Calendar description: This course explores the role of climate in history, from the last ice age to the present. There are special emphases on Canadians’ relationship with climate, the development of meteorology in the 19th and 20th century, and the part that history plays in documenting and understanding global warming.

Course description: This seminar course explores the role of climate in history, from the last ice age to the present. Using the tools of environmental history, we examine how the climate has changed, how it has influenced human societies and how, now more than ever, humans are influencing it. Beyond that broad span, the course has three somewhat inter-related emphases:
Canada's relationship with climate. From Voltaire's taunt about “a few acres of snow” to the true North strong and free, climate has figured heavily in our national development and identity.

The development of meteorology. Advances in meteorology in the mid-19th century meant not only that humans, for the first time, were able to make rudimentary weather predictions, but that they gained much better understanding of longer-term climate trends.

The discovery of global warming. Scientists in the 20th century discovered that global temperatures and CO₂ levels were on the rise, coincident with the rise of fossil fuel use. Historical data – whether from ice cores, lake sediments, or more traditional textual sources such as farmer’s diaries or photographs showing glacial retreat – has proven critical in documenting and understanding climate change.

The class meets for 3 hours each week. The first 2 hours involve a short lecture followed by seminar discussion. In the final hour, we will discuss assignments, and in particular work with the archival collection that will be the basis of students’ major research essay: the Environment Canada archival collection of 1820s-1960s meteorological and climatological material that was recently transferred to Western.

Learning outcomes:
Upon completion of this course, students will be able to
- Identify major concepts and periods in the history of climate, climatology, and meteorology.
- Discuss the role of climate in the evolution of Canada’s national identity.
- Consider contemporary environmental issues from a long-term perspective.
- Assess and analyze secondary sources, including their argument, methods, strengths, limitations, and significance for the field and/or implications for broader public discourse.
- Assess and analyze primary source texts, utilizing them in an original research essay.
- Continue to improve their writing skills.

Required texts:

The remainder of the readings is available on the password-protected Owl course website, the Western Libraries website, or course reserve.

Grade breakdown:
- Participation (including presentation) 20%
  Student participation is essential to the success of seminar courses. Students are expected to read all assigned readings and participate in each class. Note that attendance is not in and of itself participation: participation demands speaking, and speaking demands knowledge of the material under discussion.
Toward the end of the course (weeks 8-10), students will make 10-minute presentations that introduce their draft research essays, raise any issues they are facing, and seek input. The draft need not be submitted to either the students or professor.

**Book review - Finding history in climate - week 5**  
A lot has been written about climate change of late: Western Libraries lists more than 2000 titles published since 2000 with “global warming” or “climate change” in the name. Many of these implicitly or explicitly detail the history of climate. Students will write a 750-word review of a contemporary book on climate change, from a list provided by the instructor, providing an analysis as to how history figures and is applied in this contemporary work.

**Primary research essay - Finding climate in history**

- **Initial draft – week 10**  
- **Final draft – week 13**

Students will utilize primary sources as the foundation of a 2500-word research essay. Students may use:

- an item or items from the Environment Canada collection acquired by Western Archives on long-term loan in 2014. The collection consists of 1000 volumes of the Meteorological Service of Canada's extant meteorological observations from its beginnings until 1960, and another 250 items, from the 1820s on, related to the history of Canadian climate and meteorology.
  
  *or*
  
- an 1816 newspaper available online or on microfilm in Weldon Library, to chronicle the Canadian experience of “the year without a summer.”
  
  *or*
  
- documents, determined in consultation with the instructor, related to a defining moment in the international debate on global warming.

In week 10, students will submit a draft of their completed essay to be graded and returned in week 11. The revised essay will be due in week 13.

**Final (take-home) exam**  
This exam will be distributed in the last class, to be completed and returned one week later. Students will be asked six questions and expected to write essays on three.

**The fine print:**

All assignments will be discussed further in class.

Students are required to submit a copy of their written assignment in electronic form to [Turnitin](https://www.turnitin.com) for plagiarism checking. The Faculty of Social Science’s policy statement on plagiarism and the use of plagiarism detection software is attached to this syllabus.
The Western Academic Handbook declares that an essay course such as this “must be so structured that the student is required to demonstrate competence in essay writing to pass the course.” As such, students must receive a passing grade on the combined value of the book review and research essay to pass the course.

No extensions will be granted for late essays, except for reasons defined by Senate regulations. Pressure of work or computer/printer problems are not acceptable excuses for late essays. Five per cent will be deducted from the essay grade for the first day that any assignment is overdue, three per cent each day after (including Saturdays and Sundays).

Students with special requirements are advised to contact the Student Development Centre. The SDC will handle all documentation and make arrangements with the instructor for academic accommodation. Students encountering serious problems that might affect their performance in a course should inform Academic Counselling in their home faculty immediately. See also the Faculty of Social Science’s policy statement on medical accommodation, which is appended to the plagiarism statement attached.

Schedule and readings:
Readings are available online, through the course’s Owl website, or in the required texts, which are also on reserve.

**6 Jan**  
1. Introduction  

**13 Jan**  
2. What we know & how we know it  

**20 Jan**  
3. Adaptability & collapse during the Holocene  
o Behringer, ch.2  

**27 Jan**  
4. The Little Ice Age
o Behringer, ch.3-4

**3 Feb** 5. The Little Ice Age: A Canadian case study

**10 Feb** 6. Climate & Canadian identity

**24 Feb** 7. A science of the weather

**3 Mar** 8. A science of the weather: Canada as a case study

**10 Mar** 9. The accidental anthropocene
17 Mar  **10. The discovery of global warming**
- Behringer, ch.5
- Weart, ch.2-4.

24 Mar  **11. The discovery of global warming**
- Weart, ch.5-6

31 Mar  **12. A deliberate anthropocene?**
- Weart, ch.7-8

7 Apr  **13. Conclusions and review**
- Behringer, ch.6.