

Department of Environmental Science and Policy Seminar Series

Selling the Offshore: Insurance Expertise and Climate Change in Bermuda

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DATE: Thursday, 3/20/2025 TIME: 11am ROOM: UNGAR 230-E

Zoom: <https://miami.zoom.us/j/94362255951>



Abstract: This talk explores the contemporary practice of private insurance markets and visions of solidarity in the shadow of climate change. The talk shows that insurance professionals experiment creatively with technical methods to make sense of the shrinking influence of offshore domiciles such as Bermuda, in global markets. Alongside efforts to make generalizable claims about risk pools, they also give attention to the non-quantifiable and affective dynamics that shape their business. They experiment creatively with the empirical challenges of sourcing data while leveraging Bermuda as a 'natural' site with the geography, scientific acumen, history, and culture to demonstrate resilience. "Selling the offshore," in other words, is as much a battle over the pricing of risk as the self-reflexive ways in which insurance professionals come to see themselves in solidarity with their clients as subjects who are environmentally at risk. The caveat, of course, is that the offshore itself is a place with multiple imaginative framings that may reaffirm old dynamics of extraction that have contributed to the very risks the industry and Bermuda seek to avoid in the long-term.

Bio: Sarah E. Vaughn is an Associate Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. Vaughn's research agenda entails developing an ethnographic approach and critical social theory of climate adaptation. This research has primarily focused on Guyana and Bermuda. She is the author of several articles published in the journals *Critical Inquiry*, *Cultural Anthropology*, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, *Public Culture*, *Environment and Planning*, among others. She is the author of the award-winning book *Engineering Vulnerability: In Pursuit of Climate Adaptation* (Duke, 2022). During the 2024-2025 academic year she is the Katherine Hampson Bessell Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute.



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