

+1 (503) 550 3243

Box 9399, Berkeley, CA 94709

[stephen.lezak@berkeley.edu](mailto:stephen.lezak@berkeley.edu)

## Stephen Lezak

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Academic webpage: <https://gspp.berkeley.edu/directories/staff-administration/stephen-lezak>

Personal webpage: [www.stephenlezak.com](http://www.stephenlezak.com)

Google Scholar: <http://bit.ly/3sOpg3f>

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### EDUCATION

PhD in Polar Studies & Geography	2019—2025
University of Cambridge, Scott Polar Research Institute	
Dissertation: <i>The Map Is Not the Territory: Indigenous Climate Sovereignty in the Age of Apocalypse</i>	
Committee: Richard Powell, Ariell Ahearn, and Maan Barua	
Gates Cambridge Scholar	
Certificate in Tribal Governance	2023—2024
University of Alaska, Fairbanks (part-time, non-degree-seeking)	
Postgraduate Certificate of Education (PGCE)	2017—2018
University of Buckingham, U.K.	
(U.S. Equivalent: MA in Education)	
MSc (Distinction), Environmental Change & Management	2016—2017
University of Oxford School of Geography & the Environment	
BA in Politics (Honors)	2011—2015
Oberlin College	
GPA: 3.9, Phi Beta Kappa	
Major: Politics; Minor: Geology	
Uppsala University, Sweden	2014
Visiting Student, Applied Sustainability Studies	

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PUBLICATIONS

Forthcoming books:

1. *The Longest Night: Coming Home in the Age of Apocalypse*. (Under contract with Simon & Schuster, expected publication in 2027).
2. *The Map Is not the Territory* (Manuscript in preparation. Represented by Emma Dries of Triangle House Literary; expected publication in 2027).

Manuscripts under review:

3. Taylor-Burns, R.; ... Lezak, S. et al. "Offsets and contributions: two finance streams for California wetland restoration and rice conversion" (under review at *AGU Earth's Future*).
4. Blanchard, L.; Haya, B.; Lezak, S.; and Anderegg, W.' "The History of "Contribution" Approaches for Climate Mitigation: A Narrative Review" (under review at *Environmental Research Letters*).
5. Lezak, S. "After Dread: When Climate Change Isn't an Allegory" (under review at *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*).
6. Lezak, S., "Territory Without Borders: Rethinking Sovereignty, Indigeneity, and Climate Justice" (under review at *Territory, Politics, Governance*).
7. Blanchard, L., Lezak, S., and Anderegg, W. "Update corporate climate standards to increase rigor and ambition." (in press) *One Earth*.

Refereed articles and book chapters:

8. Romm, J, Lezak, S., and Alshamsi, A. (2025) "Carbon Offsets: A Critical Review." *Annual Reviews: Environment & Resources*.
9. Lezak, S.; Zaman, S. T.; Johnstone, I.; Haya, B. (2025) "UNFCCC Carbon Trading Could Undermine Global Climate Action, *Nature Climate Change*.
10. Johnstone, I.; Allen, M.; Axelsson, K.; ... Lezak, S.; Smith, A.; Smith, S.; Wagner, A., (2025) The Revised Oxford Principles for Net Zero Aligned Carbon Offsetting, *Environmental Research Letters* 20: 9.
11. Lezak, S., and Rock, G. (2024) "On Micropolitics: Climate adaptation and Indigenous governance in Western Alaska." *Climatic Change* 177: 135.

12. Lezak, S. (2023) "Environmental Ethnography." *Progress in Environmental Geography*.
13. Lezak, S. (2023), "From Capacity Building to Capacity Sharing." *Nature Sustainability*.
14. Lezak, S., Wilson, C., Ansar, A., Bazillian, M. (2022) "The Case Against Gold Mining." *Environmental Research Letters* 18.
15. Lezak, S., and Munkherderne, G. (2021) "The Social Lives of Abandoned Mines." In *The Impact of Mining lifecycles in Central Asia and Mongolia*, eds. Sternberg, T., Toktomushev, K., and Ichinkhorloo, B.. London: Routledge.
16. Lezak, S., Ahearn, A., McConnell, F., & Sternberg, T. (2019) "Frameworks for conflict mediation in international infrastructure development: A comparative overview and critical appraisal." *Journal of Cleaner Production* 239.
17. Lezak, S. (2019) "Re-Placing the Desert in the Conservation Landscape: Charisma and Absence in the Gobi Desert." *LAND* 8(1), 3.
18. Lezak, S. & Thibodeau, P. H. (2016). Systems thinking and environmental concern. *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 46,143-153.

Other academic publications and working papers:

19. Haya, B., and Lezak, S. (2025) California sends millions of dollars out of state for carbon offsets of dubious quality. Policy Brief. Berkeley Carbon Trading Project, University of California, Berkeley.
20. Carleton, E., Lezak, S., Haya, B. (2025), DEBS in Name Only: Another Way California's Offset Rule Misses the Mark. Policy Brief. Berkeley Carbon Trading Project, University of California, Berkeley.
21. Johnstone, I.; Schneider, L., Michaelowa, A.; ... Lezak, S.; ... Hepburn, C. (2025) Oxford Principles for Responsible Engagement with Article 6. Oxford: Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment, University of Oxford.
22. Lezak, S., Axelsson, K., & Blanchard, L. (2024) Joint Commentary on SBTi's Discussion Paper: Aligning Corporate Value Chains to Global Climate Goals, Berkeley Carbon Trading Project.
23. Haya, B., ... & Lezak, S. (2024) Joint Commentary on SBTi's Discussion Paper: Aligning Corporate Value Chains to Global Climate Goals, Berkeley Carbon Trading Project.
24. Axelsson, K., ... Lezak, S., et al. (2024) "Revised Oxford Offsetting Principles." Oxford Smith School of Enterprise & the Environment.

25. Lezak, S., Guido, V., & Natali, P. (2023) "Commodities Markets Are Broken. Responsible Supply Chains Can Fix Them," *MIT Sloan Management Review*.
26. Cullen, K., Axelsson, K., Lezak, S., Hale, T., Lang, J., & Smith, S. (2021) "Leveling up net zero climate leadership in the United States." Oxford Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment Working Paper No. 21-01.
27. Axelsson, K., ... Lezak, S., et al. (2021) "Sensitive Intervention Points for Achieving Climate Neutrality," Summary report for the Climate Neutrality Forum. Presented at COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland.
28. Lezak, S. (2020) "Review: Transnational Law and State Formation." *Journal of Nomadic Peoples* 24(1), 171-74.
29. Lezak, S. (2019) "Re-Placing the Desert in the Conservation Landscape: Charisma and Absence in the Gobi Desert." In *Arid Land Systems: Science and Societies*. Eds. Ariell Ahearn & Troy Sternberg. Basel: MDPI, 53-64.
30. Lezak, S., Cannon, C., & Koch Blank, T. (2019). Low-Carbon Metals for a Low-Carbon World: A New Energy Paradigm for Mines. Report. Rocky Mountain Institute.
31. Lezak, S. (2019) "Review: Mongolia Remade." *Journal of Nomadic Peoples* 23(1), 149-154.
32. Ahearn, A., and Lezak, S. (2018) "The Mongolian Ger." In *House Tour: Views of the Unfurnished Interior*. Ed. Adam Jasper. Zurich: Park Books.

Selected non-academic publications and op-eds, 2021-Present:

33. "MAGA Elites Are Indoor Cats." *The New York Times*. February 2026.
34. "Bill Gates Has a Point." *The New York Times*. November 2025.
35. "Why the US is letting China win on energy innovation." *The Conversation*. August 2025.
36. "We just found millions in waste in California's cap-and-trade program. Here's the fix." *San Francisco Chronicle*. May 2025. (With Barbara Haya.)
37. "Is America Just Going to Abandon Its Towns Falling Into the Ocean?" *The New York Times*, January 2025.
38. "Cop29: Indigenous communities still being sold short as the world decides how to regulate carbon markets." *The Conversation*, November 2024.
39. "US election: Trump is threatening to turn back the tide on America's environmental laws and reverse climate progress," *The Conversation*, November 2024.

40. ["What the Cobalt Industry Can Learn From Coffee Producers,"](#) Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 2024.
41. ["This Dirty Industry Is Better Off Operating in America,"](#) *The New York Times*, July 2024.
42. ["The 'Anthropocene' Was Always an Act of Defeatism",](#) *The New York Times*, March 2024.
43. ["Carbon markets are broken. Here are three ways we can start fixing them,"](#) *The Conversation*, March 2024.
44. ["Republicans Care About Climate Change Too. Our Presidential Primaries Ignore Them,"](#) *The New Republic*, February 2024.
45. ["The Arctic Is Becoming One Giant Construction Site,"](#) *The New Republic*, November 2023.
46. ["Awe in the Anthropocene,"](#) *Imagine5* (autumn 2023).
47. ["Climate Fraud on America's Last Frontier",](#) *The New Republic*, June 2023.
48. ["'Voodoo economics': How SB 48 makes Alaska play the fool,"](#) *Anchorage Daily News*, May 2023.
49. ["Gold mining is one of the world's most destructive and unnecessary industries – here's how to end it,"](#) *The Conversation*, February 2023.
50. ["Giving Up on 1.5 Degrees Celsius Is a Luxury for the Rich,"](#) *The New Republic*, December 2022.
51. ["Climate change is Putin's best ally",](#) *The New Republic*, 2022.
52. ["Credible Corporate Climate Leadership and the Net-Zero Imperative,"](#) *World Economic Forum*, 2022.
53. ["Looking beyond just greenhouse gases to build supply chain transparency,"](#) *GreenBiz*, 2022.
54. ["All My Relations: Buffalo, Wild Horses, and the Politics of Belonging on the Wind River Indian Reservation,"](#) *High Country News*, December 2021
55. ["Carbon Markets Are Terrible—But We Need Them,"](#) *The New Republic*, November 2021.
56. ["Meltwater: A Timepiece for the Arctic,"](#) *Emergence Magazine*, July 2021.
57. ["Achieving net-zero climate targets will depend on public lands,"](#) *The Revelator*, April 2021.
58. ["It should be tougher to fly first class."](#) *Grist*, April 2021.
59. ["Is it too soon for America to adopt a comprehensive net-zero strategy?"](#) *The Independent*, March 2021.

60. "Net zero goal is crucial for Phoenix, but we need federal help," *The Arizona Republic*, 2021.

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#### HONORS, RESEARCH GRANTS, AND ACADEMIC AWARDS

- Banff Centre for the Arts & Creativity Residency (2025): CAD\$8,000
- Alaska Humanities Forum Stories Grant (2024): \$10,000.
- Phillip Lake Fund Research Grant, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge (2022): £6,000
- Beatrice Shaw Fund Research Grant, Department of Geography, University of Cambridge (2020, declined)
- Gates Cambridge Scholarship (2019): £250,000
- Cambridge International Trust Scholarship (2019, declined) : £220,000
- John Fell Fund Research Grant, Oxford University Press, University of Oxford (2018): £10,000
- Environmental Change & Management Dissertation Publication Prize, University of Oxford (2017): £3,000
- Green Templeton College CCFF Grant, University of Oxford (2107): £2,500
- Environmental Change Institute Small Research Grant, University of Oxford (2017): £500
- Joan Doll Scholarship, Green Templeton College, University of Oxford (2016)
- Phi Beta Kappa (2015)
- Starr Award in Politics, Oberlin College (2015)
- Jere Bruner Research Grant, Oberlin College (2015)
- Jerome Davis Research Award, Oberlin College (2015)
- John Frederick Oberlin Merit Scholar, Oberlin College (2011)
- National Merit Scholar Finalist (2011)

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#### SELECTED INVITED TALKS IN 2021-24

1. "Infrastructural Fear", Closing Lecture to the Central St. Martins "Arctic Cities" course, MA (Design) and M.Arch students. Dec. 6, 2024.
2. "Operationalising the Oxford Offsetting Principles," COP29, Baku, Azerbaijan. Panel hosted by the Global Alliance of Universities on Climate. November 13, 2024.

3. "Infrastructural Fear," Polar Humanities & Social Sciences, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, 22 February, 2024.
4. "Climate Apocalypse as Science (Non-)Fiction." Churchill College, Univ. of Cambridge. Nov 21, 2023.
5. "Decolonizing capacity building: Insights from Alaska Native villages." Scott Polar Research Institute, Univ. of Cambridge, October 2023
6. YES Europe Annual Conference. Keynote Address, May 2023.
7. "The Longest Night: Coming Home in the Age of Apocalypse." Half Wild. Portland, Oregon, June 2023.
8. "Emerging Leaders for Climate Action." Expert Panelist. Organized by Globally. Washington, DC, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates, August 2023.
9. Sustainability Leadership Forum, Dallas, TX, July 2022.
10. "Snowy Steps Toward an Affect of Latitude." Polar Humanities and Social Sciences, Scott Polar Research Institute, Univ. of Cambridge, 2022.
11. Cambridge Festival of Ideas, University of Cambridge, 2022.
12. Cambridge Zero, Harder-to-Abate Sectors, 24 November 2021. "Does the world need gold mining?"
13. University of Cambridge, Polar Humanities and Social Sciences Seminar Series October 28, 2021, "The Arctic at the end of the world: Hannah Arendt and Climate Apocalypse."
14. YES Europe Annual Conference, October 16, 2021, "Understand & apprehend the latest IPCC report on climate change: Physical Science Basis & Climate Politics," moderating Nicolas Bellouin (Professor in Climate Processes, University of Reading) & Ella Gilbert (Climate Scientist, University of Reading).
15. YES Europe Annual Conference, October 16 2021, Keynote Address: "Post-Climate: Keeping Climate Politics Transformative"
16. Terra.do Climate Change Bootcamp, "Introduction to Carbon Offsets." October 22, 2021.
17. Catlin Gabel Alumni Science Series, interviewed by Dave Corkran and Paul Dickinson, September 15, 2021.
18. Terra.do Lecture on Investment and Carbon Offsets, "Offsets: Problems and Principles" June 23 2021
19. Gates Cambridge Weekend of Research, Environment and Migration, "Why Mine Gold?" May 7, 2021
20. Presentation to Oxford University Silk Road Society, March 2021

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SELECTED TEACHING EXPERIENCE

**University of Alaska, Fairbanks** — Northwest Campus (Nome, Alaska) (Spring 2023)  
Environmental Studies F105: "Climate Change in Western Alaska"  
(Instructor of Record)

**University of Cambridge, Department of Geography**

Geography 1B: "The Human Nature of Climate Apocalypse" (Winter 2022)  
Geography II: Dissertation Advisor (Spring 2021)  
Geography 1B: "Geographies of the Cryosphere" (Autumn 2023 and Winter 2024)

**University of Oxford, School of Geography and the Environment**

"Critical Ecologies: Alternative Visions of Environmental Community" (Autumn 2018 and Winter 2020)  
(Instructor of Record)

**Notting Hill & Ealing High School, London** Sept. 2017—July 2018  
Geography Teacher (A-Level)

**Explorer Post 58** Sept. 2012—Present  
Youth Advisor and Mountain Guide

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PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Research Fellow August 2024—Present  
Berkeley Carbon Trading Project, Goldman School of Public Policy  
University of California, Berkeley

Researcher & Programme Manager May 2020—Present  
School of Geography & the Environment, University of Oxford

Principal Investigator: Dr. Atif Ansar

Writer	Mar. 2021—Present
Publications in <i>The New York Times</i> , <i>The New Republic</i> , <i>Grist</i> , <i>High Country News</i> , <i>Colorado Public Radio</i> , <i>Alaska Public Radio</i> , <i>Emergence Magazine</i> , <i>The Revelator</i> , <i>The Independent</i> , <i>Imagine5</i> , <i>World Economic Forum</i> , <i>Anchorage Daily News</i> , and <i>The Nome Nugget</i> .	
Policy Analyst	June 2024—June 2025
Alliance for Tribal Clean Energy	
Fellow	Jun. 2019—January 2024
Rocky Mountain Institute	
Research Consultant (full-time)	Oct. 2018—May 2019
Gobi Framework Research Team, University of Oxford Principal Investigator: Dr. Fiona McConnell	
Research Assistant (full-time)	June 2015—Sept. 2015
Oberlin College Department of Psychology Principal Investigator: Dr. Paul Thibodeau	
Climate Policy Intern (full-time)	June 2014—Aug. 2014
Oregon Environmental Council	
Intern for Oregon Congressman Earl Blumenauer (full-time)	Jan. 2013—Feb. 2013
United States House of Representatives	

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SELECTED PROFESSIONAL AND PUBLIC SERVICE

Advisory Group Member, California 5<sup>th</sup> Climate Assessment, Topical Synthesis Report on

Climate-Induced Human Displacement & Migration (April 2025 – Present)  
Steering Committee Member, Article 6 Observatory (August 2025 – present)  
Member, Washington State Dept. of Ecology Environmental Justice Offsets Working Group (2024 — 2025)  
Board Member, Tundra Health Initiative (June 2024 – present)  
Advisory Board Member, YES-Europe (Young leaders in Environmental Sustainability, European Chapter) (2023-present)  
Steering Committee Member, Alaska Climate Tech Hub Consortium (2023)  
Expert Reviewer, Working Group II of IPCC Sixth Assessment Report (2020)  
Member, Climate, Energy, and Environment Committee, Joe Biden Presidential Campaign (2020)  
Member, Climate, Energy, and Environment Committee, Pete Buttigieg Presidential Campaign (2020)

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#### UNIVERSITY SERVICE

Member, Anti-racism Staff Committee, Goldman School of Public Policy, UC Berkeley  
Graduate convenor, Infrastructural Geographies Research Group, Department of Geography, University of Cambridge (2023)  
Admissions interviewer, Clare College, University of Cambridge (2023)  
Admissions interviewer, Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge (2023)

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#### CONFERENCES

Given the high carbon footprint of conference travel, I elect to not disclose these activities on my CV.

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#### SELECT MEDIA APPEARANCES

1. Podcast interview with “A Climate Change with Matt Matern.” Dec 1 2025.
2. AirTalk Panel on Bill Gates’ Climate Memo, 12 November 2025, *LAist* (89.3FM).
3. “It’s official: 25 years of evidence proves carbon offsets don’t work.” *FastCompany*. October

2025.

4. "Carbon offsets fail to cut global heating due to 'intractable' systemic problems, study says." *The Guardian* (2025).
5. Australian Broadcasting Corporation, (October 2025).
6. "California should end its emissions offset program, researchers say." *E&E News* (2025).
7. "Trump's gilded Oval Office was the perfect setting for his and Bukele's grotesque spectacle." *The Guardian* (2025).
8. "Buying carbon credits to fight climate change? Here's what to know." *ScienceNews* (2025).
9. "The jewelry industry loves recycled gold. Is that a good thing?" *Vogue Business* (2025).
10. "'Mercury destroys lives': but if goldmining is here to stay, is there a way to make it safer?" *The Guardian* (2024).
11. "Why Climate's Hardest Problem Might Need a Carbon Market" *Heatmap* (2024).
12. *Schroder's Value Perspective Podcast*. (2024)
13. "Is recycled gold the new philosopher's stone?" Oxford Smtih School, Climate Future series (2024).
14. "How mining plays a role in lower-income nations," *BNN Bloomberg* (2024).
15. "Market value of carbon offsets drops 61%, report finds," *The Guardian* (2024).
16. "Making the case to recycle gold instead of mining it," *BNN Bloomberg* (2023).
17. "The antidote for modern slavery in the renewables supply chain," *Energy Monitor* (2023).
18. "The new gold boom: how long can it last?" *Financial Times* (2023).
19. "A disaster that harms the environment, climate, and humans. Why should gold mining stop now?" *Al Jazeera*, (2023).
20. *How to Save the World Podcast* (2018).
21. "Scientists now know the psychology behind your worries about the environment," *The Washington Post* (2016).

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LANGUAGES:

**English:** Native fluency

**Spanish:** Reading C1; Speaking: B1; Writing: B1

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REFERENCES:

*Dr. Ariell Ahearn*

Departmental Lecturer in Human  
Geography  
School of Geography and the Environment  
University of Oxford  
[ariell.ahearn@ouce.ox.ac.uk](mailto:ariell.ahearn@ouce.ox.ac.uk)

*Professor Richard Powell*

Professor of Arctic Studies  
Scott Polar Research Institute  
University of Cambridge  
[richard.powell@spri.cam.ac.uk](mailto:richard.powell@spri.cam.ac.uk)

*Professor Michael Bravo*

Professor of the History and Geography of  
Science  
Scott Polar Research Institute  
University of Cambridge  
[mb124@cam.ac.uk](mailto:mb124@cam.ac.uk)

*Dr. Maan Barua*

University Lecturer in Human Geography  
Department of Geography  
University of Cambridge  
[maan.barua@geog.cam.ac.uk](mailto:maan.barua@geog.cam.ac.uk)