

2023-2024 MES/MESc Speaker Series

Sandia: A Mountain, A Family, and the Climate Crisis

Date: Wednesday, October 11, 2023 **Time:** 12:00-1:00 pm (Brown Bag Lunch Seminar)

Zoom Link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86377473019?pwd=aXkwZEpaLzZjV3p2SHdieVBNMkp1UT09>

Or In person: A252-C (The Sandbox, in the Teaching Hub)

Speaker: Robert M. Wilson

Co-Chairs: Dr. Kirsten Greer (CRC in Global Environmental Histories and Geographies) and Dr. Colin McCarter (CRC in Climate and Environmental Change)

In this presentation, I examine a New Mexico mountain range and a small ski area to tell a larger story about the environmental history of recreation, climate politics, and global warming in the American Southwest. The La Madera ski area (later renamed Sandia) was created by Robert Nordhaus, a member of a prominent family in New Mexico. Established during the Great Depression, Nordhaus expanded the ski area after he served in the 10th Mountain Division—the U.S. ski troops—during the Second World War. His two sons, Bob Nordhaus and William Nordhaus, learned to ski there. In their careers, the two men played pivotal roles in crafting America's response to climate change through policy and economics. And his grandson, Ted Nordhaus, is a key figure in the development of ecomodernism, an influential environmental philosophy that advocates state-led technological innovation as a solution to climate change and other environmental problems. Meanwhile, the ski area their father and grandfather founded has suffered due to a two decade-long megadrought—worsened by climate change—and seems destined to close for good in the next few years. This presentation is a small-scale, place-based account of this storied mountain range and ski area and the involvement of the Nordhauses, who have perhaps done more than any other American family to shape the country's response to climate change while also influencing environmental governance in the Global North.

Bob Wilson is associate professor in the Department of Geography and the Environment at Syracuse University. He has written extensively on the history of wildlife conservation and the history of environmentalism. A former Rachel Carson Fellow in Munich, Germany, his current research examines the future of winter sports in a warming world.

