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
Prof. Alan MacEachern
http://history.uwo.ca/People/Faculty/maceachern.html
amaceach@uwo.ca
519-661-2111 ext.84993
office hours, Weds 12:30-2:30, Lawson 2268

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**
   - Alan MacEachern, “The Canthropocene” on Twitter.

2. 17 Jan – **Introducing Environmental History**

3. 24 Jan – **Indigenous People & Nature**

4. 31 Jan – **The Commons**
5 7 Feb – Energy
McNeill and Engelke, 7-40.
Timothy Mitchell, “Carbon Democracy,” *Economy and Society* 38 no.3 (2009), 399-432.

6 14 Feb – Seeing Nature
   o See also [EH teaching unit](#) for this gallery.

Reading Week

7 28 Feb – Food & Agriculture

8 7 Mar – Environmental Inequality

9 14 Mar – WiP / (Environmental) History as Literature

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.

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]
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]

13 11 Apr – How to Think about Nature, and History
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.