

Environmental History of Europe

Hist/Env St 328, UW-Madison, Spring 2022: Syllabus

Instructional Modality

Face-to-face, Tues. and Thur., 1:00 - 2:15pm, Humanities 1221.

Instructor

Prof. Richard Keyser, rkeyser (at) wisc.edu. Office Hours: Tues. & Thur., 11:00 am – 12:00 pm, 7131 Social Sciences, and by appointment.

Course Description

This class explores a new approach to a part of the world with a very old history, but one that is now as ‘modern’ as any. The changing relations between Europeans and their environments from antiquity to the twenty-first century offer instructive comparison with American and current global environmental concerns. Approaching European history from an environmental perspective also offers fresh perspective on Europe’s enduring cultures. Questions we will consider include: how have Western ideas about nature changed over time? To what extent have Europeans degraded, or managed to live sustainably with, their environments? How did the development of capitalism, industrialization, and colonialism affect Europe’s environment? How do modern European conservationism and environmentalism compare with their American analogs?

Credit Hours: This is a 3-Credit-Hour course, for which the credit standard is met by: a) the two class meetings of 75 minutes each per week; and b) the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing, film clips, studying, etc.) for about 3 hours out of the classroom for every class period, or about 6 hours per week outside of class.

Regular and Substantive Student-Instructor Interaction: In this course students interact with the instructor primarily in each scheduled class meeting and through the comments provided by the instructor on each student’s assigned papers. The instructor’s weekly office hours provide an additional opportunity for students to ask questions.

Course Level & Requisites: Level: Intermediate. Requisite: Sophomore standing.

Course Attributes: Breadth: Either Humanities or Social Science; Grad Attribute; Sustainability Attribute. L&S Credit - Counts as Liberal Arts and Science credit in L&S.

Student Learning Goals

In this class students will practice and improve their skills and abilities to:

1. Define historical questions concerning the human understanding of and impact on past environments in Europe.

2. Identify pertinent types of evidence to study past interactions between humans and their environments in Europe, while assessing their advantages and disadvantages.
3. Evaluate the evidentiary and theoretical bases, and areas for further investigation, in ongoing scholarly and public debates about Europe's environmental history.
4. Develop an understanding of the variety of natural environments, cultures, and processes of historical change in Europe.
5. Present original and coherent arguments through clearly written and persuasive writing.
6. Analyze the causes of and solutions for the sustainability challenge of the conservation of natural resources.
7. Analyze the social, political, and environmental dimensions of the sustainability of natural resources, biodiversity, clean air and water, and other, larger earth systems.
8. Graduate students share in all of the above learning goals, but in addition will be expected to become familiar with and demonstrate an advanced understanding of the historiography or other scholarly debates that have shaped the study of conservation and environmental law.

Grades

Grades are calculated on the standard UW scale: A=93-100%, AB=88-92%, B=83-87%, BC=78- 82%, C=70-77%, D=60-69%, F=0-59%. Grades will be determined as follows:

Item	Percent of course grade	Course points
Quizzes	5%	25
Participation	15	75
Short Essay	15	75
Midterm Essay	30	150
Final Essay	35	175
Total	100	500

Note: in order to pass this class, you must complete all of the essay assignments and at least 75% of the quizzes and discussions.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance and Past-Due Guidelines:

- 1) you do not earn credit just for attending class, which is expected.
- 2) any more than THREE unexcused absences is excessive, because missing this much class usually leads to misunderstanding of course materials and assignments.
- 3) missing more than SIX classes without valid excuses may be grounds for failing the class.
- 4) valid excuses for any absence or any late or missed assignment are limited to: university-recognized religious observances and athletic participation (but in both of these cases you must inform me of your planned absences by the end of the second week of classes); and for well-documented major illnesses or emergencies in the immediate family.
- 5) In cases of absence or missed deadlines for quizzes, paper due-dates, and exams, you should inform me of your absence or other problem in advance if at all possible. Missing class or a deadline without prior notice to me may result in a failing grade for that

assessment.

Online Discussions. Part of your participation will consist of your posts to online discussions on the course website, for which the class will be divided into two or more discussion sections. Students in each group will be required to post responses on a rotating basis, approximately every two to three weeks (the precise schedule is to be determined). When it is your group's turn, each student will need to make a total of **two posts**, including both your answers to the questions and your responses to others. Each posting should aim for a length of **between about 100 and 250 words**.

Assessment of Discussion Contributions and Participation. There will be a rubric posted on Canvas and your discussion posts will be scored accordingly. These numeric scores will focus on such criteria as the length of posts, being on time, being on topic, citing pertinent evidence, and a rough assessment of the quality of your posts. These scores will provide, however, only one factor in determining your participation grade. Final grades for participation will be determined at the end of the semester, taking into account the numeric scores on your online posts, your class attendance, and a qualitative assessment of your attendance and the overall quality and consistency of your discussion contributions, both online and in class. Then I will assign an overall grade level, i.e., A-level contributor, AB-level, etc. For more detail, see the "Rubric for Final Assessment of Discussion Contributions," under the Course Orientation Module.

Quality of Participation: When making discussion contributions, both in class and online, quality of contribution counts more than quantity. A quality contribution is one in which you: a) cite the assigned readings and other sources; b) make thoughtful and ideally original points; and c) explain your ideas clearly and concisely. Quality contributions reflect your familiarity with the readings and your effort to ask good critical questions about them, such as: What are the main questions the author tries to answer? What is the author's main argument? What specific arguments, assumptions, or evidence are used in support? What is left out? Good participation also means that you listen to others and try to engage seriously but respectfully with what others say.

Computers, Electronic Devices, & Distracted Behavior: Due to the potential for distraction, the use of computers or any other electronic devices in class is prohibited. I make exceptions only if you speak to me, explaining your need to use a computer to take notes. Those students who need to use a computer class should if possible, in order to minimize the potential for distracting others, sit in either the back row or at the ends of rows and near the front or back of the classroom. Engaging in any unauthorized screen time or in any other distracted or distracting behavior, such as reading unassigned materials, audible eating or drinking, sleeping, conversation with classmates or on the phone, etc., may negatively impact your grade.

Written Work

Quizzes: There will be a few online quizzes, but not until a couple of weeks after the first essay is due, at the earliest. Quizzes will consist of multiple choice or true/false questions. You will be provided with a study guide about a week before each quiz.

Essays: There will be three essays, including near the beginning of the semester one short one of about three pages, and later on two longer essays of about six to eight pages. All of the essays focus on the assigned readings and other course materials. Essays must be turned in as electronic copies on Canvas (not via email!). Late papers will be heavily penalized: they will be marked down one grade per class day late. For help with papers, besides asking me, see the tips on my webpage on [Teaching Policies & Guides](#). You can also get one-on-one help at both the [Writing Center](#) and the [History Lab](#).

Essay Drafts for Writing Fellows: for Essays 2 and 3 you are required to turn in a draft two weeks before the final paper is due. You will then work with an undergraduate Writing Fellow on revising them; see the [Writing Fellows Program](#) for general information. Our class is fortunate to have WFs to work with you!

***Note:** the draft for the WF is a course requirement. Failing to submit a draft on time will result in up to ten (10) points deducted from your final draft.

Academic Honesty and Accommodations

Academic Honesty: Your written work must reflect your own ideas, and where you draw on others' words or ideas you need to indicate this clearly with proper quotations and citations. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated, and all appropriate penalties, including failing the course, will be strictly enforced. Academic misconduct includes, but is not limited to "claim[ing] credit for the work or efforts of another without authorization or citation." See UW's guidance on this topic, on the page "[Academic Misconduct](#)." Specifically on the proper ways to give credit to sources, consult the [Writing Center](#) and see their page on "[Quoting and Paraphrasing](#)."

Accommodations: If you need accommodations due to any disability, please let me know within the first two weeks of class, i.e. by Feb. 3rd. It is the student's responsibility to contact the McBurney Center and arrange to have the proper notification sent to me. See: <https://mcburney.wisc.edu/>. If you are on or near campus, you can also visit their office, the McBurney Disability Resource Center, 702 West Johnson St., Suite 2104, tel. 608-263-2741; or email them at: mcburney@studentlife.wisc.edu.

Course Materials

Required Textbooks (4): You need to have access to the four books required for this class, which are listed here in the order in which they will be assigned:

- Winter, James. *Secure from Rash Assault: Sustaining the Victorian Environment*. University of California Press, 1999. (Digital access available through UW-Madison Libraries.)
- Ford, Caroline. *Natural Interests: The Contest over Environment in Modern France*. Harvard University Press, 2016. (Digital access available through UW-Madison Libraries.)
- Bess, Michael. *The Light-Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960-2000*. The University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Uekötter, Frank. *The Greenest Nation? A New History of German Environmentalism*. The MIT Press, 2014.

The printed versions of these books are available from, among other places, the UW Bookstore: www.uwbookstore.com. A request has been made to have physical copies available on reserve at College Library, where there is also digital access to three of them (all but the book by Bess). See [College Library](#), scroll to reserves, and then follow the instructions for the reading list for this class. For two of the books, those by Winter and Ford, you can also get the same digital access through the [UW-Madison Libraries Catalog](#): just look up the book and follow the instructions for digital access.

Reading Assignments: you should read each week's assignments in the order they are listed on the syllabus and, ideally, finish all of them by Tuesday's class time. This will enable you to make connections among the readings and to use class time to review, clarify, and ask questions about the week's material.

SCHEDULE

***Note:** the schedule below provides the weekly topics, the reading assignments, and the essay due-dates. These are all set and will not be changed. But the **full details for all of the course activities**, including such online activities as film clips, discussions, quizzes, etc., **will be updated and provided on a weekly basis** on the course website on Canvas, under the **Activity Guide for each Module**.

I. Europe's Deep Past & the Question of Sustainability

Week 1, Tues.-Thur., Jan. 25-27. Introduction: Environmental History & the "Deep" Past in Europe

- Course Pack or Canvas, ch. 1: The Ancient & Medieval Periods.

Week 2, Tues.-Thur., Feb. 1-3. Preindustrial Sustainability?

- Course Pack or Canvas, ch. 2: Medieval & Early Modern Forests & Commons.

Essay 1 due, Mon. Feb. 7.

II. Early Industrial Change & 19th-Century Environmental Debates

Week 3, Tues.-Thur., Feb. 8-10. Early Modern Change to Britain's Early Industrial Revolution.

- Begin Winter, *Secure from Rash Assault*, intro and ch. 1-2, pp. 1-39.

Week 4, Tues.-Thur., Feb. 15-17. New Ideas and British Traditions.

- Course Pack or Canvas: James Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, introduction & ch. 1, pp. 1-22.
- Course Pack or Canvas: Romanticism.
- Winter, *Secure from Rash Assault*, ch. 5, pp. 83-103.

Week 5, Tues- Thur., Feb. 22-24. Early French Environmental Ideas and Conservation.

- Ford, *Natural Interests*, intro and ch. 1-2, pp. 1-65.

Week 6, Tues.-Thur., March 1-3. Britain and France Compared.

- Winter, *Secure from Rash Assault*, ch. 9, pp. 166-88; ch. 11, pp. 209-30.
- Ford, *Natural Interests*, ch. 4, pp. 92-113.

Mon., March 7: Essay 2 Draft Due

III. The 20th Century: Modern Technology & Environmentalism

Week 7, Tues.-Thur., March 8-10. Twentieth-Century France: Peasant Tradition & Modern Technology

- Bess, *Light-Green Society*, intro, pp. 3-9; & ch. 1, pp. 11-37.

Spring Break, March 12-20.

Week 8, Tues.-Thur., March 22-24. Ecology and Early Environmentalism in France.

- Bess, *Light-Green Society*, ch. 2-3, pp. 38-53, 57-75.

Mon., March 28: Essay 2 Final Draft Due.

Week 9, Tues.-Thur., March 29-31. French Environmentalism.

- Bess, *The Light-Green Society*, ch. 4, pp. 76-114.

Week 10, Tues.-Thur., April 5-7. German Conservation and Early Environmentalism.

- Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation?*, ch. 1-2, pp. 1-57.

Week 11, Tues.-Thur., April 12-14. German Environmentalism & the International Context.

- Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation?*, ch. 3 & Interim Remarks, pp. 59-111.

Week 12, Tues.-Thur., April 19-21. Green Governance in France & the International Context.

- Bess, *The Light-Green Society*, ch. 9-11, pp. 190-233.

Fri., April 22: Essay 3 Draft Due.

Week 13, Tues.-Thur., April 26-28. Green Governance in Germany & the International Context.

- Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation?*, ch. 4, pp. 113-55.

Week 14, Tues.-Thur., May 3-5. France, Germany, & the Wider World: Conclusions.

- Bess, *The Light-Green Society*, ch. 12, pp. 237-45; & Conclusion, pp. 291-95.
- Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation?*, ch. 5 & Conclusion, pp. 157-83.

Fri., May 6: Essay 3 Final Draft Due.

Final Exam: Sunday, May 8, 10:05 am – 12:05 pm (reserved if needed for class use).