

CALL FOR PAPERS

African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene: (Re)mediating Mountain Imaginaries

17 – 20 March 2025, Champagne Sports Resort, Central Drakensberg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

But how wonderful when the tale is told, / And the message that is meant for us / Opens like the scents of a
mountain flower!

— Mazisi Kunene

“Mountains, according to the angle of view, the season, the time of day, the beholder's frame of mind, or any one
thing, can effectively change their appearance. Thus, it is essential to recognize that we can never know more
than one side, one small aspect of a mountain.”

— Haruki Murakami, *A Wild Sheep Chase*

“The secret of the mountain is that the mountains simply exist, as I do myself: the mountains exist simply, which I
do not. The mountains have no "meaning," they are meaning; the mountains are. The sun is round. I ring with life,
and the mountains ring, and when I can hear it, there is a ringing that we share. I understand all this, not in my
mind but in my heart, knowing how meaningless it is to try to capture what cannot be expressed, knowing that
mere words will remain when I read it all again, another day.”

— Peter Matthiessen, *The Snow Leopard*

“What are men to rocks and mountains?”

— Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*

“Therefore am I still / A lover of the meadows and the woods, / And mountains; and of all that we behold / From
this green earth; of all the mighty world / Of eye and ear, both what they half create / And what perceive; well
pleased to recognize / In nature and the language of the sense, / The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse /
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul / Of all my moral being.”

— William Wordsworth, *Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey*

“Some people are born in the mountains, while others are born by the sea. Some people are happy to live in the
place they were born, while others must make a journey to reach the climate in which they can flourish and grow.
Between the ocean and the mountains is a wild forest. That is where I want to make my home.” — Maia Kobabe,

Gender Queer: A Memoir

“It is not the mountain we conquer, but ourselves.”

— Edmund Hillary

Conceptual Rationale:

Mountains are important landscapes that exude presence and character. Mountain science (montology), also known as orology, is a field of research focused on regions of the earth's surface covered by mountain environments. Widely studied in the natural sciences, mountains are investigated for their geodiversity, the richness of species, high levels of endemism, and association with a rich

diversity of ecosystems. Mountain regions are usually complex human-environment systems. They are highly heterogeneous, dynamic, and increasingly vulnerable to rapid changes in the Anthropocene.

The concept of mountainscapes, in its association with the Anthropocene, refers to the holistic sphere of multidimensional aspects that interact to provide a novel epistemology of mountain systems (following Sarmiento, 2022). Mountainscapes from a humanities, social sciences, and arts perspective share a curiously central existence across cultures and are generally recognised as areas of “great cultural importance” (Price, 2015: 10). Mountains constitute (in several ways) a central attraction to many disciplines in the broad field of the humanities, as well as the social and natural sciences, and are important landmarks of ecocriticism and reflection (see Bryson, 2010 and Schrepfer, 2005, for example).

Mountains are not just physical and material geospatial sites but are, in fact, also ontological (they tell us stories and narratives about being and existence) and epistemological (they are signifiers and repositories of knowledge that give effect to different forms of knowledge). Mountains are visible and culturally loaded landforms that encode many nuanced layers of meaning such as sites of nationalism, masculinity, heroism, environmentalism, belonging, and artistic inspiration, and are shaped in part by modern mountaineering and mountain tourism. As markers and embodiments of cultural histories, both near and distant, which reveal hidden layers and networks of history, mountains are also echo chambers of deeper intertexts. The double investment in mountains as significant cultural/social (including mythical) and geographical sites is what makes mountains so relevant for the rethinking of the symbolic and the real in the humanities, social sciences, and arts, particularly in the Anthropocene.

This call invites papers from scholars working on aspects of African Mountainscapes and the Anthropocene. Scholarship that explores the relationship between mountains and the deeper meanings they enable in relation to the human and the social is sought. Papers should examine new paradigms of looking at (re)mediations of mountain imaginaries and bring to light their fluidity, as well as their changing and transformative virtues.

The papers will be presented as a series of panels at the second Southern African Mountain Conference, SAMCC2025 (<https://2025.samc.africa/>) which will be hosted at the Champagne Sports Resort in the central Drakensberg, KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa from 17 to 20 March 2025.

We invite papers that utilise a disciplinary, inter- and/or multidisciplinary lens and provide rich, cutting-edge and deep analysis (conceptual and/or empirical). Submissions are especially welcome from the following disciplines: literature; languages; linguistics; history, political sciences/international relations; sociology; anthropology; philosophy; heritage and tourism studies; critical psychology; architecture; human geography; communication science; gender studies; arts (drama, music, film, visual arts); architecture; and archaeology.

The following indicative themes (by no means exhaustive nor definitive) are proposed for abstracts:

- Mountains as archives
- Histories of mountains
- Mountains and identities
- Mountains as borders

- Mountains and marginality
- Conceptual metaphors of mountains
- Mountains and visual culture
- Mountains as places of refuge
- Mountain architectures
- Mountains in political science and international relations
- Mountains and gender
- Mountains and masculinities
- Mountains in religious, spiritual, and theological scriptures
- Mountains as abject landforms giving rise to responses such as fear, disdain, and avoidance
- Mountain knowledge, activities, aesthetics, and literary representation – performance, art, cinema (including documentaries), drama, music, etc.
- Mountains and the history of ideas
- Mountains as objects of economic value
- Mountains as a matter of taste and tourism
- Mountains as cultural heritage
- Mountains, memories, and nostalgia
- Mountains in premodernity, modernity, postcoloniality and decoloniality
- Discourses and grammars of mountains (with a particular focus on language/s and linguistics)

Organising Committee

- Prof Vasu Reddy (University of the Free State and University of Pretoria)
- Dr Jared McDonald (University of the Free State)
- Dr Grey Magaiza (University of the Free State)

Abstract Submission Guidelines

- All abstracts must be submitted via the online abstract submission process. This can be accessed on <https://2025.samc.africa/> (and select Abstracts/Proposals). Please complete all relevant fields, which include name(s) and contact information of author(s), abstract text in free format, acknowledgements, and keywords.
- Abstracts for individual oral presentations should be no more than 500 words (plus 5 to 6 keywords). Please also indicate the relevant theme/s under which your abstract should fall from the list above.

Deadlines

- The submission deadline is **Monday, 16 September 2024**. Decisions on abstracts will be made by **Friday, 11 October 2024**.

Please Note:

- Physical participation at the conference will be required for all accepted abstracts.
- Abstracts will be accepted following peer review.
- Draft papers must be submitted to the organisers at least one week before the conference, as these papers will be circulated to the panel participants.
- The panels will take place within the conference dates, during the 17 – 20 March 2025 date range.

- All presenters will be required to make their own travel arrangements, though some costs will be covered (further details to be provided).
- Please feel free to forward this call to your relevant networks.

Publication Prospects:

- We anticipate given the theoretical and empirical scope (contingent on quality) of pre-circulated papers, an edited volume with a reputable international publisher and/or a special edition of an accredited journal.
- All of the above will be determined by timeous meeting of deadlines, which will be discussed at the conference.

Enquiries:

- Please feel free to contact the SAMC2025 Conference Secretariat at secretariat@samc.africa
- More details about the conference and information updates can be accessed at the conference website www.2025.samc.africa