate concerns. How might ASLE make these popular communication channels more academically prestigious, so that younger ecocritics will share their ideas through these channels, assured that their work will have academic worth when they enter the job market, or apply for promotion and tenure? Finally, what connections can be developed between ASLE and the visionary movements of climate justice—not only climate change arts, music, and theater, but also renewable energy and transition town movements?

From the 1995 founding conference to the present, my years with ASLE include launching the Diversity Caucus at the Kalamazoo conference in 1999, serving on the Editorial Board for *ISLE* since 1995, serving on the Executive Council (2010-2012), and organizing the Pre-Conference Workshops in 2011 and 2013.

I've presented papers or chaired panels at every conference except the year that coincided with my daughter's birth. Thanks to ASLE, I have been invited to teach in Taiwan, and to address ecocritical conferences around the world.

My scholarship includes six books and many essays exploring feminist ecocriticism, ecofeminism, climate and environmental justice, ecopedagogy, queer ecologies and multispecies ethics. As Professor of English and founding Coordinator of the Sustainable Justice Minor at University of Wisconsin-River Falls, I lead faculty development workshops and foster campus conversations across the environmental humanities and sciences. If chosen, I am prepared to serve this community with joy.

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## **Executive Council**

Vote for up to two of the six candidates.

### **Kathryn Aalto**

For nearly 30 years, I have been immersed in ecocriticism and the environmental humanities as landscape historian, designer, speaker, lecturer, and New York Times Best Selling author. Since presenting a paper at a 1996 ASLE conference in Reno, Nevada, ASLE ideals have consistently informed my interdisciplinary and international career. As an American now living in Exeter, England, I have taught a range of courses in environmental issues, critical thinking, and writing at Western Washington University, Everett Community College, Exeter College, Plymouth University and many summer writing programs in the United Kingdom.

A multidimensional career can be grounded in theory and bridge academic and non-academic worlds, demonstrating my commitment to pull other voices into ASLE if I were elected. This commitment to reaching wide demographics can be seen in recent projects. My second book, *The Natural World of Winnie-the-Pooh: A Walk Through the Forest that Inspired the Hundred Acre Wood*, became a feature on NPR's "All Things Considered," was selected as *People* magazine Best New Book Pick, and hit the New York Times Best Seller list. It may also be coming to television. Written for the magazine *Outside*, my article about 25 essential female nature writers is forthcoming. I attended the Environmental Literature Conference at Phillips Exeter Academy in June 2017 and came away enriched with new teaching methodologies. If elected to the Executive Council, I would extend a collaborative ASLE hand to working writers, artists, and others in hopes of developing rich areas for growth and collaboration.

### **Brianna Burke, Iowa State University**

I was a graduate student the first time I attended the ASLE conference and was astounded by the breadth and scope of the scholarship conducted within the Literary Environmental Humanities; at that time, ASLE showed me what was possible, and what environmentally engaged literary scholarship could look like. My desire to become a member of the EC is simple: I want to do my part in supporting a growing organization that helps scholars professionalize, that provides a meaningful community for many, and that continues to illustrate the power of engaged humanist scholarship. ASLE has helped me flourish; I want to help others do the same. As a professor of Environmental Humanities and American Indian Studies, I have been proud to see ASLE include Indigenous voices, and I aim to continue that work

on the EC, but I would also like to see ASLE help young scholars navigate the complexities of conducting interdisciplinary or collaborative scholarship in our current academy.

About me: I teach courses on environmental justice and climate change within the English Department, American Indian Studies, and Environmental Studies at Iowa State University. Almost all of my courses are cross-listed, so I reach a broad spectrum of students across disciplines, and I am currently engaged in two collaborative studies on climate change with faculty members from various departments. I believe cross-disciplinary research is necessary to effectively demonstrate how the environmental/social problems represented in literary culture correlate with and complicate the existing environmental/social problems we face, and that environmental humanists have more to contribute to our understanding of environmental issues than is currently acknowledged.

If elected, it would be a pleasure to serve.

### **Sara Crosby, Ohio State University at Marion**

I grew up on an island off the coast of Louisiana, and I am currently an associate professor of English at a regional campus of the Ohio State University, where I teach everything from early American literature and pop culture to animals in literature, nature writing, and the literature of resource extraction. I've written two books on poisonous women in American culture (one published, one in process) and various articles, including one for ISLE about early American ecohorror. I'm working on a book about why the U. S. has allowed south Louisiana to wash away. (The region hangs between two self-reinforcing narratives: a fantasy of heroic extraction and ecohorror, filled with swamp monsters, vampires, murderous "bayou hicks," etc.)

I've been deeply involved in promoting the study of environmental humanities, both through ASLE and at my university. This year, I've been helping to organize a new off-year ASLE conference on ecomedia—writing the proposal for it, etc. I also wrote the proposal for and helped push through the first "environment in literature and cultures" class in OSU's English department. I've mentored and continue to direct several students through theses on ecocritical topics, and I serve as a manuscript reader for ISLE.

I believe that big things happen only if you show up for the little things—if you step up, do the work, do it right, and do it early with as much goodwill and as little drama as possible. I would truly appreciate this opportunity to serve and your vote.

### **Barbara Eckstein, University of Iowa**

I have been immersed in environmental humanities thought—under this name and other aliases—for three decades. The scholars, teachers, and activists who give intellectual rigor and integrity to ASLE have become, for me, the most compelling community of the several I've enjoyed over time. In my scholarship, teaching, and activism, I've partnered with planners and attended American Collegiate Schools of Planning conferences; with geographers, and attended American Association of Geographers conferences. I have also learned a great deal about the ethics and imagination necessary for public engagement from participating in the Oral History Association and, most recently, in the organization Imagining America. Other partnerships have enabled digital humanities projects. I especially admire the reach of ASLE out to local environmental justice workers, to pedagogy, and to posthumanist theory—affect and effect, as I saw most recently in Detroit.

At the University of Iowa I am a faculty member in English and in the Center for Global and Regional Environmental Research, a cross-institution consortium of Iowa researchers principally from engineering, the physical sciences, and public health. I served briefly as an Associate Provost, a role I accepted in order to initiate and foster into life a cross-collegiate sustainability certificate available to all undergraduate students. Now at 196 enrolled and growing, it's going strong.

It would be an honor to serve with the current ASLE board and to help expand a conversation and practice that we carry into our classrooms, scholarship, and public engagement.

### **Andrea Knutson, Oakland University**

I've been a member of ASLE for a short time—my first conference was in 2015, but it changed the course of my career, and my scholarly focus. I embraced the opportunity to bring the conference to Detroit in 2017, and began to envision my role in academia as counter-extractive—responsible for channeling resources back into the community and our students' education to offset my university's capitalist-colonial and neoliberal extraction practices. I admire the way ASLE balances its mission with a nimble, experimental attitude. Serving on the 2017 conference host committee gave me an opportunity to think about how to manifest that ethos through the conference's location in Detroit, and we made the community an integral part of the conference's schedule. I was the principle organizer of the field trips and the Midtown cultural crawl, which made apparent the ways academics, community institutions, and activists could collaborate.

At Oakland University, I have organized campus events in the Environmental Humanities, including a symposium on climate literacy, an interdisciplinary faculty round table discussion on the environment, art, and social change, and the artists' residency for *World Without Ice*, a multimedia art installation about Earth's changing climate. I'm currently working on a study of Barbados in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, researching the island's indigenous and slave history, environmental history, sugar economy, and the problem of tropical humidity, and reframing Richard Ligon's *History* through an ecomaterial lens. I'm also working on reframing 18<sup>th</sup>-century theologian Jonathan Edwards' writings on religious affections through his geologic imaginary.

I am the beneficiary of the mentorship ASLE seeks to manifest, its openness to new scholarship, and its inclusivity. In Detroit, I experienced ASLE's embrace of a conference that sought to build conversations and networks into broader environmental communities and share our strengths. If elected to the Executive Council I'll remain committed to these goals.

### **Julietta Singh, University of Richmond**

My investments in ecocriticism extend back into my childhood in Canada, where I was raised by immigrant parents who were both, in very different ways, committed to rethinking human and environmental relations. In my youth, my Irish mother became a reputable environmental activist in Manitoba. She founded an organization to prevent the spread of Dutch Elm Disease, she conducted studies on the deleterious environmental and social effects of the hog industry in the province, and she led an organization committed to the preservation of historical architectures in our city. My Indian father was an allergist who specialized in food allergies, emphasizing and treating the body's reactions to diet and dietary toxicities.

It makes a certain sense, then, that my passion for literature would coincide with my intellectual and political interests in environment, migration and animal life. I am an Associate Professor of English and Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies at the University of Richmond, where I work at the intersections of the environmental humanities, decolonial studies, and queer theory. My book, *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements*, is forthcoming with Duke UP in December, 2017. I am also a published poet and writer whose creative work tends toward feminist, queer, and materialist re-mappings of the subject.

My investment in serving on ASLE's Executive Council is rooted in a desire to see the organization become increasingly global in scope, creating an organization that welcomes an increasingly representative body of scholars and scholarship that take up the environment trans-historically and trans-nationally.

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## **Graduate Student Liaison (GSL)**

Vote for one of the eight candidates.

### **Derya Agis, Ankara University**

I, Derya Agis, want to be your next Graduate Student Liaison. I have served as a diversity campaign volunteer, an environmentalist, an online instructor, a senior lecturer, and an independent scholar at different stages of my life. As ASLE's graduate students come from different countries and communities, I am ready to pay attention to their needs, respond to their concerns, and communicate these to the related officers. As I have been a student in Turkey and Italy, a research scholar and an instructor in the U.S., and conducted anthropological, sociological, historical, psychological, and literary research on different ethnicities around the globe, I can easily understand the needs of graduate students from different parts of the world, studying humanities and social sciences.

I have a B.A. in Italian Language and Literature, an M.A. in English Linguistics, and an M.S. in Social Anthropology, and my dissertation work on the environmental aspects of Amerigo Vespucci's letters is in progress. Currently, I am an adjunct instructor at the University of the People, helping various students around the globe achieve their educational goals.

My website: <http://deryaagis.wix.com/derya>

### **Kristin George Bagdanov, University of California, Davis**

We have all chosen to study literature and the environment because we believe that close and sustained attention to the world and its representations matters. And judging by the conferences I've attended in Moscow and Detroit, it is clear that the energy, collaboration, and criticism fostered by ASLE can effect change. As a third-year English PhD student at U.C. Davis who studies ecopoetics, I rely on the inspiration gleaned from ASLE on those days when theory feels very far from praxis. As graduate student liaison, I will help cultivate the ASLE community and the future of environmental scholarship by creating more opportunities for graduate students to collaborate with one another. Having started my studies in ecopoetics as a poet in Colorado State University's MFA program, I am especially interested in strengthening ties between creative writers and literary critics, who have so much to learn from one another in terms of method, archive, and action. I also hope to create more workshops and reading

groups for graduate students between conferences, expanding and strengthening the network of environmental scholarship across disciplines. As a scholar, poet, editor, and teacher with a background in non-profit development, I am equipped to manage both the logistical and creative tasks required of me in this role. An added bonus: since the ASLE 2019 conference will be at U.C. Davis, I'll be able to tailor the graduate student conference experience to our specific campus and community. Find out more about my work at [kristingebagdanov.com](http://kristingebagdanov.com) or on Twitter: @KristinGeorgeB.

### **Katherine Greulich, Michigan State University**

As an ABD student with a strong record of service, I have accrued a skill set that is uniquely applicable to the Graduate Student Liaison position at ASLE. I have advocated for graduate students both within my department and the university throughout my time at Michigan State. I represented graduate students on a key hiring committee at the university level, a role that required an attention to grad student needs across our large institution. I also served as President of the Association of English Graduate Students, operating as a liaison between the grad student corps and the department. During my tenure, I implemented our organization's system for assessing and designing programming initiatives, in coordination with faculty and students. My work experience is especially relevant to this position. As a department technology coordinator, I developed workshops related to writing, digital presence, and professionalization for graduate students in English. Currently, I oversee social media strategy for the American Economic Association Summer Program. In this role, I curate and create resources for graduate students and early career researchers in the field of economics, paying close attention to the issues that affect graduate study across the disciplines. As a first-generation college student and former two-year college faculty member, I am especially committed to encouraging access to our field among undergraduate and graduate students from underrepresented communities. I am looking forward to sharing my expertise and commitment to service with ASLE, a community of scholars that has often supported my research and career development.

### **Md. Amir Hossain, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh**

As a member of ASLE, I would like to bridge a long lasting relationship with this globally well-reputed research organization on Literature and Ecology. To deepen my core philosophy of life, I aim to focus on human life and environmental literature through rendering my duty and responsibility for GSL position despite living in a distant geographical area, like a small Bangladesh of the atlas. I have a big expectation to foster my radiant future endeavours concerning a profound relationship between human thoughts and philology through ASLE that I never imagine. In the light of literary judgement, we can express that there is a perfect combination between man and nature through which man has recorded unlimited writings and literary genres loving ecological objects.

As Graduate Student Liaison, my honest target is to close myself with the renowned intellectuals, ecologists, literary icons and academicians of the planet; for this purpose, I am devoted to:

- Performing my responsibility for ASLE- big boss and highly honoured figures in the world around;
- Participating in the international conference, workshop, symposium and round table talks;
- Spreading fruitful materials to graduate students and members so as to carry out their potential research project via ASLE;
- Establishing a powerful bond between GSL and ASLE;
- Sending timely published newsletters to ASLE members, undergraduate and graduate students via different social media.

As a M. Phil. Research Scholar on English Literature at Jahangirnagar University, I feel like dreaming beyond my dream through being dedicated to GSL and ASLE. My plan is to dig out ecological literature and to find out a strong aspect of epistemology with the current realm through preaching an innovative message of potential literature and environment to ASLE members and graduate students in the globe as well.

### **Mika Kennedy, University of Michigan**

Students.

That was what my colleague said she wanted to focus on. This was in 2015, after we'd spent a year inviting established environmental and borderlands scholars to share their knowledge. But it was time to shift the dynamic--to find our eco-minded peers.

One word--"students"--ultimately became over a year of collaboration, 30 graduate students gathering from across the globe, and ASLE's first off-year graduate symposium in 2016. Though this symposium, my colleague and I were able to organize two panels of graduate student to send to the 2017 ASLE Conference. I also served as Volunteer Coordinator for the conference planning committee at Wayne State University.

What I've learned from this trajectory is that even as academia is often made synonymous with research, it's service that runs bone-deep. In ASLE I see an organization genuinely built on collaboration, and the impulse to push boundaries ever outward. I want to be a part of that organism, and I see my opportunity in the position of Graduate Student Liaison.

As GSL, I would work to actively support future graduate symposia for ASLE. These symposia are ideal grounds for fostering graduate scholarship, and also serve as a point of approach for upper-level undergraduates. With an eye to ASLE's commitment to engaged scholarship, as well as to shifting outlooks in academia, I want to develop networks that connect graduate students with environmental public humanities practitioners and opportunities. I also want to continue initiatives like 2017's graduate writing workshop, which are so crucial not only to individual scholarship but also community within ASLE. It's this community, after all, that draws us in and inspires us, always, to reach further.

### **Jacob Price, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey**

I am interested in the position of Graduate Student Liaison because I am able to organize events for graduate students. While at the University of Kansas, I served both as a student mentor and the secretary to the Graduate Student Organization of the department. As a student mentor, I was assigned a first year student and helped them become adjusted to the program and community academically and socially. As secretary of the GSO, I kept track of all the details of the events we planned, making sure that fellow presidency members carried out their responsibilities in a timely fashion. Our work culminated in the visit of writer Horacio Castellanos Moya to the program.

These two experiences helped me transition to my PhD program at Rutgers, where I currently serve in two graduate positions. I am a representative of the Literary Students in Spanish Organization where I go to graduate study body meetings, take notes, and report to my fellow students as well as plan and

execute graduate events. I am currently planning a visit from renowned scholar Arturo Arias for Spring 2018. I also serve as an Editor for the literary journal [Yzur](#), which I revived with some fellow students. Our first issue will be published in January 2018.

These experiences have prepared me to work with fellow graduate students in ASLE, where I will help plan, organize, and execute panels, sessions, and workshops, as well as coordinate with other members to ensure our professionalization.

### **David Rodriguez, Stony Brook University**

I am a fifth-year English PhD at Stony Brook University, studying narrative theory and American literature. I currently am the President of the Graduate English Society at my university and have also acted as the Treasurer and Faculty Liaison. I have experience organizing an international conference ([stonybrook.edu/cognitivefutures](http://stonybrook.edu/cognitivefutures)) and a grant-winning interdisciplinary speaker series ([stonybrook.edu/coghumanities](http://stonybrook.edu/coghumanities)).

My past two ASLE conference experiences have cumulated in a desire to become more involved in the organization, in particular in how ASLE connects its members. My trip to Idaho from New York was exhausting, long, and delay-ridden, but also an enjoyable chance to get to know a new part of the country. Inspired by that experience, a colleague and I began working on a project that included cycling from New York to Detroit for the 2017 conference, as a way to research the form of the conference and the potential of conference work. Needless to say, the community was hugely supportive of this challenge in a way that I have not experienced with other organizations.

I believe this has to do with the work in the past that has established ASLE as an organization (really, a culture) that foregrounds the connections between diverse kinds of work by students, junior faculty, and senior scholars, as well as artists, activists, and the public. As the Graduate Student Liaison, I will work specifically to create more opportunities for graduate students to communicate their diverse work in addition to seeking colleagues for collaboration and support.

### **Carl Thompson, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign**

I am a PhD candidate at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, and my dissertation project, "Surveying and the Ecology of Belonging in the Nineteenth Century U.S." examines the labor of surveying and its role in shaping discourses of sustainability, land use, and citizenship into the present day. I was first drawn to the Environmental Humanities as a way of situating my research within contemporary climate activism and found along the way that my historical focus contributes to the creation of a broader frame of reference for understanding and combatting global climate crisis. As a scholar of the nineteenth century, I seek to highlight lessons about resource access, commons use, and ecological citizenship that environmentalists might draw on today. This summer, I presented at my first ASLE conference and was struck by the community of support and encouragement I found there—an experience that has impelled me to become more active in the organization. I have previously served as treasurer and president of the SUNY Buffalo Graduate Americanist Group and relished working closely with my peers to put on workshops and bring speakers to campus. Serving as Graduate Student Liaison would be a wonderful opportunity to continue that work with, and on behalf of, like-minded graduates who are so integral to ASLE's mission of fostering truly interdisciplinary environmental study and activism.