

HIS493: Topics in Global History—Environmental History



Anselm Kiefer: *der Morgenthau Plan* (2012), Albright-Knox Art Gallery

Course Meetings: Mondays and Wednesdays, 17:00-19:00 in MN 2210.

Instructor: Steven McClellan

Office: TBA

Office Hour: TBA

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Course Description:

Environmental history considers how humans and natural environments have interacted and reshaped each other in the past. As we explore the environmental history of the world, we'll follow several paths of inquiry. How has the natural environment influenced human actions, decisions, and cultural and social development? How have people perceived or imagined the natural world? How have they reshaped and even reordered the natural environment? How have science and technology shaped the environment? How have people struggled with each other over ways the environment should be treated and understood? What have been the intended and unintended consequences of their actions?

Course Objectives:

Students should leave the course with:

- An understanding of some of the major themes and questions of environmental history;
- An understanding of the special methodologies employed in environmental history, particularly in global contexts;
- An understanding of the similarities and differences between the environmental histories of various parts of the world and different historical approaches;

- An ability to critically analyze, discuss, and write about a text;
- An appreciation for the way historians of different eras and places grapple with the same theoretical and thematic questions.

Course Website: Our course website is on Quercus: <https://q.utoronto.ca>. You must be registered on the website with a U of T email address (@mail.utoronto.ca). If you wish to use a different email address than your utoronto address, set up forwarding to ensure that you receive course information and updates. Announcements, study sheets, lecture outlines/images and course and tutorial information are available on the Quercus site.

Course readings:

Please see the class schedule. All readings for this course will be posted on the course website (Quercus).

Course requirements:

Class discussion: 20%

Presentations (at least two): 20%

One-Page Response Papers (3 for 5% each): 15%

Environment on Film Assignment: 20%

Due in class on July 25

Subfields Assignment: 25%

Due in class on August 10

Class discussion (20%):

This is a discussion-based course, and its success depends on your involvement and that of your fellow classmates. Attendance is *mandatory*, and you are expected to participate regularly. Each week, we will expect you to have critically read all assignments for the day and to discuss and raise questions about them. Always bring each week's readings to class. Each week, two of you will be asked to help lead the discussion by developing two or three questions to help launch the conversation.

Your participation is the key to the success of the class. Think of our discussions as lively conversations about issues of mutual interest to all of us. Our purpose is to explore, analyze, and reflect on the arguments made in the readings, the evidence they use to support those arguments, and the wisdom the authors impart (or the lack thereof). Our other purpose is to explore your own ideas about the issues raised in the readings. Come prepared to express your ideas and have them challenged by others.

3 One-Page Response Papers (15%):

For this assignment you will select an assigned reading and write a single-spaced one-page précis analyzing the chosen reading's arguments, use of sources, methodology, and scholarly contribution. More about how to write a "winning" précis will be posted in the first week of class. You cannot select a reading that you are doing a presentation on.

Student Presentations 20%:

Each session, following Week 1, we have discussion leaders who will introduce the readings in a 5-10 minute presentation and then present either main points or questions for consideration by the

entire class. They will prepare discussion questions in advance and post them on the course website before noon on the day of the session they'll be leading.

Environment on Film Assignment (20%):

Your task will be to select a film (movie, documentary, or newsreel) from a list provided at the start of the term, watch it, and provide a *two-page, single-spaced* review of it. While watching the film, it is a good idea to follow along with this worksheet. In your review, you should provide a brief plot synopsis that assumes your reader is not familiar with the film. Describe the film in general terms. However the review should go beyond a summary of the plot and provide analysis. What does it cover? What do you see as the main purpose of the film? Relate the film's content to class discussions, readings, and themes. Is the film historically accurate? Does it challenge or contradict anything that you learned in this course?

Historiographical Subfields Assignment (25%):

This assignment asks you to analyze the state of research for a particular field of research in an area that interests you. Your first step will be to identify some books and articles relevant to the topic of your interest. Use these articles and books, as well as reviews of the latter, to identify the major debates on the topic and the evidence used to support various positions. In a 5-7 page essay describe these debates and discuss the ways in which this subfield interacts with, or can inform, mainstream scholarship in the field of global environmental history.

Aside from particular geographical areas, some specialized subfields to consider: international/diplomatic history, family history, women's or gender history, demographic history, ethnohistory, history of science or medicine, history of technology, religious history, economic history, agricultural history, history of education, military history.

Late Policy. Assignments must be submitted at the beginning of class on the due date. Late assignments will be assessed a 5% penalty per day. Late assignments or missed work due to emergency medical reasons require official UTM documentation. Students are required to declare their absence on ROSI/ACORN in order to receive academic accommodation for any course work such as missed deadlines.

Extensions can only request special consideration from the Department of Historical Studies (not the course instructor.) Instructions for Special Consideration Requests to make-up any in-class tests or extensions on assignments can be found here: <https://www.utm.utoronto.ca/historical-studies/resources/specialconsideration>. The form must be sent directly to the Department, no later than THREE days from the deadline. Additionally, all requests for special consideration must be sent to the course instructor no later than 11:59 pm on the night of the original deadline.

Academic integrity:

The University of Toronto has a strict zero tolerance policy on plagiarism, as defined in section B.I.1. (d) of the University's Code of Behavior on Academic Matters. It is up to you to know the Code and understand what constitutes a violation of Academic Integrity. As such, be sure to:

- Consult the University's site on Academic Integrity: <http://www.utoronto.ca/academicintegrity/>
- Acquaint yourself with the Code and Appendix "A" Section 2;

<http://www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm>

• Consult the site How Not to Plagiarize:

<http://www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/usingsources/how-not-to-plagiarize>

Remember: plagiarism through negligence, as distinct from deliberate intent, is still plagiarism in the eyes of the University. Take notes carefully, use quotation marks religiously when copying and pasting from digital sources (so that no one, including you, mistakes someone else's words for your own), and document your research process. And always, when in doubt, ask.

AccessAbility Centre and the Academic Skills Centre:

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and the AccessAbility Resource Centre as soon as possible. AccessAbility staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations. Please call 905-569-4699 or email access.utm@utoronto.ca. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course. For more info, please see <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/access/>.

All UTM students are eligible to use the resources of the Academic Skills Centre. For information regarding, e.g., individual appointments, academic skills, such as writing, reading, and notetaking workshops, see <http://www.utm.utoronto.ca/asc/>.

Class Schedule:

Week 1: Defining Global History and Environmental History

Meeting 1: The Global & the Environment

- Joachim Radkau, Chapter 1 of *Nature and Power. A Global History of the Environment*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 1-35.
- Sebastian Conrad, *Global History*. Introduction, 1-16.
- Donald Worster, "Nature and the Disorder of History." *Environmental History Review* 18 (1994): 1-15.
- Gabriella Corona, "What is Global Environmental History? Conversation With Piero Bevilacqua, Guillermo Castro, Ranjan Chakrabarti, Kobus Du Pisani, John R. McNeill, Donald Worster." *Global Environment* 2 (2008): 228-49.

Meeting 2: Intersections

- Nancy Langston, "Gender Transformed: Endocrine Disruptors in the Environment," from Virginia Scharff, ed., *Seeing Nature Through Gender* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2003), 129-168.
- Alan MacEachern, "Restricted Clientele! Everyday Racism in Canadian National Parks", *NiCHE* (2020): <https://niche-canada.org/2020/09/09/race-revisited-in-canadian-national-parks/>
- David Silkenat, *Scars on the Land: An Environmental History of Slavery in the American South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), selections.

Recommended if you can find it (copy was unavailable in library):

- Ruth A. Morgan, "Health, Hearth and Empire: Climate, Race and Reproduction in British India and Western Australia", *Environmental History* 27, 2, (2021), 229-250.

Week 2: Agriculture and Animals

Meeting 1: Changes to the Land Through Science

- Pekka Hämmäläinen, "The Politics of Grass: European Expansion, Ecological Change, and Indigenous Power in the Southwest Borderlands," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 67.2 (2010), 173-208.
- Ajit Menon. "Colonial Constructions of 'Agrarian Fields' and 'Forests' in the Kolli Hills." *Indian Economic and Social History Review* 41 (2004): 315-37.
- Sigrid Schmalzer, Chapter 1, "Agriculture Science and the Socialist State" in *Red Revolution, Green Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), 27-46.

Meeting 2: Communist Pigs, Fascist Pigs, Capitalist Beef

- Thomas Fleischman, *Communist Pigs: An Animal History of East Germany's Rise and Fall* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020), selections.
- Tiago Saraiva, *Fascist Pigs: Technoscientific Organisms and the History of Fascism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2018), selections.
- Joshua Specht, *Red Meat Republic: A Hoof-to-Table History of How Beef Changed America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), selections.

Week 3: Industrialization: Carbonization and Mining

Meeting 1: Economics of Power: Oil and Coal

- Thomas G. Andrews, "Dying with their boots on," Chapter 4 of *Killing for Coal: American's Deadliest Labor War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 122-156.
- Paul Sabin, "'A Dive into Nature's Great Grab-bag': Nature, Gender, and Capitalism in the Early Pennsylvania Oil Industry," *Pennsylvania History* 66 (1999): 472-505.
- Rüdiger Graf, *Oil and Sovereignty: Petro-Knowledge and Energy Policy in the United States and Western Europe in the 1970s* (New York: Bergahn Books, 2018), selections.
- Darren Dochuk, "Blessed by Oil, Cursed with Crude: God and Black Gold in the American Southwest" in *Journal of American History* 99 (2012): 51-61.

Meeting 2: Labor, Migration, Exploitation: Extracting Nature

- Mae Nagi, "The Chinese Question: The Gold Rushes and Global Politics" in Benjamin Mountford and Stephen Tuffnell, *A Global History of Gold Rushes* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018): 109-136.
- Jessica van Horssen, *A Town Called Asbestos: Environmental Contamination, Health, and Resilience in a Resource Community* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), selections.
- Elizabeth Carolyn Miller, *Extraction Ecologies and the Literature of the Long Exhaustion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2021), selections.

Week 4: Colonization and War

Meeting 1: Colonialism, Imperialism, and Environment

- Mackenzie, A. Fiona D. "Contested Ground: Colonial Narratives and the Kenyan Environment, 1920-1945." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26 (2000): 697-718.
- Curtin, Philip D. "The End of the 'White Man's Grave'? Nineteenth-Century Mortality in West Africa." *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 21 (1990): 63-88.
- J.R. McNeil, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), selections.
- Eric T. Jennings, *Imperial Heights: Dalat and the Making and Undoing of French Indochina* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), selections.

Meeting 2: Landscapes of Blood, Destroyed Landscapes

- Dorothee Brantz, "Environments of Death: Trench Warfare on the Western Front, 1914-1918" in Charles E. Closmann, *War and Environment: Military Destruction in the Modern Age* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2009);
- William M. Tsutsui, "Landscapes in the Dark Valley: Toward an Environmental History of Wartime Japan" in Richard P. Tucker and Edmund Russell, eds. *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally: Toward an Environmental History of Warfare* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2004).
- David Zierler, *The Invention of Ecocide: Agent Orange, Vietnam, and the Scientists who Changed the Way We Think about the Environment* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), selections.

Week 5: Fire and Water

Meeting 1: Fire and History

- Baer, Marc David. "The Great Fire of 1660 and the Islamization of Christian and Jewish Space in Istanbul." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36 (2004): 159-81.
- Simon Pooley, "Fire, Smoke, and Expertise in South Africa's Grasslands" in *Environmental History*, 23, 1 (2018), 28-55.
- Mica Jorgenson, "Fire Break? Environmental History and the 2019 Wildfire Season". <https://niche-canada.org/2019/10/23/fire-break-environmental-history-and-the-2019-wildfire-season/>
- Stephen J. Pyne, *Fire: A Brief History*, second edition (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019), selections.

Meeting 2: Water: Encounters and Management

- Sunil Amrith, *Unruly Waters: How Mountain Rivers and Monsoons Have Shaped South Asia's History* (New York: Penguin Books, 2020), selections.
- Andy Horowitz, *Katrina: A History 1915-2015* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), selections.
- Michèle Dagenais, *Montreal, City of Water: An Environmental History* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), selections.

- Laleh Khalili, *Sinews of War and Trade: Shipping and Capitalism in the Arabian Peninsula* (London: Verso Books, 2020), selections.

Week 6: The Nuclear Age and the Great Acceleration

Meeting 1: From Light Green Societies to Green Politics

- Kate Brown and Olha Martynyuk, “The Harvests of Chernobyl” in *Aeon*. <https://aeon.co/essays/ukraine-s-berry-pickers-are-reaping-a-radioactive-bounty>;
- Kate Brown, “A People’s Truth” <https://aeon.co/essays/downwinders-the-noxious-legacy-of-the-hanford-nuclear-site>
- Gabriele Hecht, Introduction and “Nuclearity at Work” in *Africans and the Global Uranium Trade*, 1-10 and 219-258.
- Stephen Milder, *Greening Democracy: The Anti-Nuclear Movement and Political Environmentalism in West Germany and Beyond, 1968-1983* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), selections.

Meeting 2: Has History a Future?

- J.R. McNeill and Peter Engelke, Introduction and “Energy and Population” in *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014).
- Selections from Andreas Malm.
- Selections from “Environmental History in the Era of COVID-19,” *Environmental History*, 25 (2020).