

ASU Tempe campus

School for the Future of Innovation in Society

Innovations Talk

Etienne Benson

One Environment or Many? Reconsidering the Conceptual Foundations of Environmentalism

Monday, February 17
2–3 p.m.
Ross Blakely Hall Rm 196

Since the emergence of the modern environmental movement in the 1960s and 1970s, the concerns and goals of that movement have profoundly shaped what we think “the environment” is. Toxic pollution, resource exhaustion, biodiversity loss, and climate change, in particular, have come to constitute our threatened environment. But do these issues span the full range of possible environmental concerns? The history of the concept of environment suggests not. This talk will set the past half-century of environmental thought in a much longer and richer history that runs from the early-nineteenth-century invention of the milieu by French naturalists to present-day experiments at the intersection of environmental art, science, and activism. And it will argue that a suitably “environmentalized” conceptual history can be a critical tool in responding to today’s very real and pressing environmental challenges.



Etienne Benson is an Associate Professor in the Department of History and Sociology of Science at the University of Pennsylvania. A historian of environmentalism and the environmental sciences, he is the author of *Wired Wilderness: Technologies of Tracking and the Making of Modern Wildlife* (2010) and the forthcoming *Surroundings: A History of Environments and Environmentalisms*.