HISTORY 106
Global Environmental History

January-April 2015
Lectures on Thursdays, 11-12:20
Location: Klinck 200
Tutorials on Fridays

Instructor:
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Office hours: Thursdays 2-3, Fridays 11-12, and by appointment

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Description

Think globally and act locally has been a staple of environmentalism since the early 1970s. What does it mean to think globally, and historically, about the environment? How have global historical processes like industrialization, urbanization, and the agricultural revolution affected local environments? Local and individual actions have long played out in a global context. We will focus in particular on interrelated developments in climate, agriculture, energy, and cities.

Through readings, writing, research, and discussion, we will examine the connection of global and local environments. Case studies will include historical responses to climate change in Europe and North America, the transformation of indigenous foodways and the urban development of Vancouver. By the end of the course, students will have an understanding of the dynamic and complex place of the environment in world history, of interdisciplinary approaches to historical thinking, and of the ways in which their own lives are embedded in the history we will be exploring.

Learning Objectives

Students should:

• Learn to situate local experience, perception, and causes of environmental change within a global context. I.e. be able to identify the global forces at play in local concerns, but also the role of local action in constituting global environmental systems.
• Learn how global historical processes like industrialization, urbanization, and the agricultural revolution have affected local environments and societies.

• Learn to apply particular environmental historical concepts to both historical and contemporary environmental issues. Concepts include spatial and temporal scale, environmental determinism/agency, urban metabolism, social construction of nature, social ecology, environmental justice, geographies of risk, and others.

• Hone their humanities writing skills through the development of an argument and the use of evidence with proper citations.

• Engage reading material and classmates via discussion in tutorials and online.

**Requirements and Evaluation**

• There will be one 80-minute lecture on Thursday each week. Each week there will also be an interactive online module, which you must complete before lecture on Thursday. Your online module participation is required and part of your tutorial participation grade.

• Your online module participation takes the form of online discussion responses on Connect. You’re expected to write a response on a particular subject or question(s), as well as comment on the entry of at least one of your classmates. See the end of the syllabus for more information.

• Regular attendance and participation in discussion during tutorials. Tutorials are an integral part of the course, and your attendance and participation will be a significant portion of your grade. You cannot participate successfully unless you have done the online module and the assigned readings for the week. In order to attend tutorial, you must bring a completed discussion “ticket” to class with you. We will supply the tickets at tutorial the first week; you should fill one out and bring it along each subsequent week.

• Two short essays (750-1000 words each) due in class on February 5 and April 9. The paper topics are at the end of this syllabus. Late papers will be penalized at 4 per cent per day unless otherwise arranged in advance of the due date. Note that your second essay can be the culmination of a community service volunteer project that you undertake during the semester. If you are interested in this option, you need to attend an information session or meet with Prof. Glassheim before reading week.

• Scheduled final exam at the end of the term. The exam will have 2 parts: identifications and an essay. We will post a list of possible identifications and essay questions at the start of the semester.

The grade breakdown is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requirement</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tutorial attendance and participation (in class and online)</td>
<td>20 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essays: 2 x 25 per cent</td>
<td>50 per cent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam</td>
<td>30 per cent</td>
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**Readings**

Most readings for tutorials are available in a **reader** for sale at the UBC bookstore. All students should purchase the reader and bring a hard copy of the weekly readings with you to tutorial. We urge you to purchase the reader right away. The best way to ensure a copy is available is to pre-order online at: [http://shop.bookstore.ubc.ca/courselistbuilder.aspx](http://shop.bookstore.ubc.ca/courselistbuilder.aspx)

A few of the readings are available only online; they are marked in bold on the syllabus, followed by the web address for access. You can also find these links in the weekly online modules.

**Course Schedule**

**Week 1**
8 Jan: Introduction

Online Module: Thinking Globally, Thinking Locally

For tutorial, come ready to discuss your footprint results.

Consider the following questions:

- Where are you from, and how does that affect your footprint?

**SECTION 1: CLIMATE CHANGE**

**Week 2**
15 Jan: Introduction to Climate Change

Online: Welcome to the Anthropocene

For tutorial, read the following:


Consider the following questions:

- What kind of work does the “Anthropocene” concept do? Are you convinced by the arguments of the concept’s proponents?
- How do concepts like the “Anthropocene” and a “safe operating space” encourage us to think about both the past and the future?
Week 3
22 Jan: Climate and Culture

Online: Environmental Determinism, Climate Change, and the Inuit

For tutorial, read the following:

Consider the following questions:
- In what ways does the Canadian Arctic serve as a “Distant Early Warning” line for climate change? What can we learn from contemporary Inuit reactions to climate change?
- What are Griffiths and Hulme arguing? How would Franklyn Griffiths and the Inuit he spoke with respond to Mike Hulme?

Week 4
29 Jan: The Moral and Political Economy of Climate Change

Online: Climate Change and Sustainability

For discussion, read and watch the following:
- Naomi Klein, “Capitalism vs. the Climate,” The Nation, 9 November 2011.

Please consider the following questions for discussion:
- How do various responses to climate change relate to the way their advocates understand climate change as a problem?
- What is capitalism, what does it have to do with climate change, and what does it have to do with climate change action?

SECTION 2: AGRICULTURE

Week 5
5 Feb: Agriculture: An Overview of Origins and Change
*ESSAY 1 DUE IN CLASS*

Online: Why do we eat what we eat?

For tutorial, read the following:

Please consider the following questions for discussion:
• What kinds of insights does McNeill's big picture history give us? Does it make you think at all differently about our current historical moment?
• What was the Columbian Exchange? What were the implications of the Columbian Exchange for agriculture around the world?

**Week 6**
12 Feb: Industrial Agriculture

Online: The Green Revolution and Its Critics

Readings for tutorial:

Consider the following questions:
• In what ways has the Green Revolution transformed the relationship between developed and developing countries? What are some similarities and differences between the Green Revolution and the Columbian Exchange? In both, what was/is the relationship between agriculture and empire?
• Broadly speaking, how has the industrialization of agriculture changed the way people interact with nature? Is this a good or bad thing? Why?

READING WEEK: 16-20 FEBRUARY 2015

**Week 7**
26 Feb: Post-Industrial Agriculture?

Online: Alt-Ag and Wendell Berry

For discussion, read the following short articles:

Questions for discussion
• What is the relationship of the local and the global in the critiques of industrial agriculture we've encountered (Shiva, Pollan, and Berry)?
In what ways do these writers and thinkers connect food production, values, and politics in their critiques? Do you see a necessary connection between the three?

SECTION 3: ENERGY

**Week 8**
5 Mar: Energy in World History: An Overview

Online: We Are Energy: Energy Regimes, Society, and Culture

For tutorial, read the following:

For discussion, consider the following questions:
- Historically, what has been the relationship between energy and slavery? Between energy and power over others more generally?
- How effective is Nikiforuk’s metaphor of energy slavery, and why do you think he presents his argument this way? What do slavery and energy have to do with each other?

**Week 9**
12 Mar: The Regime of Steam and Coal

Online: China’s Industrial Revolution

For discussion, read the following:

Consider the following questions:
- Vaclav Smil suggests a correspondence between a country’s ability to harness energy and to wield global power. What do you think? Was there a correspondence between the Age of Coal and Europe’s global influence in the nineteenth century? If the general axiom holds true, who/what might be the next to turn new energy sources into global power?
- What surprised you about the history of coal in China? What does coal have to do with China’s economic and political aspirations, in the past and the present?
**Week 10**
19 Mar: The Age of Oil

Online: Canada’s Tar Sands

Readings for tutorial:

Consider the following questions:
- What are the impacts and implications of tar sands development for Alberta, Canada, and the world? Is the tar sands debate simply a matter of pitting economic interests against environmental concerns, or is there more going on?
- What does it mean to say that we live in an “age of oil”? How does oil shape our economy and society, as well as our basic economic and cultural assumptions? In what ways are our lifestyles connected to global flows of commodities like oil?

**SECTION 4: CITIES**

**Week 11**
26 Mar: The Nature of Cities

Online: Nature in the City

For discussion, read the following:
- **City of Vancouver. “Restoring Streams” [http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/restoring-streams.aspx](http://vancouver.ca/home-property-development/restoring-streams.aspx) and “Still Creek Enhancement” - for the latter, look at the tab called “Details” and “History” and skim the Still Creek Rehabilitation and Enhancement Study, 1-5.**

Consider the following questions:
- Rees argues that people living in cities are cut off from the implications of their consumption—thus his idea of the ecological footprint to get us thinking about our relationship with distant natural resources. What do you think is at the root of this apparent disconnect between cities and nature? Is this a problem?
- What is nature-deficit disorder, and how might it be treated?
**Week 12**
2 Apr: Cities and Environmentalism

Online: Unnatural Disaster: The Social Ecology of New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina

***Friday Apr. 3 is a holiday—no tutorials this week—discussion online***

For discussion (online this week), read the following short articles:


Consider the following questions (for online discussion):

- What does climate change have to do with Hurricane Katrina, if anything?
- In what ways was Hurricane Katrina a “natural” and an “unnatural disaster”? How was environmental crisis experienced by different social and racial groups in New Orleans? What is the environmental justice story here?

**Week 13:**
9 Apr: Futureville: The Search for the Ideal City

*ESSAY 2 DUE IN LECTURE*

Online: Cars, Bikes, and Transit: Getting Around in the Greenest City

For discussion, read the following:


Consider the following questions:

- Is Vancouver the (sustainable) city of the future? Are sustainable cities possible? Is it possible to balance economic dynamism/growth of cities and sustainability?
- What concretely can/should Vancouver do to become a more sustainable city? Does “greening” the city involve trade-offs?
Assignments

Online Activities: Modules and Responses

In this course, there are 13 online modules, each requiring a written response on the Connect discussion board. Each week, you should respond in approximately 100-150 words to one of the posted questions and comment on at least one of your fellow students’ responses. Your responses should not be mini-essays, but rather should give an informed, but informal response to a question or questions relating to the online material. Your responses will be assessed as part of your participation grade.

The Essays

Essays should be 750-1000 words in length and should include footnotes or parenthetical citations with a bibliography. The notes are not part of your word count. Papers should be double-spaced and in 12-point font. Please include a title, the name of your Teaching Assistant, and a word count on the front page. Please number your pages.

All sources, including those on the Internet, should have proper citations. Failure to acknowledge sources (including proper use of quotation marks) constitutes plagiarism, and will result in a serious penalty, ranging from failure on the assignment to failure of the course. For further guidance on citations, you may want to consult the History Writing Centre at http://www.history.ubc.ca/content/common-questions-about-citations and http://www.history.ubc.ca/content/examples

A good site for generating citations is: http://noodletools.com/noodlebib/citeone_s.php

Note: history (and most humanities) essays should have a thesis, or central argument. For some tips on generating a significant, analytical thesis, see the History Writing Centre at: https://www.history.ubc.ca/content/formulating-thesis. You’ll also find suggestions there on other aspects of the writing process.

The sources (evidence) that you choose are very much a part of the argument that you make. How you make use of these sources is an important part of your paper. When grading papers, evaluators look to see: a) that you have identified and understood the main argument or thesis of the source that you are using; b) that you have engaged with the author’s argument, and not merely summarized their work; c) that your use of the source has added to or helped you to establish your own argument. You can find a detailed grading rubric for essays under “Handouts” on Connect.

Essay 1 (due in class on February 5)

Assignment: Use a historical perspective to make an argument about the relationship between climate change and human culture.

This essay is designed to get you thinking historically about the present, and there are many ways that you might do this. It helps to break the assignment down. First, you should consider what it means to approach the study of climate change ‘historically’. You might draw on one or more of the conceptual tools historians use to analyze the past (scale, causality, continuity and change, the social construction of knowledge).
Second, remember that climate change is experienced very differently by people of different backgrounds and places. Third, recall that many ‘cultural’ factors make up our society. You may choose to interpret culture as a set of social practices (i.e. Griffiths), ways of understanding value (i.e. Hulme), or political stances (i.e. Lomborg and Klein). Any are acceptable, but be sure to explain what you mean when you refer to “culture.”

In addition to the material from the lectures, you should use at least four (and probably more) of the assigned readings from weeks 1-4. You do not need to do outside reading for this assignment.

- Please note that all essays should make an argument of some sort—they should not only describe your topic, but also explain something important about it.
- Papers should have footnotes or parenthetical citations with a bibliography (see above for details). A reminder that all sources must be cited, including internet sources and your parents or roommates.

**Essay 2** (due in class on April 9)

For the second essay you may write on any one of the topics below.

We’d like you to reflect on what you’ve learned in the course about humans’ relationship with the environment (that human could be you!). Thinking about the larger themes and arguments in the course will be useful in preparing for the final exam as well, so you’re really accomplishing two things with this assignment: completing the second essay and doing some final exam preparation.

- Please note that all essays should make an argument of some sort—they should not only describe your topic, but also explain something important about it.
- Papers should have footnotes or parenthetical citations with a bibliography (see above for details). A reminder that all sources must be cited, including internet sources and your parents or roommates.

**Topic #1**

Imagine yourself as a working professional, perhaps as an architect, engineer, city planner, education consultant, etc. How is your job affected by environmental change, and what lessons can you draw from your experiences in H106? You may wish to articulate the economic and/or social implications of environmental change, and make a case for your own field’s potential for contributing to solutions to environmental challenges.

**Topic #2**

In a future role as policy advisor to an esteemed and powerful political leader, you’ve been tasked with writing a “guide to sustainable consumption.” Drawing from the readings on energy and consumption, outline a wise-use strategy for the consumption of products or energy that is ecologically and socially sustainable. Your guide may target younger generations, or it may target adult consumers. In either case, clearly identify your target audience, and explain the rationale for your recommendations.
**Topic #3**
Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the ability of the human species to work collectively to address the challenges of climate change? In giving your answer, explain your position with reference to discussions in the Sections 2, 3, or 4 of the course. Are we inherently poor managers of the world’s resources? Or, will human ingenuity and innovation prevail?

**Topic #4**
Based on your experiences in this course, and drawing specifically from two or more of the topics we’ve studied, assess the effectiveness of thinking locally about global issues. You may choose to focus on the strengths of this approach, or you may focus on some of the shortcomings. Or, you may wish to link the two together. In your answer, we ask you to connect discussions from at least two different units that we’ve studied.

**Topic #5**
If you are doing a community service learning project, you are welcome to write a final essay that connects your project to some of the themes of the course. Please discuss your plans with your TA.

We will also accept projects that involve audio-visual components. If you are not writing a conventional essay, then you must also include a brief (400-500 word) commentary explaining the point you are making about humans’ relationship with the environment and how it relates to one or more key themes in the course (just so the subtleties and finer points don’t escape us!).

We’ll talk more about this in class, but here are some things students have done in the past:
- participated in “Critical Mass” as a way of raging against the machine, which in this case is the car. They’ve written about the experience of riding, making a video of it or taking photographs, as a way of talking about their relationship with the automobile.
- photographed every piece of garbage they made in a week and then tried the next week to do something about it. They created a photo-essay discussing what their trash taught them.
- mapped where all the food they ate in a day came from and reflected on that.
- wrote songs and performed them; choreographed dances!