



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

**Environmental History: People & Nature through Time  
Winter 2020**

**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 – 35%***

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.

***Images essay – due 12 Feb – 15%***

In week 6, the class discusses images of nature and history, as seen in photographs, film, advertising, etc. Students are to write a 1000-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%***

Students are to write a 5-6000 word major research paper, with a primary source component, 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. (Western

Library's Archives and Research Collections Centre has a number of collections which connect with environmental history. I will discuss this further in class.)

***introduced in class – 11 Mar – 10%***

Students will give a 5-minute presentation that introduces their research essay in progress, raises any issues they are facing, and opens up discussion to seek input for improvement. To accompany the presentation, students will provide their classmates and instructor with a single-page, one-sided handout.

***final essay – due 15 Apr – 40%***

***\*The fine print:***

All assignments will be discussed further in class.

Essays are to be submitted through the OWL site. There is no need to submit a paper copy.

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 material for the course is 22 April. All assignments must be completed in order to pass the course.

**Course Schedule and Readings:**

**1 8 Jan – Introductions**

- Graeme Wynn, "Nature and Nation," *The Nature of Canada*, eds. Colin M. Coates and Graeme Wynn (2019), 25-49.
- 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.
- Timothy LeCain, "Fellow Travelers: The Nonhuman Things that Make Us Human," *The Matter of History: How Things Create the Past* (2017), 1-22.
- 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.

**2 15 Jan – The Anthropocene**

- Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History, and Us*, trans. David Fernbach (2016 [2015]). [reserve]
- 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, and Paul Warde (2011), 486-90.
- Alan MacEachern, "[The Alanthropocene](#)," *NiCHE-Canada.org*, 15 January 2018.
- Sean Kheraj, "[Culpability and Canada's Anthropocene: A Response](#)," *NiCHE-Canada.org*, 29 January 2018.

### 3 **22 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 **29 Jan – Climate**

- Sam White, *A Cold Welcome: The Little Ice Age and Europe's Encounter with North America* (2017). [reserve]
- Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35 no.2 (2009), 197-222.
- Liza Piper, "Climates of Our Times," *The Nature of Canada*, eds. Colin M. Coates and Graeme Wynn (2019), 319-34.
- Liza Piper, "[Colloquial Meteorology](#)," *Method and Meaning in Canadian Environmental History*, eds. Alan MacEachern and William J. Turkel (2009), 102-23.

### 5 **5 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]
- Steve Penfold, "The Power of Canada," *The Nature of Canada*, eds. Colin M. Coates and Graeme Wynn (2019), 243-62.
- Timothy Mitchell, "Carbon Democracy," *Economy and Society* 38 no.3 (2009), 399-432.

### 6 **12 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 **26 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]
- Donald Worster, [The Good Muck: Toward an Excremental History of China](#) (2017).
- Meredith McKittrick, "Industrial Agriculture," *A Companion to Global Environmental History*, eds. JR McNeill and Erin Stewart Mauldin (2012), 411-32.

### 8 **4 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**     **11 Mar – (Environmental) History as Literature / final essay 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**    **18 Mar – Sensing the Past**

- Melanie E. Kiechle. *Smell Detectives: An Olfactory History of Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (2017).
- Peter Coates, “The Strange Stillness of the Past: Toward an Environmental History of Sound and Noise,” *Environmental History* 10 (Oct 2005), 636-55.
- Joy Parr, “Smells Like? Source of Uncertainty in the History of the Great Lakes Environment,” *Environmental History* 11 (2006), 269-99.

**11**    **25 Mar – Critters**

- 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, 8, 9, and epilogue.
- Erica Fudge, “A Left-Handed Blow: Writing the History of Animals,” *Representing Animals*, ed. Nigel Rothfels (2002), 3-18.
- Richard Bulliet, “Postdomesticity: Our Lives with Animals,” *Hunters, Herders, and Hamburgers: The Past and Future of Human-Animal Relationships* (2005), 1-35.
- Edmund Russell, “Evolutionary History: Prospectus for a New Field,” *Environmental History* 8 no.2 (2003), 204-28.

**12**    **1 Apr – Environmentalism**

- Tina Loo, *States of Nature: Conserving Canada’s Wildlife in the Twentieth Century* (2002).
- 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.
- Joanna Dean, “A Gendered Sense of Nature,” *The Nature of Canada*, eds. Colin M. Coates and Graeme Wynn (2019), 281-97.
- Jonathan Clapperton and Liza Piper, “In the Shadow of the Green Giants: Environmentalism and Civic Engagement,” *Environmentalism on the Ground: Small Green and Indigenous Organizing*, eds. Jonathan Clapperton and Liza Piper (2019), XX-XX.

## **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.

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### ***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).