

EEES Department Seminar

Pipe Dreams: The Urgent Global Quest to Transform the Toilet

Chelsea Wald

Freelance journalist writing about science, the environment, health, & technology
<https://chelseawald.com/>

This week's seminar is a special "Book Club" experience facilitated by the producers of *The Outfall* podcast, Robert Osborne, Amy Anderson, and David Ladner. It is co-sponsored by the Clemson Environmental Institute. The selected book is *Pipe Dreams: The Urgent Global Quest to Transform the Toilet*, by Chelsea Wald who will join remotely. The audience is encouraged to participate in the discussion, which will be recorded and turned into a future episode of *The Outfall*.

About the book: *Pipe Dreams* was a finalist for the [2022 NASW Science in Society Journalism Award](#) and longlisted for the [2022 AAAS/Subaru SB&F Prize for Excellence in Science Books](#). It explores the surprisingly interesting topic of the toilet. Most of us do not give much thought to the centerpiece of our bathrooms, but the toilet is an unexpected paradox. On the one hand, it is a modern miracle: a ubiquitous fixture in a vast sanitation system that has helped add decades to human lifespan by reducing disease. On the other hand, the toilet is also a tragic failure: less than half of the world's population can access a toilet that safely manages body waste, including many right here in the United States. And it is inefficient, squandering clean water as well as the nutrients, energy, and information contained in the stuff we flush away. While we see radical technological change in almost every other aspect of our lives, we remain stuck in a sanitation status quo—in part because the topic of toilets is taboo. Fortunately, there's hope—and *Pipe Dreams* daringly profiles the growing army of scientists, engineers, philanthropists, entrepreneurs, and activists worldwide who are overcoming their aversions and focusing their formidable skills on making toilets accessible and healthier for all.

Bio: Chelsea Wald is a freelance journalist who writes about science, the environment, health, technology, and anything else that delights, disturbs, or distracts. Currently, that means everything about toilets. She has been a guest on [NPR's Fresh Air](#) and on the podcast [99% Invisible](#). After graduating from Columbia University with a bachelor's in astronomy, she traveled to Chile on a Fulbright grant to study ancient Andean cosmology. She returned to the United States and earned a master's in journalism from Indiana University. Before launching her freelance career, she worked at a local NPR affiliate, physics news and blogging sites, publications for talented young people, and a one-minute radio show about science. She now lives in The Hague and reports from around the world.



2:30 PM

**Friday, December 2, 2022
Rich Lab Auditorium**

Also available online via Zoom:

<https://clemson.zoom.us/j/5783910968>