

# *Anthropology* **and**

# **THE ENDS OF WORLDS**

<http://anthroendsofworlds.wordpress.com/>

## *A Symposium*

**Thursday 25<sup>th</sup>,  
Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2010**

Hosted by the

**Department of Anthropology  
School of Social and  
Political Sciences  
The University of Sydney**

Prof Linda Conner,  
Dr. Sebastian Job (Convenors)

**Keynote speaker**  
**Prof Michael Taussig**  
Columbia University, New York

What is entailed in casting a specifically anthropological light on the ends of worlds, and how might anthropology itself be changed in the process?

Ethnographic fieldwork is often conducted at “worlds’ ends,” or in social worlds whose negative transformations are experienced as endings. Among the world’s comparatively wealthy and culturally dominant the fear that everything is coming to an end sits shoulder to shoulder with security, comfort and optimism. Technological advances and post-industrial affluence coexist with apathy, denial and indifference, as well as anxieties about danger, loss, risk and looming catastrophe.

Anthropology has long contributed to differentiated and pluralised understandings of cosmologies of destruction and renewal. These eschatologies - such as Apocalypse, Kali Yuga, Doomsday, or Mesoamerican calendars – also operate as visions of transcendence. How do end-time doctrines, myths and prophecies articulate with the domain of scientific rationality? How are they caught up in other dimensions of the “global process” such as economic and ecological interdependence? Are there signs of converging demands for a world process that reveals itself as having a purpose, a good “end” to which it must be directed – lest it “really, finally, end”? How is cultural anthropology situated in relation to this persistent quest for a human telos and the prospect of world endings?

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