



# The Affect Theory Reader

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## The Affect Theory Reader From imusti

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

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“*The Affect Theory Reader* is . . . a very valuable resource: it presents essays in conversation in such a way as to provoke further discussion, to hone various definitions and approaches to affect. Gregg and Seigworth frame the conversations in such a way as to draw out the differences between approaches, and their substantial introduction serves as an apt survey of current work. . . . Gregg and Seigworth have assembled an impressive collection of essays and, in their introduction, certainly recognize the limits and scope of such a project. The work is impressive and will certainly catalyze further development in affect theory across disciplines.” - Russ Leo, *Reviews in Cultural Theory*

“As the first definitive collection of essays on affect studies, *The Affect Theory Reader* demonstrates how the affective turn in academia has been, and continues to be felt, throughout a variety of disciplines.” - Marcie Bianco, *Elevate Difference*

“While a reader of the book might be left less rather than more sure of what precisely constitutes ‘affect theory’, or even affect itself, s/he is nevertheless very likely to be moved by the range of both thought and affective styles that make up the volume and constitute what the editors call in the introduction, an ‘inventory of shimmers’ (p11). This incitement to ‘more than discourse’, the capacity ‘to touch, to move, to mobilise readers’ (p24) is exactly what one would hope for from a reader of affect theory, and is what the contributions that make up this collection indeed achieve.” - Michael Goddard, *New Formations*

“*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*

“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’s and Gregory J. Seigworth’s reader will be indispensable to anyone working in or adjacent to affect theory.”—**Sianne Ngai**, author of *Ugly Feelings*

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(Michael Goddard *New Formations*)

About the Author

Melissa Gregg works in the Department of Gender and Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney in Australia. She is the author of *Cultural Studies’ Affective Voices*.

Gregory J. Seigworth is a professor in communication and theater at Millersville University in Pennsylvania.

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