

**Title:** What Does it Mean to Declare a Climate Emergency? Why Narratives Matter in the Movement to Address Climate Change

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Dr. Sarah Marie Wiebe grew up on Coast Salish territory in British Columbia, BC, and is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa where she focuses on environmental sustainability. She has published in journals including *Citizenship Studies* and *Studies in Social Justice*. Her book *Everyday Exposure: Indigenous Mobilization and Environmental Justice in Canada's Chemical Valley* (2016) with UBC Press won the Charles Taylor Book Award (2017) and examines policy responses to the impact of pollution on the Aamjiwnaang First Nation's environmental health. At the intersections of environmental justice and citizen engagement, her teaching and research interests emphasize political ecology, participatory policy making and deliberative dialogue. As a collaborative researcher and filmmaker, she worked with Indigenous communities on sustainability-themed films including *Indian Givers* and *To Fish as Formerly*.

**Abstract:** Jurisdictions around the globe are now declaring climate change to be a state of emergency. Physicians are calling climate change a public health emergency. Many communities living on the frontlines of a dramatically changing climate who call the Pacific Ocean their home are relocating, often arriving on the shores of O'ahu, requiring access to vital health care and social services. Just this year, the State of Hawai'i broke nearly 300 heat records. It is widely known that rising sea-levels pose serious threats to the health of our public beaches, homes and livelihoods. But from where does the climate emergency narrative emerge? What does it mean when local, state, federal and international authorities declare a "climate emergency"? Should more jurisdictions across Hawai'i declare a climate emergency? How can we understand the forces driving this movement to declare a climate emergency and what are the implications for governance in practice? To cultivate a conversation that responds to these questions, this interactive presentation draws from scholarship in environmental justice, political ecology and the interpretive inquiry of storytelling to draw our attention to the discursive power of declaring a climate emergency. By drawing from specific local and global examples, we can both zoom in and out of this sticky, thorny, multilayered issue to more closely investigate the rhetorical power of emergency declarations, examine how movements are mobilizing for change, and imagine possible futures as we begin to envision and enact other sustainable alternatives.



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