

This is a Nov 2017 DRAFT syllabus. I reserve the right to make *small* changes until January, when I will distribute the FINAL syllabus to students in the first class.

Department of History / the University of Western Ontario

History 9833B

People and Nature through Time: Environmental History

Wednesdays, 9:30-11:30am, Winter 2018, Lawson 2270C

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Introduction

Environmental history considers how humans have acted toward and thought about nature through time, and how nature itself has changed. Besides introducing the main concepts and debates in the field, “People and Nature through Time” traces a global environmental history, with special emphasis on the concept of the Anthropocene - the era in which humans have made intense and effectively permanent environmental changes on a global scale.

Seminars are built around a series of readings, together averaging around 300 pages per week. Readings are available on the course Owl site, on 1-day reserve in Weldon Library, on the internet (linked off the syllabus), and/or through the Western Libraries online system.

Course requirements

All assignments will be discussed further in class.

Seminar participation – 40%

This is a seminar course and student participation is essential to its success. Students are expected to read all assigned readings and participate in every class.

Also, each student will be asked to be discussion leader for one class, introducing the readings briefly at the beginning of class; posing a few questions to start discussion; offering, when necessary, counter-readings of the works under discussion (that is, challenging works that the class accept uncritically, or championing elements of works about which the class are overcritical); and, at end of class, giving a brief summary of the discussion.

Images essay – 10% – due 14 Feb

In week 6, the class discusses images of nature and history, as seen in photographs, film, advertising, etc. Students are to write a 750-word essay on an environmental image of their choice (*not* discussed in

detail in any of the assigned readings), interpreting the image, as Joan Schwartz suggests, “not as illustrations but as primary sources.”

Major essay – 50% – draft introduced in class 14 Mar (5%) / final essay due 11 Apr (45%)

Students are to write a 20-25 page major research paper, based on primary sources, on a topic to be determined in consultation with the instructor. In keeping with the course, the essay can be on any period and place in history, large or small. Bear in mind the importance of having a manageable topic, however, as well as an available and manageable source base.

Please note that Western Archives recently received a massive [Environment Canada archival collection](#) related to climate history. The collection could be the basis of any number of potential essay topics.

Schedule and readings

- 1 10 Jan – **Introductions ...&, so as not to bury the lede, the Anthropocene**
 - ✦ Paul J. Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, “[The ‘Anthropocene,’](#)” *Global Change Newsletter* 41(2000), 17-18.
 - Will Steffen, “Commentary,” in *The Future of Nature: Documents of Global Change*, eds. Libby Robin, Sverker Sörlin, Paul Warde (2011), 486-90.
 - ✦ JR McNeill and Peter Engelke, *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945* (2014), 1-6. [reserve]
 - ✦ Alan MacEachern, “[The Canthropocene](#)” on Twitter.

- 2 17 Jan – **Introducing Environmental History**
 - ✦ Donald Worster, “[Ice, Worms, and Dirt: The Power of Nature in North American History,](#)” *Method and Meaning in Canadian Environmental History*, eds. Alan MacEachern and William J. Turkel (2009), 24-33.
 - ✦ Paul S. Sutter, “The World with Us: The State of American Environmental History,” *Journal of American History* 100 no. 1 (Jun 2013), 94-148.
 - ✦ Sverker Sörlin and Paul Warde, “The Problem of the Problem of Environmental History: A Re-reading of the Field,” *Environmental History* 12 (Jan 2007), 107-30.
 - ✦ Joyce E. Chaplin, “Can the Nonhuman Speak? Breaking the Chain of Being in the Anthropocene,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 78 no.4 (Oct 2017), 509-29.
 - ✦ Alan MacEachern, “[The People Test,](#)” NiCHE website, Dec 2013.

- 3 24 Jan – **Indigenous People & Nature**
 - ✦ Julie Cruikshank, [Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, & Social Imagination](#) (2005). [also reserve]
 - ✦ Lyle Dick, “[People and Animals in the Arctic: Mediating Between Indigenous and Western Knowledge,](#)” *Method and Meaning in Canadian Environmental History*, eds. Alan MacEachern and William J. Turkel (2009), 76-101.

- 4 31 Jan – **The Commons**
 - ✦ Dean Bavington, [Managed Annihilation: An Unnatural History of the Newfoundland Cod Collapse](#) (2010). [also reserve]
 - ✦ Garrett Hardin, “The Tragedy of the Commons,” *Science*, 162 (1968), 1243-8.
 - ✦ Vaclav Smil, “Garrett James Hardin,” *American Scientist*, vol.92 (2004), 8-10.

- 5 7 Feb – **Energy**
- ✦ Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (1995). [reserve]
 - ✦ R.W. Sandwell, ed., *Powering Up Canada: A History of Power, Fuel, and Energy from 1600* (2016), ch.1, 3, 4, 8-11. [reserve]
 - ✦ McNeill and Engelke, 7-40.
 - ✦ Timothy Mitchell, “Carbon Democracy,” *Economy and Society* 38 no.3 (2009), 399-432.
- 6 14 Feb – **Seeing Nature**
- ✦ Finis Dunaway, [Seeing Green: The Use and Abuse of American Environmental Images](#) (2015). [also reserve]
 - ✦ Joan M. Schwartz, “Photographic Reflections: Nature, Landscape, and Environment,” *Environmental History* 12 (Oct 2007), 966-93.
 - See also [EH teaching unit](#) for this gallery.
 - ✦ Colin M. Coates, “[Seeing and Not Seeing: Landscape Art as a Historical Source](#),” *Method and Meaning in Canadian Environmental History*, Alan MacEachern and William J. Turkel, eds. (2009). 140-57.

Reading Week

- 7 28 Feb – **Food & Agriculture**
- ✦ George Colpitts, *Pemmican Empire: Food, Trade, and the Last Bison Hunts in the North American Plains, 1780-1882* (2015). [reserve]
 - ✦ John Green, “[The Columbian Exchange](#)” (2012).
 - ✦ Edward Melillo, “The First Green Revolution: Debt Peonage and the Making of the Nitrogen Fertilizer Trade, 1840-1930,” *American Historical Review* 117, 4 (2012), 1028-60.
 - ✦ Meredith McKittrick, “Industrial Agriculture,” *A Companion to Global Environmental History*, eds. JR McNeill and Erin Stewart Mauldin (2012), 411-32.
- 8 7 Mar – **Environmental Inequality**
- ✦ Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (2001), pts. 1, 2, and 4. [reserve]
 - ✦ Eileen Maura McGurty, “From NIMBY to Civil Rights: The Origins of the Environmental Justice Movement,” *Environmental History* 2 (1997), 301-23.
 - ✦ Rob Nixon, “[Introduction](#),” *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), 1-44.
- 9 14 Mar – **WiP / (Environmental) History as Literature**
- ✦ Stephen J. Pyne, *Voice and Vision: A Guide to Writing History and Other Serious Nonfiction* (2009), 1-36 and 277-98.
 - ✦ William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative,” *Journal of American History* 78 (1992), 1347-76.
- 10 21 Mar – **Cities**
- ✦ Joanna Dean, Darcy Ingram, and Christabella Sethna, eds., [Animal Metropolis: Histories of Human-Animal Relations in Urban Canada](#) (2017), introduction, ch.1, 2, 3, 7, 9, and epilogue.
 - ✦ Martin V. Melosi, “Humans, Cities, and Nature: How Do Cities Fit in the Material World?” *Journal of Urban History* 36, 1 (2010), 3-21.

- ✦ Michèle Dagenais, "[The Urbanization of Nature: Water Networks and Green Spaces in Montreal](#)" *Method and Meaning in Canadian Environmental History*, Alan MacEachern and William J. Turkel, eds. (2009), 216-35.
 - ✦ McNeill and Engelke, 103-28.
- 11 28 Mar – **Climate**
- ✦ Sam White, "Introduction" and "Death Follows Us Everywhere," in *A Cold Welcome: The Little Ice Age and Europe's Encounter with North America* (2017), 1-9 and 186-228. [reserve]
 - ✦ Liza Piper, "[Colloquial Meteorology](#)," *Method and Meaning in Canadian Environmental History*, eds. Alan MacEachern and William J. Turkel (2009), 102-23.
 - ✦ Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35 no.2 (2009), 197-222.
 - ✦ J.R. McNeill, "[Changing Climates of History](#)" *Public Books* (Dec 2014).
 - ✦ Deborah R. Coen, "Big is a Thing of the Past: Climate Change and Methodology in the History of Ideas," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 77 no.2 (Apr 2016), 305-21.
 - ✦ McNeill and Engelke, 63-82.
- 12 4 Apr – **Nature & Nation**
- ✦ Claire Elizabeth Campbell, *Nature, Place, and Story: Rethinking Historic Sites in Canada* (2017). [reserve]
 - ✦ James C. Scott, "Introduction" and "Nature and Space," *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (1998), 1-52.
 - ✦ Richard White, "The Nationalization of Nature," *Journal of American History* (December 1999), 976-86.
 - ✦ Mark Fiege, "Land of Lincoln," in *The Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States* (2011), 3-22.
- 13 11 Apr – **How to Think about Nature, and History**
- ✦ Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History, and Us*, trans. David Fernbach (2016 [2015]). [reserve]
 - ✦ William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (1995), 69-90.
 - ✦ Paul Warde, "The Invention of Sustainability," *Modern Intellectual History* 8 no.1 (2011), 153-70.
 - ✦ McNeill and Engelke, 184-211.

Statement on Academic Offences

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site: http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf. All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism-detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system. Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com - <http://www.turnitin.com>.