

History 228 / Section 001

Modern Global Environmental History

MoWe 4:00 – 5:15 pm,
Humanities Bldg. 1217

Instructor:

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pm

Modernity and globalization have become inseparable concepts and the both have had an undeniable impact on the natural world over the last two centuries. For instance, the role of humanity in radically changing the environment since the Industrial Revolution has been recently acknowledged with the coinage of the concept of anthropocene.

In this course we will discuss the environmental consequences and context of major themes in modern world history, including capitalism, industrialization, urbanization, colonialism, and warfare. Central to the class will be the environmentally informed analysis of the two sides of the Hobsbawmian “age of empire”: the final conquest and subjugation of the world by European colonial powers and the rise of new forms of economy, production, and consumption since the late eighteenth century. Moreover, the evolution of the perceptions of the natural world in an increasingly small world will be considered, as well as the wider social and political impact of such perceptions and their relationship with existing power structures.

Assignments:

Homework and in-class exercises: Short homework assignments may be assigned, in particular regarding the viewing of documentary films and guest lectures. Deadlines and further details about format and length will be given in class. Occasionally there will also be in-class exercises of various sorts and discussion sections: you are thus advised to come to class ready to discuss the assigned readings. These exercises will not be graded, but help to inform your participation grade.

Exams: There will be two exams: a mid-term on 11 Mar 2015, in class; and a final exam scheduled for 10 May 2015, 2:45 pm. If you have an unusual conflict or problem, please contact me before the exams. Both exams will comprise a combination of short-answer (3-4) and essay questions (1-2). Each exam will count for 28% of the final grade. The mid-term will focus on topics covered in weeks 1-7 and the final on topics covered in weeks 8-15.

Mini-essays: Up to 24% of the final grade will be assigned for 3 “Places & Events” mini-essays (8% each). These are very short summaries of environmentally significant places or events, with supporting information. They appear on the Environment and Society Portal's map and timeline:

www.environmentandsociety.org/places-events.

Each mini-essay should not be longer than 150 words, plus a summary of up to 50 words. They should also include one copyright cleared image, at least two further readings, one related link, and all further required metadata. The full guidelines are available at this link: www.environmentandsociety.org/places-events/guidelines-contributors.

Explore the Portal's map or timeline to discover places and events that have not yet been covered. Let yourself be inspired by the weekly readings and lectures to fill the gaps. This is a research intensive assignment, which requires to go beyond in-class readings, exploring references and quotations, to make a historiographically sound description of places and events in modern global environmental history. Start early!

There is the possibility that these mini-essays might be published on the Environment & Society Portal, with full credits to students, but a final decision on this will be taken independently by the Portal. I will forward the best entries to the Portal after grading. Let me know if you do not want your mini-essays to be considered for publication.

The final deadline for the mini-essays is 22 Apr, but you are more than welcome to submit entries earlier than that. All mini-essays should be submitted in a modifiable format: any text, Windows, Libre/OpenOffice format works. Text should be thoroughly proofread. Formatting, grammar, syntax, ability to follow the guidelines, and quality of the chosen image will all be graded. Submissions after the 22 Apr deadline will impact your participation grade: 1 point will be deduced for each day of delay.

Grading

Letter grades will be converted from the following scale:

93-100 = A; 88-92 = AB; 83-87 = B; 78-82 = BC; 70-77 = C; 60-69 = D; 59-below =

F.
Grades per coursework will be assigned following this rubric:

–	20%
Participation	28%
– Mid-term	24%
– Mini-essays	28%
– Final exam	

Required books

Guha, Ramachandra. *Environmentalism: A Global History*. Longman World History Series. New York: Longman, 2000.

Hobsbawm, E. J. *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*. New York: Vintage, 1989.

McNeill, J. R. *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2001.

Scott, James. *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

Bayly, C. A. *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914: Global Connections and Comparisons*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2004.

Suggested reading

Rael, Patrick. *Reading, Writing, and Researching for History: A Guide for College Students*. Brunswick, ME: Bowdoin College, 2004 www.bowdoin.edu/writing-guides/

Course policies

Attendance: Attending classes is the student's responsibility and attendance will not be taken. This class has a discussion component and your involvement is essential for the course to reach its pedagogical goals. As a reminder: just showing up to class is necessary, but not sufficient, to gain grades for participation. I invite you to notify me within the first two weeks of class of the specific dates for which you request relief for religious observance, since these may affect your ability to respect the deadlines.

Reading assignments: Reading assigned texts before classes is expected. These texts are the core materials of the course. Their reading will affect your participation grade and is essential for a successful completion of assignments.

Academic integrity: In any written assignment it is necessary to acknowledge and fully quote your sources and references. You should NEVER attribute to yourself, or give the impression that you are attributing to yourself, the words and phrasing of others. Plagiarism is an unacceptable ethical infraction and can lead to serious consequences. For further information on how to avoid plagiarism please refer to the UW-Madison Writing Center webpages: <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>

Communication: E-mails will be answered only on weekdays 10am-5pm. If you have any questions that require a longer answer please arrange a meeting. In e-mails please always use a subject line.

Modifications to Syllabus: The syllabus may be subject to changes. Reasonable notice will be given.

Course Schedule

Week 1 – 21 Jan 2015 – Introduction of course and presentation of the syllabus

- McNeill, J. R. "Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History." *History and Theory* 42, no. 4 (December 1, 2003): 5–43.

Week 2 – 26 and 28 Jan 2015 – A long age of empire

- Ch. 2, 3, 12 and 13 of Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*
- Introduction of Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*

Week 3 – 2 and 4 Feb 2015 – Modernizing nature

- Ch. 1, 3, 6 and 8 of Scott, *Seeing Like a State*
- Ch. 7 of Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*

Week 4 – 9 and 11 Feb 2015 – Industrialization and energy transitions

- Introduction of Landes, David *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present*. 2. ed. repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005 [Orig. ed. 1969]
- Ch. 10 of McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*
- Ch. 5 of Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*

The lecture of 9 February will be held by Prof. Eric Schatzberg, Director of the Holtz Center for Science & Technology Studies.

Week 5 – 16 and 18 Feb 2015 – The making of the Third World

- Part 3 "The Political Ecology of Famine" in Davis, Mike. *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*. New York: Verso, 2002.

Week 6 – 23 and 25 Feb 2015 – Resource use and colonialism

- Ch. 2 of McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*
- Ch. 6 of Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*

Week 7 – 2 and 4 Mar 2015 – Water: consumption, pollution, irrigation, power

- Ch. 5 and 6 of McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*

Week 8 – 9 and 11 Mar 2015 – Changing air: smoke, pollution, climate

- Ch. 3 and 4 of McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*

The mid-term exam will take place on 11 Mar.

Week 9 – 16 and 18 Mar 2015 – Environments of war

- Ch. 12 of Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*

A documentary film relevant to the week's topic will be screened on 18 Mar.

Week 10 – 23 and 25 Mar 2015 – Population and urbanization

- “The Role of Urbanization in Environmental History” in Hays, Samuel P. *Explorations in Environmental History: Essays*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998,
- Ch. 11 of Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*

Spring Break – 28 Mar – 5 Apr 2015

Week 11 – 6 and 8 Apr 2015 – Germs, plants, animals

- Ch. 7 and 8 of McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*
- Introduction of Gissibl, Bernhard, Sabine Höhler, and Patrick Kupper. *Civilizing Nature: National Parks in Global Historical Perspective*. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012.

Week 12 – 13 and 15 Apr 2015 – The roots of environmentalism

- Part 1 of Guha, *Environmentalism*

Week 13 – 20 and 22 Apr 2015 – Decolonization, development, and disasters

- Ch. 7 of Scott, *Seeing Like a State*
- Pfister, Christian. «Learning From Nature-Induced Disasters: Theoretical Considerations and Case Studies from Western Europe». In *Natural Disasters, Cultural Responses: Case Studies Toward a Global Environmental History*, 17–40. Lanahm, MD: Lexington Books, 2009
- Pritchard, Sara B. «An Envirotechnical Disaster: Nature, Technology, and Politics at Fukushima». *Environmental History* 17 (aprile 2012): 213–43.

One class this week will be given by Dr. Giacomo Parrinello, Marie Curie Fellow at Louisiana State University.

The final deadline for the mini-essays is 22 Apr before class.

Week 14 – 27 and 29 Apr 2015 – Environmentalism as a global ideology

- Part 2 of Guha, *Environmentalism*
- Ch. 11 of McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*

Week 15 – 4 and 6 May 2015 – The great acceleration(s): legacies and challenges

- Steffen, Will, Jacques Grinewald, Paul J. Crutzen, and John R. McNeill. “The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives.” *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A* no. 369 (2011): 842–867.
doi:10.1098/rsta.2010.0327.
- Ch. 13 of Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World*