



**History 465 / Environmental Studies 465**  
**Global Environmental History: Nature and Science in the Early Modern World**

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Virtual Office Hours: Wednesday 4:00PM-6:00PM

Fall 2020  
1131 Mosse Humanities  
Wednesday 1:20PM-3:15PM

**Introduction**

During the early modern period of world history, from about 1500 to 1800 CE, the relationship between human beings and the natural environment underwent a profound transformation. Intercontinental transfers of flora and fauna, and perhaps the start of the Anthropocene – a new era in the earth's history – laid the groundwork for modern globalization, industrialization, and imperialism. Cross-cultural contact and exchange between the Old World and the New gave birth to worldviews: The Scientific Revolution in Europe arose alongside alternative approaches to nature, from East Asia to North America. As the world changed, so too did efforts to change it; the result was modern imperial projects to conserve, exploit, manipulate, and control the earth in new ways. In this newly interconnected global environment, nature and science each transformed the other.

This course is organized thematically, chronologically, and geographically to introduce you to three related historical fields: global history, the history of science, and environmental history. In Unit I, we study the global transformations that took place in the environment at the beginning of the modern era as societies became linked together, focusing on the Atlantic World. In Unit II, we consider European, Chinese, and Native American approaches to nature in a comparative and cross-cultural context. In Unit III, we examine how diverse peoples shaped and were shaped by the natural environment, focusing on empires in the Pacific World. Grading is based on oral and online participation, as well as writing assignments leading up to a final paper in which you will ask and answer your own historical question. This course is suitable for undergraduates in any field, and no previous background is required.

## Learning Objectives

This course will help you achieve educational goals related both to historical content and transferable skills.

In terms of content, you will learn to:

- 1) understand the environmental transformations that took place in the early modern world
- 1) appreciate and compare approaches to nature across diverse human cultures
- 1) explain the origins of contemporary debates about nature, science, and the environment

In terms of skills, you will learn to

- 1) research, interpret, analyze, and criticize different kinds of sources
- 1) engage and empathize with viewpoints that are different from your own
- 1) construct and defend your own historical narratives

## Readings

Readings should be completed for the day on the schedule under which they are listed. Combined readings are normally less than 100 pages a week, but the style, substance, and difficulty of texts varies greatly. We will discuss adjusting reading strategies throughout the semester. All readings are provided or available online, and there is no required textbook.

*Primary sources:* Historians use primary sources – artifacts dating from the period under analysis – to tell stories about the past. Primary sources for this course include travelogues, letters, philosophical texts, paintings, poems, maps, and other resources that we can use as evidence to determine and explain what happened.

*Secondary sources:* Historians engage with secondary sources, composed by recent scholars, to anchor their interpretations. Other historical studies can provide their own narratives and arguments, while theoretical works from disciplines, including anthropology, philosophy, and environmental studies offer additional theoretical models and methodological tools.

## Grading:

In this seminar course, you will not only learn about history, but also how to be a historian. You will be graded based on weekly participation, several short assignments, and a final project in which you will conduct original historical research. Further details will be discussed in class.

*Weekly Discussion and Participation: 40%*

In this seminar course, you will all learn from each other. Every week, you are responsible for a brief reading response online and active participation in class. Unexcused absences will adversely affect your grade.

*Discussion Leader: (Week variable) (1 page) 10%*

Each student will sign up for a day to open discussion. For that day, write a one-page response the readings to share with the class by 5PM Monday and introduce the materials at the beginning of our meeting.

*Historiographical Analysis (Week 5) (1-2 pages) 5%*

Pick two different author's approaches to the same topic from the Unit I course readings. What are the similarities and differences? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each? Which do you find more compelling, and why?

*Final Paper Proposal (Week 9) (1-2 pages) (5%)*

To begin your final paper, do the following: 1) Propose a historical topic. 2) Find and summarize two secondary sources about it. 3) Raise some related questions that you find interesting. 4) Suggest some primary sources that could be used to answer it.

*Final Paper Primary Source Analysis (Week 11) (1-2 pages) (5%)*

Find one primary source. Answer the following questions: 1) Where, when, and by whom was it created? 2) Why was it created – what was its purpose and what points was it intended to make? 3) What are some interpretive questions that you could use it to answer in your final paper?

*Final Paper (Week 15) (5-7 pages) (35%)*

Ask and answer a historical question related to early modern global environmental history. The final paper must cite at least one primary source and two secondary sources. Incorporating writing from all previous assignments is allowed and encouraged.

## **Credit Policy**

The credit standard for this 3-credit course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course's learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit or 9 hours per week), which include regularly scheduled meeting times (group seminar meetings of 115 minutes per week), guided individual research, dedicated online time, reading, writing, individual consultations with the instructor, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

## **Accommodations**

**Disabilities:** The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform faculty of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. Faculty will work either directly with the student or in coordination with the

McBurney Center to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

Religious observances: The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports accommodation of religious observances that might conflict with the course schedule. Students must notify the instructor within the first two weeks of class of the specific days or dates on which they request relief. Make-ups may be scheduled before or after the regularly scheduled requirements. It is understood that instructors may set reasonable limits on the total number of days claimed by any one student.

### **In-person Instruction Statement (COVID-19)**

This is an in-person course meeting once per week. Please note however that not every session of an in-person course needs to meet physically. Given the unpredictable status of the COVID-19 pandemic, the frequency and format of class meetings is subject to modification at any time.

The History Department has directed instructors to halt the class and, if necessary, leave the classroom if anyone in the room is not wearing a properly fitted mask.

Individuals are expected to wear a face covering while inside any university building. Face coverings must be worn correctly (i.e., covering both your mouth and nose) in the building if you are attending class in person. If any student is unable to wear a face-covering, an accommodation may be provided due to disability, medical condition, or other legitimate reason. Students with disabilities or medical conditions who are unable to wear a face covering should contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center or their Access Consultant if they are already affiliated. Students requesting an accommodation unrelated to disability or medical condition, should contact the Dean of Students Office. Students who choose not to wear a face covering may not attend in-person classes, unless they are approved for an accommodation or exemption. All other students not wearing a face covering will be asked to put one on or leave the classroom. Students who refuse to wear face coverings appropriately or adhere to other stated requirements will be reported to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards and will not be allowed to return to the classroom until they agree to comply with the face covering policy.

Student should continually monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms and get tested for the virus if they have symptoms or have been in close contact with someone with COVID-19. Student should reach out to instructors as soon as possible if they become ill or need to isolate or quarantine, in order to make alternate plans for how to proceed with the course. Students are strongly encouraged to communicate with their instructor concerning their illness and the anticipated extent of their absence from the course (either in-person or remote). The instructor will work with the student to provide alternative ways to complete the course work.

## Schedule

### 1. 09/02 Introduction

William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," 7-28  
Thomas Cole, The Course of Empire [5 Paintings], (1830s)

## Unit I: Early Modern Environments

### 2. 09/09 The Anthropocene

J.R. McNeil, "The First 150,000 Years," 3-17  
Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin, "Defining the Anthropocene," 171-180  
Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," 197-222

### 3. 09/16 The Columbian Exchange

Alfred Crosby, "Ecological Imperialism: The Overseas Migration of Western Europeans as a Biological Phenomenon," 1-11; *The Columbian Exchange*, xi-xxvii, 3-21, 165-202  
Marcy Norton, "Tasting Empire: Chocolate and the European Internalization of Mesoamerican Aesthetics," 660-691

### 4. 09/23 Viral Agents

Linda Nash, "The Agency of Nature or the Nature of Agency," 67-70  
J.R. McNeil, *Mosquito Empires*, 1-11, 40-62, 169-192  
Katherine Olivarius, "Immunity, Capital, and Power in Antebellum New Orleans," 425-455

### 5. 09/30 Climate Change

Sam White, "Climate Change in Global Environmental History," 394-410  
Lydia Barnett, *After the Flood*, 8-11, 89-107  
Anya Zilberstein, *A Temperate Empire: Making Climate Change*, 1-10, 19-32, 91-117

## Unit II: Global Science

### 6. Mother Nature and the Scientific Revolution

Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, xix-xxiv, 1-6, 10-29, 164-172, 253-264 "Gender and Environmental History," 82-87  
Francis Bacon, *New Organon* (1620), extracts (10 pp.), frontispiece  
Ann Conway, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy*, (1690), extracts (5 pp.)

### 7. 10/14 Chinese Views of Nature

Peter Perdue, "Is There a Chinese View of Technology and Nature?" 101-119  
Li Shizhen and Carla Nappi, *Compendium of Materia Medica* (1596), 53-65  
Zhang Zai, *Western Inscription, Correcting Youthful Ignorance* (11<sup>th</sup> century), 682-689

### **8. 10/21 “The Ecological Indian”**

Julie Kruikshank, “Are Glaciers ‘Good to Think With’? Recognising Indigenous Environmental Knowledge,” 239-250

Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian*, 15-28, 123-150, 211-229

Darren Ranco, “The Ecological Indian in the Age of Ecocide,” 32-50

### **9. 10/28 Romantic Environmentalism**

James Lovelock, *Gaia: A New Look at Life on Earth*, 1-11, 115-142

Alexander von Humboldt, *Aspects of Nature* (1808), v-viii, 227-246, images

Caspar David Friedrich, *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog* [painting] (1818)

## **Unit III: Controlling Nature**

### **10. 11/04 Discovering Lands**

Paul d’Arcy, “Oceania,” 196-221

Vincent Clement, “Star Path to a New World,” 29-48

Hawaiian Islanders, “The Song of Kualii” (c.1700), 163-177

### **11. 11/11 Imagining Nature**

Emma Teng, *Taiwan’s Imagined Geography*, 1-59

Tristan Brown, Fengshui exercise

Yu Yonghe, *Small Sea Travelogue* (1697), 266-280

### **12. 11/18 Conquering Resources**

Jonathan Schlesinger, *A World Trimmed with Fur*, 1-4, 12-15, 129-166

Brett Walker, *The Conquest of Ainu Lands*, 1-15, 73-98

Richard White, *The Middle Ground*, xxv-xxi, 94-141

## **Thanksgiving**

### **13. 12/02 Engineering Environments**

Chandra Mukerji, *Impossible Engineering*, 1-14, 27-59

Dilip da Cunha, *The Invention of Rivers*, extracts (20 pp.)

Alexander Statman, “Cross-Cultural Canals and the Control of Water,” 1-30

### **14. 12/09 Final Conversation**

William Cronon, “The Uses of Environmental History,” 1-22

Naomi Oreskes and Erick Conway, *The Collapse of Western Civilization*, 1-10, 53-56