

CUNY-CSI WORLD ON FIRE LECTURE SERIES

Presented by the Office of the Dean of Humanities and Social Sciences.

This lecture series examines important topics facing humanity through a variety of academic lenses.

Climate of PUBLICITY

Tuesday, September 16, 2025 | 2:30pm - 4:00pm at Building 1P-119 Center for the Arts

CLIMATE CHANGE HAS A BRANDING PROBLEM.

The current political and media environment has polluted our ability to frame the clear, coherent, and collective values needed to deal with the greatest crisis of our time. Meanwhile, PR firms are hired by fossil fuel companies to host international climate summits, ad agencies promote plastic bottles of chemically treated water against blue-sky backgrounds, and tech companies forget to mention that their newest AI chatbot uses enough energy to power the Empire State Building. How do we wade out of the promotional and political sludge and figure out what's really going on? This talk will examine some of the tricks and tactics used to persuade us that fossil fuels are "part of the solution" and show how to think and act toward genuinely sustainable responses.



Melissa Aronczyk is Professor of Media Studies in the School of Communication & Information at Rutgers University. She is the co-author, with Maria Espinoza, of *A Strategic Nature: Public Relations and the Politics of Environmentalism* (Oxford University Press), winner of the 2023 Roderick P. Hart Outstanding Book Award in Political Communication from the National Communication Association. Her research on how PR affects our ability to communicate about climate change has been featured in **The Nation**, the **BBC**, the **Financial Times**, **Rolling Stone**, **CNBC**, **The Intercept**, and other outlets. She has also written stories about PR and sustainability for **The Washington Post** and **Foreign Policy** magazine.