

**12.03.2026**  
**17:30**

**Auditorium P**  
**Plateau-Rozier**

# **CARL H.** SARTON MEDAL

2025  
2026

# **NIGHTINGALE**

Professor Carl H. Nightingale will be handed the Sarton Medal 2025-2026 for the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture. The Sarton Committee, the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture and the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning are warmly welcoming you to this event. The event will be followed by a drink.

On the next page you can find the abstract of the lecture Professor Nightingale will give at this occasion. Michiel Dehaene will give the Laudatio. Please join us on this festive occasion!

You can register [here](#).

## LECTURE **Building Our Urban Planet: Terraformation in History, Theory, and Practice**

**Carl H. Nightingale** is Professor Emeritus of urban history and world history at the State University at Buffalo and Coordinator of the Global Urban History Project. He is the author of *Segregation: A Global History of Divided Cities* (2012), *Earthopolis: A Biography of Our Urban Planet* (2022) and *Our Urban Planet in Theory and History* (2024).

CARL H. NIGHTINGALE

# **Building Our Urban Planet: Terraformation in History, Theory, and Practice**

LECTURE ABSTRACT

How should urban historians approach the predicament of Our Time, when humans have achieved unprecedented, and obscenely unequal, power to change the relationship between Sun and Earth? Should we add the carbon footprint of urban buildings to that of car commuting then subtract the efficiencies of dense living and public transit? Should we simply treat both the planetary acceleration of cities and climate change as twin epiphenomena of advanced capitalism? Or can we offer a more nuanced diagnosis from our highly textured, multicausal, dialectical treatments of thousands of case studies spread across all six millennia of urban history?

Begin by recognizing that cities are power: the premier products and enablers of a series of specific practices or “verbs” arising from our gamble that making, growing, and using human space will allow us to make, grow, and use human power. A close look at one of these constituent verbs, to Build, forces us to stretch “the urban” to include both cities and many non-city spaces. To Build is thus best understood as “Earth-Making”: to Terraform. The larger Urban Condition, and its oft-interrupted growth to planetary scope, are a product of “terrapolitics,” the vexed historical relationship between geo-solar energies needed to build cities and the augmented power cities accord to humans over other humans, other lifeforms, and the changing geophysical condition of Earth and Sun.

This talk scouts out paths for urban historians to address the longest and largest contexts of our subject. Inspired by paleoclimatologists’ use of tiny observations to conjure narratives of Earth Time, I propose a historically informed theory of the terrapolitical dynamics by which urban space spread across Earth as a whole, creating Our Urban Planet.

**Lecture for the Sarton Medal 2025-2026**  
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