

## Existentialism for existential times? Contemplating the Anthropocene, and other catastrophes

*Thursday, 19 June 2025 09:00 (1h 30m)*

As climate collapse looms, wars rage on, great power competition returns under new management, fascists revel in renaissance, and societies continue to recover from Covid-19, global life seems saturated with existential challenges. Though it emerged to grapple with war and colonial violence, matured in the first nuclear age, and continues to theorise multiple dangerous and anxious phenomena, IR has not, as a discipline, engaged as much with existentialism – even as it treats a number of ‘existential threats’ like climate change in the Anthropocene. Drawing on theories of time, timing, and temporality, this panel builds on recent scholarly collaborations that suggest IR was always existentialist without really admitting it. It expands upon such efforts by tracing the influence of existentialist themes on core IR concerns and by thinking creatively about how to adapt existentialism to our current moment(s). Authors scrutinize what resources existentialist thought and culture might furnish to environmental catastrophe and other global traumas, as well as how existentialism has changed our ability to understand those experiences and ‘the world’ in which they take place. In so doing, they unpack problems of meaning, death, responsibility, and collective action in a time of multiple threats to existence.

**Track Classification:** Emotions in Politics and International Relations Working Group