

*Course syllabus: Modern Global Environmental History*

History 228 / Section 001

**Modern Global Environmental History**

MoWe 4:00 – 5:15 pm,  
Humanities Bldg. 1217  
Twitter #wischist228

**Instructor:**

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**Contact details**

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Office hours: Tu 3:20 – 5:20 pm

Modernity and globalization seem to have become inseparable concepts and the ways they have been put in practice over the last couple of centuries have had an undeniable impact on the natural world. For instance, the role of humanity in radically changing the environment since the Industrial Revolution has been recently acknowledged with the coinage of the concept of anthropocene.

In this course the environmental consequences and context of major themes in modern world history, including capitalism, industrialization, urbanization, colonialism, and warfare will be discussed from both a general and a case-study based approach. Central to the class will be the environmentally informed analysis of the two sides of the Hobsbawmian “age of empire”: the final conquest and subjugation of the world by European colonial powers and the rise of new forms of economy, production, and consumption. Moreover, the evolution of the perceptions of the natural world in an increasingly small world will be considered, as well as the wider social and political impact of such perceptions and their relationship with existing power structures.

This is a lecture course, but active participation will be an important component and about a third of lecture time will be dedicated to discussion and group activities. There will thus be frequent, discussion slots interspersed with lectures. There will as well be online tools to facilitate discussion in-between meetings.

**Assignments:**

The course includes the following written assignments:

- Mid-term take-home exam
- “Places & Events” mini-essays
- Final take-home exam

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You will also be graded for participation. Both in-class and online participation will be evaluated for this grade. Come to class ready to discuss the assigned readings. On occasion you will be asked to write down a question about the readings while in class and to attempt to answer one of your colleagues' questions.

### *Mid-term exam*

For mid-term there will be a take-home exam. Questions will be distributed on Monday 3 March. Answers are expected by Friday 7 March at 1pm in the Learn@UW dropbox. The questions will cover topics discussed in weeks 1-7 and require the students to make links between the course's different components, assigned readings, and lecture notes. Further details and guidelines will be distributed in due time.

### *Places & Events*

"Places & Events" ([www.environmentandsociety.org/places-events](http://www.environmentandsociety.org/places-events)) are part of the Environment & Society Portal . They are very short summaries of environmentally significant places or events, with supporting information. They appear on the Portal's map and timeline.

Up to 25 pts will be assigned for 5 short "Places & Events" mini-essays (5 pts each). These should be written following the Portal's guidelines (see below), and each include **one** copyright cleared image, at least **two** further readings, possibly **one** related link, and all further required metadata. As stated in the guidelines the text should be not longer than **150** words, plus a summary of up to 50 words. The full guidelines are available at this link:

[www.environmentandsociety.org/places-events/guidelines-contributors](http://www.environmentandsociety.org/places-events/guidelines-contributors).

Explore the Portal's map or timeline to discover places and events that have not yet been covered (please avoid doubles). Let inspire yourself by the weekly readings and lectures to fill the gaps. This is a research intensive assignment, since it requires to go beyond in-class readings, exploring references and quotations, to make a historiographically sound description of places and events in modern global environmental history. Start early! I will be available during office hours to discuss topics.

There is the possibility that these mini-essays might be published on the Environment & Society Portal, with full credits to the students, but a final decision on this will be taken independently by the Portal team. I'll forward the best entries to the Portal team after having graded them. Please let me know if you do **not** want your mini-essays to be considered for online publication.

The mini-essays are due on 23 Apr 2014 before class starts. Please upload the mini-essays in one file to the Learn@UW dropbox. Entries should be submitted in a modifiable format: any text, Windows, Libre/OpenOffice format works.

### **Final exam**

Also the final will be a take-home exam. Questions will be distributed on the last day of class. Exams are due in the Learn@UW dropbox by Friday 14 May at 12:05pm. The questions will cover topics discussed in weeks 8-15 and require the students to make links between the course's different components, assigned readings, and lecture notes. Further details will be given in due time.

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### Grading

Letter grades will be converted from a 100-point scale. The following conversion chart applies:

- 93-100 = A;
- 88-92 = AB;
- 83-87 = B;
- 78-82 = BC;
- 70-77 = C;
- 60-69 = D;
- 59-below = F.

Grades per coursework will be broken down following this rubric:

– Participation		20 pts
– Mid-term	Due Mar 7	25 pts
– Places & Events	Due Apr 23	25 pts
– Final exam	Due May 14	30 pts

### Required books

- Guha, Ramachandra. *Environmentalism: A Global History*. Longman World History Series. New York: Longman, 2000.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*. New York: Vintage, 1989.
- McNeill, J. R., John Robert McNeill, and Paul Kennedy. *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2001.
- Scott, James. *Seeing like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

All other articles and book chapters will be available online or are easily retrievable via [library.wisc.edu/#articles](http://library.wisc.edu/#articles).

### Course policies

*Attendance:* Attending classes is the student's responsibility and attendance will not be taken. This class has a discussion component and your involvement is essential for the course to reach its pedagogical goals. As a reminder: just showing up to class is necessary, but not sufficient, to gain grades for participation.

According to campus wide rules on religious observance I invite you, nonetheless, to notify me within the first two weeks of class of the specific dates for which you request relief for religious observance, since these may affect your ability to respect the assignments' deadlines.

*Reading assignments:* Reading the book chapters and articles given in the course schedule before classes is expected. These texts are the core materials of the course and will allow you to participate actively in discussion: their reading will affect your participation grade and is essential for a successful

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completion of written assignments.

*Academic integrity:* In any written assignment it is necessary to acknowledge and fully quote your sources and references. You should NEVER attribute to yourself, or give the impression that you are attributing to yourself, the words and phrasing of others. Plagiarism is an unacceptable ethical infraction and can lead to serious consequences. For further information on how to avoid plagiarism please refer to the UW-Madison Writing Center webpages:

<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/QuotingSources.html>

*Communication:* E-mails will be answered only on weekdays 10am-3pm. If you have any questions that require a longer answer please drop by during office hours or arrange a meeting. You may as well use the course hashtag #wischist228 for questions of interest to the whole class. In e-mails please always use a subject line and clarify which course you have a question about.

*Submitting Work:* All written assignments must be submitted electronically by the given deadline on the Learn@UW dropbox. The filename should be formatted in the following way:

[YourSurname]\_[AssignmentName].[doc/txt/odt] (e.g. Hardenberg\_PlacesEvents.odt)

The student's name, assignment title, and submission date should appear clearly on top of the paper. Formatting should be 12pt font, double spacing, 1 inch margins. Pages should be numbered. Text should be thoroughly proofread. Formatting, grammar, and syntax will be graded.

If your written assignments are submitted late they will receive a reduced grade (1 point for each day of delay). No late submissions will be accepted for the final essay.

*Modifications to Syllabus:* The syllabus may be subject to changes. Reasonable notice will be given.

### Course Schedule

**Week 1** – 22 Jan 2014 – *Introduction of course and presentation of the syllabus*

- McNeill, J. R. "Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History." *History and Theory* 42, no. 4 (December 1, 2003): 5–43.

**Week 2** – 27 and 29 Jan 2014 – *A long age of empire*

- Ch. 2, 3, 12 and 13 of Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire*

**Week 3** – 3 and 5 Feb 2014 – *Modernizing nature*

- Ch. 1, 3, 6 and 8 of Scott, *Seeing Like a State*

**Week 4** – 10 and 12 Feb 2014 – *The making of the Third World*

- **Part Three** "The Political Ecology of Famine" in Davis, Mike. *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*. New York: Verso, 2002.

**Week 5** – 17 and 19 Feb 2014 – *Industrialization and energy transitions*

- **Introduction** of Landes, David S. *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present*. 2. ed. repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005 [Orig. ed. 1969]

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- Gales, Ben, Astrid Kander, Paolo Malanima, and Mar Rubio. "North versus South: Energy Transition and Energy Intensity in Europe over 200 Years." *European Review of Economic History* 11, no. 2 (August 1, 2007): 219–253. doi:10.1017/S1361491607001967.
- Ch. **10** of McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*

**Week 6** – 24 and 26 Feb 2014 – *Resource use and colonialism*

- Ch. **2** of McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*
- **Introduction** and Ch. **5** "The Tropical Cost of the Automotive Age: Corporate Rubber Empires and the Rainforest" in Tucker, Richard P. *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000.

**Week 7** – 3 and 5 Mar 2014 – *Water: consumption, pollution, irrigation, power*

- Ch. **5** and **6** of McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*
- Worster, Donald, "The Flow of Empire: Comparing Water Control in the United States and China," *RCC Perspectives* 2011, no 5, <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/node/5586>

**Mid-term exam due on 7 Mar at 1pm.**

**Week 8** – 10 and 12 Mar 2014 – *Environments of war*

- The following essays in Tucker, Richard P., and Edmund Russell, eds. *Natural Enemy, Natural Ally: Toward an Environmental History of Warfare*. 1st ed. Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2004.
  - Roger S. Levine, "'African Warfare in all its Ferocity': Changing Military Landscapes and Precolonial and Colonial Conflict in Southern Africa"
  - Richard P. Tucker, "The World Wars and the Globalization of Timber Cutting"
  - William M. Tsutsui, "Landscapes in the Dark Valley: Toward an Environmental History of Wartime Japan"
- And the following in Closmann, Charles E. *War and the Environment. Military Destruction in the Modern Age*. College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2009.
  - Dorothee Brantz, "*Environments of Death: Trench Warfare on the Western Front, 1914-1918*"
  - John R. McNeill & David S. Painter, "The Global Environmental Footprint of the U.S. Military: 1789-2003"

**Spring break**

**Week 9** – 24 and 26 Mar 2014 – *Changing air: smoke, pollution, climate*

- Ch. **3** and **4** in McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*
- Brimblecombe, Peter. "The Globalization of Local Air Pollution." *Globalizations* 2, no. 3 (2005): 429–441. doi:10.1080/14747730500368114.

**Week 10** – 31 Mar and 2 Apr 2014 – *Population, urbanization, and waste regimes*

- "The Role of Urbanization in Environmental History" in Hays, Samuel P. *Explorations in*

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*Environmental History: Essays*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998,

- Cooper, Tim. "Recycling Modernity: Waste and Environmental History: Waste and Environmental History." *History Compass* 8, no. 9 (September 2, 2010): 1114–1125. doi:10.1111/j.1478-0542.2010.00725.x.
- Goldewijk, Kees Klein. "Three Centuries of Global Population Growth: A Spatial Referenced Population (Density) Database for 1700-2000." *Population and Environment* 26, no. 4 (March 1, 2005): 343–367.

**Week 11** – 7 and 9 Apr 2014 – *Germs, plants, animals*

- Ch. 7 and 8 of McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*
- **Introduction** of Gissibl, Bernhard, Sabine Höhler, and Patrick Kupper. *Civilizing Nature: National Parks in Global Historical Perspective*. Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012.

**Week 12** – 14 and 16 Apr 2014 – *The roots of environmentalism*

- **Part 1** of Guha, *Environmentalism*
- Ch. 2 "Nature and the colonial mind" in Adams, William Mark, and Martin Mulligan. *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for Conservation in a Post-Colonial Era*. London: Earthscan, 2002.

**Week 13** – 21 and 23 Apr 2014 – *Decolonization, development, and environment*

- Watts, Michael. "Entitlements or Empowerment? Famine and Starvation in Africa." *Review of African Political Economy* no. 51 (July 1, 1991): 9–26.
- Ch. 7 of Scott, *Seeing Like a State*
- Kull, C.A. "Deforestation, Erosion, and Fire: Degradation Myths in the Environmental History of Madagascar." *Environment and History* 6, no. 4 (November 1, 2000): 423–450. doi:10.3197/096734000129342361.
- **Introduction** to Duara, Prasenjit, ed. *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then*. London: Routledge, 2004.

**"Places & Events" mini-essays due on 23 Apr at 4pm.**

**Week 14** – 28 and 30 Apr 2014 – *Environmentalism as a global ideology*

- **Part 2** of Guha, *Environmentalism*
- Ch. 11 in McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*

**Week 15** – 5 and 7 May 2014 – *The anthropocene: legacies and challenges*

- Steffen, Will, Jacques Grinewald, Paul J. Crutzen, and John R. McNeill. "The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives." *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A* no. 369 (2011): 842–867. doi:10.1098/rsta.2010.0327.
- Chakrabarty, Dipesh. "The Climate of History: Four Theses." *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 2 (January 1, 2009): 197–222. doi:10.1086/596652.
- Ch. 5 "Global Warming: The Modern Warm Period" of Behringer, Wolfgang. *A Cultural History of Climate*. Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2010.

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**Final exam due on 14 May 2014 at 12:05 pm.**