As the calm waters of the Holocene give way to the churning rapids of climate instability, more of us than ever before feel the need to act, to take a stand, to make a difference for the planet, and for social justice. But how? What ideas about social change, institutional lethargy, environmental obligation and our own power in the world might best guide us – or lead us astray?

Informed by more than a decade of research into undergraduate attitudes toward social change and environmental sustainability, Professor Maniates explores how attractive notions of "living green" can counterintuitively foster creeping cynicism and environmental despair, not to mention a "politics of guilt" that erodes the pillars of social mobilization. He suggests "trim tab" thinking as a partial antidote, and argues for a species of personal and educational tenacity matched to the rough water ahead.

Michael Maniates is Professor of Social Sciences and Head of Studies of Environmental Studies at Yale-NUS College, Singapore. His current work focuses on competing paths to sustainable consumption, counter-consumption movements in southeast Asia, and higher education for a post-growth world. His co-authored book Consumption Corridors (with Doris Fuchs and others) was just released, and a single-authored book (Can Living Green Make A Difference?) is nearly complete.

Before joining Yale-NUS in 2013, Michael was a Senior Visiting Professor of Environmental Studies at Oberlin College (2011-2013), and a Full Professor of Political Science and Environmental Science at Allegheny College (1993 – 2013). A graduate of UC Berkeley's Energy and Resources Group, Michael has co-founded two award-winning environmental organizations, consulted widely with colleges and universities on sustainability initiatives, and is a frequent participant with Semester at Sea, where he has served as Academic Dean and twice as Director of Global Studies. He is the 2021 recipient of Yale-NUS's Distinguished Teaching award, a co-recipient of the Sprout award for the best book in global environmental affairs and, perhaps most impressively, was for more than a decade the manager of, at the time, the world's largest (by volume) frozen yogurt shop, in Berkeley, California.