



## RESEARCH PRESENTATION

### **Learning with student climate strikers' humour: Towards critical affective climate justice literacies**

Dr Eve Mayes, Deakin University

#### **Abstract**

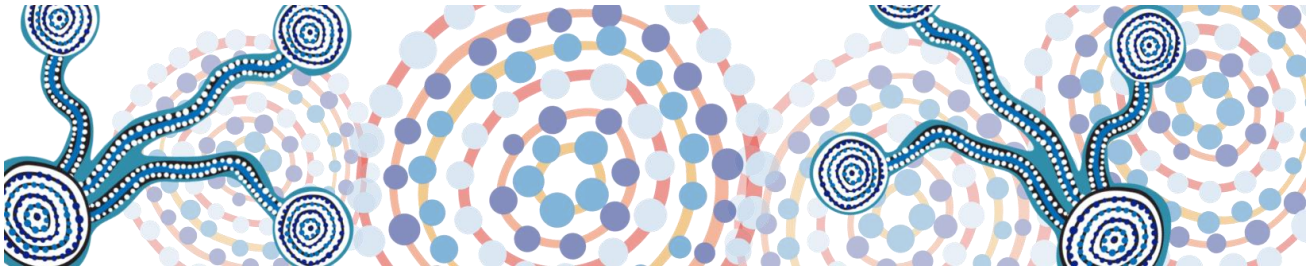
A marked feature of the political tactics of the transnational School Strike 4 Climate movement (also known as Fridays for Futures and Youth Strike for Climate) is the use of humour on cardboard signs, digital memes and social media posts. Young people's cardboard signs, memes and social media posts frequently mobilise humour as public pedagogy and political intervention – to emotionally stir and to politically engage. While students' humour has been at times misinterpreted and its political force trivialised, these texts have simultaneously satirised capitalist colonialist extractivist logics and affirmed that 'another world is possible'. In this paper, I argue that student strikers' creation and mobilisation of humour demonstrate a critical affective climate justice literacy that environmental educators have much to learn from.

Analysing three examples of humour in contemporary student climate justice activism, this paper intersects previous analyses of the potential of humour in social movement studies with recent calls from environmental education scholars to pay greater attention to the potency of emotion for climate justice education, beyond a rationalistic focus on climate science literacy. I extend these insights with work from language arts scholars who have argued the pedagogical potential of critical affective literacy: that is, critical engagement with how readers develop emotional relationships with texts, and how readers' emotional responses are forms of cultural politics. Bringing these insights into the environmental education setting, I ask: how might the student/educator's laughing body be moved towards climate justice action?

At the same time, I explore the potential challenges and limitations of analysing students' climate justice humour in classrooms – particularly the cultural and contextual contingency of humour, the risk of 'killing' the joke through critical analysis or having a joke 'backfire', and current institutional conditions that make educators cautious about appearing to be 'too political' when teaching climate change.

#### **Acknowledgement**

Dr Eve Mayes acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet and pays respects to their Elders past and present.



### *Other Acknowledgements:*

Dr Eve Mayes respectfully acknowledges the work of Dr Evan Center his work collating literature on humour in contemporary social movements.

### **Speaker Profile**

Dr Eve Mayes is a Senior Lecturer in Pedagogy and Curriculum and currently Alfred Deakin Postdoctoral Research Fellow (2020-2021) at Deakin University. Her research is concerned with students', teachers' and school leaders' experiences with enacting student voice in school reform and the roles and responses of schools to student activism. She is currently exploring the roles and responses of schools to students' climate justice activism, and the possibilities for developing transdisciplinary forms of climate justice education. She was previously an English and English as a Second Language Teacher in NSW government secondary schools.

### **Website links**

→ <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6741-2489>

