

The Ethnography and Social Theory  
Colloquium presents

**ANTHROPOLOGY AS  
COSMIC DIPLOMACY:  
TOWARD AN ECOLOGICAL ETHICS  
FOR THE ANTHROPOCENE**

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4:00pm-5:30pm  
Room 105, 10 Sachem Street  
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Forests think. This is neither a metaphor nor a cultural belief. There exists a kind of thinking, which I call “sylvan,” that is made exquisitely manifest by tropical forests and those that live with them. This kind of thought extends well beyond us humans and, in fact, holds our human forms of thinking. Thinking with the sylvan logics that thinking forests amplify can provide an ethical orientation - a mode of thought - that is adequate for these times of planetary human-driven ecological devastation that some call the “Anthropocene.” I here discuss three projects in and around the tropical forests of Ecuador whose goal is to capacitate sylvan thought. This research, which has brought me into collaboration with indigenous leaders and shamans, lawyers and conceptual artists, and even forest spirits and archaic pre-hispanic ceramic figures, has encouraged me to see my anthropological vocation as a kind of “cosmic diplomacy.” This form of diplomacy is “psychedelic” in so far as its goal is to make manifest the mind manifesting nature of the sylvan thinking on whose behalf it advocates. Another word for this kind of emergent mind is “spirit.” I here explore alternative “sylvan” means to give voice to the spirits among us, and I trace the challenge this poses for how we should think about what it means to be human.