

Environmental History of Europe

Hist/Env St 328, UW-Madison, Fall 2023: Syllabus

Instructional Modality

Face-to-face, Tues. and Thur., 1:00 - 2:15pm, Van Vleck B215.

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, colonialism, and industrialization affect European and global environments? 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
Participation	20	100
Midterm Exam	15	75
First Essay	20	100
Second Essay	25	125
Final Exam	20	100
Total	100	500

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

- 6) When you miss class: there is no practical way to “make up” for missing class: lecture and discussion cannot be entirely repeated for individual students. Nor is it useful to ask if “anything important was covered,” or “what were the key points covered,” or if you can do any extra assignments. Instead, it is your responsibility to: a) let me know by email about your absence, preferably before class; b) get lecture notes from a classmate; and c) keep up with the assigned readings. d) After you have taken these steps, you are also welcome, as always, to meet with me to ask any specific questions you may have about the material.

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 300 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 Participation,” 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 strongly discouraged. 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

Essays: There will be two essays, each of about five to six pages. Both 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 both essays 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 a 10 percent penalty (or 12.5 out of 125 points) deducted from your final draft.

Exams: The midterm and final exams will be in-class, written exams. They may include both short-answer and essay questions. In principle the exams will be comprehensive, in that questions may concern material from throughout the weeks preceding the exam (the entire semester for the final). However, the exams will usually focus on the most recent material.

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 Sept. 21st. 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 (3): You are responsible for reading very carefully large sections or all of the three books below, all of which are required for this class. They are listed below in the order in which they will be assigned. For all of them, you have access to a digital form of the book through UW-Madison Libraries.

- Pluymers, Keith. *No Wood, No Kingdom: Political Ecology in the English Atlantic*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2021.
- Davis, Diana K. *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa*. Ohio University Press, 2007.
- 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. See [College Library](#), scroll to reserves, and then follow the instructions for the reading list for this class. For 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. Introduction & Europe's Deep Past, to 1000 CE

Week 1, Thur., Sept. 7 - Tues., Sept. 12. Introduction: Environmental History & the "Deep" Past in Europe
- Course Pack, Part 1, pp. 2-30.

Week 2, Thur., Sept. 14 - Tues., Sept. 19. From Rome to the Post-Roman West
- Course Pack, Part 1, pp. 32-60.

Midterm Exam, Thur., Sept. 21.

II. Forests, Commons, & Sustainability, ca. 1100-1800 CE

Week 3, Tues.-Thur., Sept. 26 – 28. The High Middle Ages: A New Cycle of Growth.
- Course Pack, Part 2, pp. 8-29.

Week 4, Tues.-Thur., Oct. 3-5. Forests, Private Property, and the Commons.

- Course Pack, Part 2, pp. 31-69.

Week 5, Tues.-Thur., Oct. 10-12. The Early Modern Period and English Forests.

- Course Pack, Part 2, pp. 71-86.
- Pluymers, *No Wood, No Kingdom*, pp. 1-10; 14-51.
- **Essay 1 Draft Due, Tues., Oct. 17.**

III. Early Modern Europe & Colonialism

Week 6, Tues.-Thur., Oct. 17-19. Early Modern Growth & English Colonialism.

- Pluymers, *No Wood, No Kingdom*, pp. 51-107.

Week 7, Tues.-Thur., Oct. 24-26. Early Modern Growth & English Colonialism, cont'd.

- Pluymers, *No Wood, No Kingdom*, pp. 108-30; 193-238.

Tues., Oct. 31: Essay 1 Due

Week 8, Tues.-Thur., Oct. 31 – Nov. 2. Industrial Revolution & French Colonialism

- Davis, *Granary of Rome*, pp. 1-44; 177-86.
- Handout: Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, pp. 1-22.

Week 9, Tues.-Thur., Nov. 7-9. Industry, Conservation, and Colonialism.

- Davis, *Granary of Rome*, pp. 45-102.
- Handout: Romanticism.

Tues., Nov. 14: Essay 2 Draft Due.

IV. Modern Technology and the Twentieth Century

Week 10, Tues.-Thur., Nov. 14-16. German Conservation and Early Environmentalism.

- Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation?*, ch. 1, pp. 1-24.

Week 11, Tues., Nov. 21. German Conservation and Early Environmentalism, continued.

- Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation?*, ch. 2, pp. 25-57.

Thanksgiving Break, Nov. 23-26.

Tues., Nov. 28: Essay 2 Due.

Week 12, Tues.-Thur., Nov. 28-30. German Environmentalism & the International Context.

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

Week 13, Tues.-Thur., Dec. 5-7. Germany and the International Context.

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

Week 14, Tues., Dec. 12. Green Governance.

- Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation?*, ch. 5 & Conclusion, pp. 157-83.

Final Exam: Saturday, Dec. 16, 2:45 – 4:45 pm.