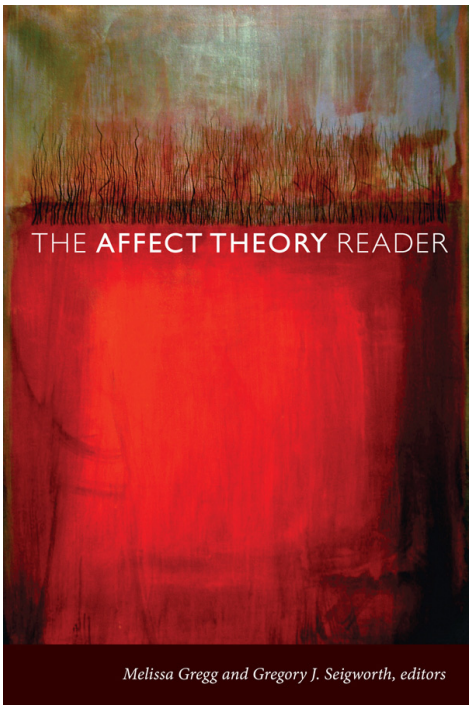
The Affect Theory Reader

Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth, editors



This field-defining collection consolidates and builds momentum in the burgeoning area of affect studies. The contributors include many of the central theorists of affect—those visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious knowing that can serve to drive us toward movement, thought, and ever-changing forms of relation. As Lauren Berlant explores "cruel optimism," Brian Massumi theorizes the affective logic of public threat, and Elspeth Probyn examines shame, they, along with the other contributors, show how an awareness of affect is opening up exciting new insights in disciplines from anthropology, cultural studies, geography, and psychology to philosophy, queer studies, and sociology. In essays diverse in subject matter, style, and perspective, the contributors demonstrate how affect theory illuminates the intertwined realms of the aesthetic, the ethical, and the political as they play out across bodies (human and non-human) in both mundane and extraordinary ways. They reveal the broad theoretical possibilities opened by an awareness of affect as they reflect on topics including ethics, food, public morale, glamor, snark in the workplace, and mental health regimes. The Affect Theory Reader includes an interview with the cultural theorist Lawrence Grossberg and an afterword by the anthropologist Kathleen Stewart. In the introduction, the editors suggest ways of defining affect, trace the concept's history, and highlight the role of affect theory in various areas of study.

Contributors. Sara Ahmed, Ben Anderson, Lauren Berlant, Lone Bertelsen, Steven D. Brown, Patricia Ticineto Clough, Anna Gibbs, Melissa Gregg, Lawrence Grossberg, Ben Highmore, Brian Massumi, Andrew Murphie, Elspeth Probyn, Gregory J. Seigworth, Kathleen Stewart, Nigel Thrift, Ian Tucker, Megan Watkins

Melissa Gregg is a faculty member in the Department of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney. She is the author of *Cultural Studies' Affective Voices*. **Gregory J. Seigworth** is a professor of communication and theater at Millersville University in Pennsylvania.

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"Written by some of the most interesting and important thinkers in the field, the essays in this superb collection prove how any serious consideration of culture and politics needs to involve serious attention to affect. *The Affect Theory Reader* covers remarkable ground: from the ontology of 'future threat' in Bush's preemptive politics to the management of workplace affects in the information economy; from the biology of human mimicry to attachments to promises of the 'good life' that often cruelly wear out economically precarious subjects. Thoughtfully curated and genuinely interdisciplinary with contributors from fields ranging from media studies to geography, Melissa Gregg and Gregory J. Seigworth's reader will be indispensable to anyone working in or adjacent to affect theory."—**Sianne Ngai**, author of *Ugly Feelings*

"*The Affect Theory Reader* is unique. It gathers interesting and provocative articles on affect by well-known theorists and suggestively brings to expression the productive divergence between different philosophical and psychological positions on the subject." —**Erin Manning**, author of *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty*

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