



**University  
of Victoria**

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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**“Tracing Carbon Footprints: Sensing with Metaphor in the Cultural  
Politics of Climate Change”**

Interdisciplinary Studies (Departments of English and Political Science)

Friday, April 17, 2015  
10:00am  
David Turpin Building  
Room A137

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Nicole Shukin, Department of English, University of Victoria (Co-Supervisor)  
Dr. Warren Magnusson, Department of Political Science, UVic (Co-Supervisor)  
Dr. Eric Higgs, School of Environmental Studies, UVic (Member)  
Dr. Andrew Weaver, School of Earth and Ocean Sciences, UVic (Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Catriona Sandilands, Faculty of Environmental Studies, York University

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Carmen Rodriguez de France, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## **Abstract**

The carbon footprint metaphor has achieved a ubiquitous presence in Anglo-North American public contexts since the turn of the millennium, yet this metaphor remains under-examined as a crucial mediator of political responses to climate change. While the assumption is that this metaphor orients people toward mitigation efforts that address this urgent crisis, close attention to its many figurations suggests a complex range of possible orientations. Using a discursive analysis of instances of this metaphor in popular and public texts, and mobilizing an interdisciplinary array of literatures including theories of metaphor; political theories of affect, and cultural politics of climate change, this dissertation asks: “what are the promises and risks of the carbon footprint metaphor?” Given the histories that have shaped the appearance of climate change as a public matter of concern to be governed, the carbon footprint metaphor in many instances risks marketized approaches, such as offsets, which allow business-as-usual trajectories of worsening carbon emissions. Yet, certain other instances of this metaphor promise to disturb such approaches. The promising disturbances to marketized and instrumental approaches through this metaphor emerge as a result of larger-than-human actors who come to challenge given accounts of the footprint. In these instances, the carbon footprint metaphor suggests that dominant anthropocentric responses to climate change are inherently flawed because they miss out on wider political ecologies. Here, the metaphor itself as a suspension to the representational logic of (human) language offers a key political opening to actors not yet accounted for. For those seriously interested in tackling the climate change issue, critical attention to the risky and promising attachments of carbon footprint metaphors marks a key intervention.