



The University of Western Ontario  
**HISTORY 9833B**

**Environmental History: People & Nature through Time**  
**Winter 2019**

**DRAFT syllabus, 2018 10**  
**Wednesdays, 9:30-11:30**

**Instructor: Prof. Alan MacEachern**

Office Hours: Wednesdays, 12:30-2:30  
Department of History, Office: Lawson Hall 2268  
Email: amaceach@uwo.ca

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**Course Description:**

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 & 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.

**Course Materials:**

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

**Methods of Evaluation:**

***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. The instructor will give a provisional participation grade to students midway through the course.

Every student will also act as discussion leader for one class, introducing the readings briefly; 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 have been overcritical); and, at end of class, giving a brief summary of the discussion.

***Images essay – 15% – due 13 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 for that week’s class), treating the images, as Joan Schwartz suggests, “not as illustrations but as primary sources.”

**Major essay – 50% –**

***draft introduced in class 13 Mar (5%)***

***final essay due 17 Apr (40%)***

Students are to write a 20-25 page major research paper, based on primary sources, on an environmental history 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.

Essays are to be submitted through the OWL site. All assignments will be discussed further in class.

Late essays are penalized 5% per day. Please come to the instructor with any routine requests for extensions. However, a student's request for accommodation (on medical, non-medical, compassionate grounds) are to go to the graduate chair, who will consult and communicate with the instructor.

The final date to submit any material for this course is 24 April.

**Course Schedule and Readings:**

**1 9 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. [also reserve]
- Alan MacEachern, "[The Canthropocene](#)," 25 Aug 2017.

**2 16 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.
- Alan MacEachern, "[The People Test](#)," NiCHE website, Dec 2013.

**3 23 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.
- Shepard Krech, "Beaver," in *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (1999), 173-209.

#### 4 **30 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*, 92 (2004), 8-10.

#### 5 **6 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. [reserve]
- McNeill and Engelke, [The Great Acceleration](#), 7-40. [also reserve]
- Timothy Mitchell, "Carbon Democracy," *Economy and Society* 38 no.3 (2009), 399-432.

#### 6 **13 Feb – Seeing Nature**

- Finis Dunaway, [Seeing Green: The Use and Abuse of American Environmental Images](#) (2015), introduction & parts 1 & 3. [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 **27 Feb – Food & Agriculture**

- George Colpitts, *Pemmican Empire: Food, Trade, and the Last Bison Hunts in the North American Plains, 1780-1882* (2015), read all but ch.5. [reserve]
- 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 **6 Mar – Inequality**

- Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (2001), read all but ch.10-12. [reserve]  
Rob Nixon, "[Introduction](#)," *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011), 1-44.
- Eileen Maura McGurty, "From NIMBY to Civil Rights: The Origins of the Environmental Justice Movement," *Environmental History* 2 (1997), 301-23.

**9**      **13 Mar – (Environmental) History as Literature / works in progress**

- Stephen J. Pyne, *Voice and Vision: A Guide to Writing History and Other Serious Nonfiction* (2009), 1-36 and 277-98. [reserve]

**10**      **20 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).
- McNeill and Engelke, [The Great Acceleration](#), 63-82. [also reserve]

**11**      **27 Mar – 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.

**12**      **3 Apr – Thinking about Nature & 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.
- McNeill and Engelke, [The Great Acceleration](#), 184-211. [also reserve]

## **Additional Statements**

### ***Academic Offences:***

Scholastic Offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitute a Scholastic Offence, at the following Web site:

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_grad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/appeals/scholastic_discipline_grad.pdf).

**[Include this paragraph on plagiarism-checking software only if relevant. If not relevant delete the paragraph below plus this paragraph as well]**

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> ).

### ***Accessibility Options:***

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 519 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

Information regarding accommodation of exams is available on the Registrar's website:

[www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated\\_exams.html](http://www.registrar.uwo.ca/examinations/accommodated_exams.html)

### ***Medical Issues***

The University recognizes that a student's ability to meet his/her academic responsibilities may, on occasion, be impaired by medical illness. Please go to:

[https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical\\_accommodations\\_link\\_for\\_OOR.pdf](https://studentservices.uwo.ca/secure/medical_accommodations_link_for_OOR.pdf)

to read about the University's policy on medical accommodation. This site provides links the necessary forms. In the event of illness, you should contact Academic Counselling as soon as possible. The Academic Counsellors will determine, in consultation with the student, whether or not accommodation should be requested. They will subsequently contact the instructors in the relevant courses about the accommodation. Once the instructor has made a decision about whether to grant an accommodation, the student should contact his/her instructors to determine a new due date for tests, assignments, and exams.

Students must see the Academic Counsellor and submit all required documentation in order to be approved for certain accommodation: [http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical\\_accommodation.html](http://counselling.ssc.uwo.ca/procedures/medical_accommodation.html)

### ***Plagiarism:***

Students must write their essays and assignments in their own words. Whenever students take an idea, or a passage from another author, they must acknowledge their debt both by using quotation marks where appropriate and by proper referencing such as footnotes or citations. Plagiarism is a major academic offense (see Scholastic Offence Policy in the Western Academic Calendar).

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 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>).

The following rules pertain to the acknowledgements necessary in academic papers.

A. In using another writer's words, you must both place the words in quotation marks and acknowledge that the words are those of another writer.

You are plagiarizing if you use a sequence of words, a sentence or a paragraph taken from other writers without acknowledging them to be theirs. Acknowledgement is indicated either by (1) mentioning the author and work from which the words are borrowed in the text of your paper; or by (2) placing a footnote number at the end of the quotation in your text, and including a correspondingly numbered footnote at the bottom of the page (or in a separate reference section at the end of your essay). This footnote should indicate author, title of the work, place and date of Publication and page number. Method (2) given above is usually preferable for academic essays because it provides the reader with more information about your sources and leaves your text uncluttered with parenthetical and tangential references. In either case words taken from another author must be enclosed in quotation marks or set off from your text by single spacing and indentation in such a way that they cannot be mistaken for your own words. Note that you cannot avoid indicating quotation simply by changing a word or phrase in a sentence or paragraph which is not your own.

B. In adopting other writer's ideas, you must acknowledge that they are theirs.

You are plagiarizing if you adopt, summarize, or paraphrase other writers' trains of argument, ideas or sequences of ideas without acknowledging their authorship according to the method of acknowledgement given in 'A' above. Since the words are your own, they need not be enclosed in quotation marks. Be certain, however, that the words you use are entirely your own; where you must use words or phrases from your source; these should be enclosed in quotation marks, as in 'A' above.

Clearly, it is possible for you to formulate arguments or ideas independently of another writer who has expounded the same ideas, and whom you have not read. Where you got your ideas is the important consideration here. Do not be afraid to present an argument or idea without acknowledgement to another writer, if you have arrived at it entirely independently. Acknowledge it if you have derived it from a source outside your own thinking on the subject.

In short, use of acknowledgements and, when necessary, quotation marks is necessary to distinguish clearly between what is yours and what is not. Since the rules have been explained to you, if you fail to make this distinction, your instructor very likely will do so for you, and they will be forced to regard your omission as intentional literary theft. Plagiarism is a serious offence which may result in a student's receiving an 'F' in a course or, in extreme cases, in their suspension from the University.

### *Scholastic Offences*

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[www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### *Support Services*

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western, [http://uwo.ca/health/mental\\_wellbeing/](http://uwo.ca/health/mental_wellbeing/) for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

Please contact the course instructor if you require material in an alternate format or if you require any other arrangements to make this course more accessible to you. You may also wish to contact Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 661-2111 x 82147 for any specific question regarding an accommodation.

If you have any further questions or concerns please contact, Heidi Van Galen, Administrative Officer, Department of History, 519-661-2111 x84963 or e-mail [vangalen@uwo.ca](mailto:vangalen@uwo.ca).