Over the past several years my research has involved the possible contribution of the humanities can make to the discussion of climate change. Most of my work has been of a speculative nature. While most scientists embrace the idea that the problems of climate change are so enormous that we need to summon all possible resources—including expertise of humanists—in order to confront them, they necessarily tend to operate along the lines of the practical.

Yet the humanities—inauthentic as they continue to exist in crisis—are by nature impractical. In my current work in progress, a book on fuels, I am trying to reconcile the impractical, speculative questions raised by the humanities with a desire for hope. I do not locate hope in any particular technology or policy, or in any particular social formation such as the multitude, or even in any forms of social movements such as Occupy. On the other hand, I want to think beyond a Heideggerian sense of hope developing only from the most abysmal disaster. I locate hope in fuels—distinguished from systems of energy or power—as pure potentiality. My seminar will open up to a discussion of what is meant by potentiality as we explore it through narrative and images.

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