

Global Environmental History

HIS 350—Spring 2017

[JES A217A](#), MW 4:00-5:30pm

Instructor: Dr. Megan Raby
meganraby@austin.utexas.edu

Office Hours: [GAR 0.114](#)
M 10:00am-12:00pm
and by appointment



Course Description:

This course explores how human societies and natural environments have shaped each other through world history. In order to tackle this formidable subject, the course is divided into three thematic units. We will begin by critically examining “bird’s eye views” of deep human and natural history, discussing historiographic controversies over topics such as the role of humans in ancient extinctions, the problem of population growth, and whether climate shaped the course of civilizations. Next, we delve into a series of transnational and comparative histories of societies’ ways of knowing and making a living in nature. We will survey cultural and economic encounters of colonialism and capitalism in the 19th the 20th centuries, tracing the global flows of commodities, “invasive species,” human migrations, and waste. Finally, we will take a closer look at the ideas that have historically shaped how we think about and act in nature, considering the emergence of ecology, climate science, and environmentalist movements around the world.

This course is an upper-division, reading- and writing-intensive seminar. It acts as an introduction to the growing field of environmental history, as well as to a variety of approaches to understanding history at a scale beyond the nation-state. It carries Independent Inquiry, Global Cultures, and Writing Flag designations:

[Independent Inquiry](#) courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your major. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of your own work.

[Global Cultures](#) courses are designed to increase your familiarity with cultural groups outside the United States. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from assignments covering the practices, beliefs, and histories of at least one non-U.S. cultural group, past or present.

[Writing Flag](#) courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers’ work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work.

Readings:

Four required textbook is available for purchase at the University Co-op. In addition, they are on 2-hour reserve at PCL:

Penna, Anthony N. *The Human Footprint: A Global Environmental History*. 2nd ed. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2015.

Crosby, Alfred W. *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Cushman, Gregory T. *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Guha, Ramachandra. *Environmentalism: A Global History*. New York: Longman, 2000.

Additional required primary and secondary source readings listed in the schedule below will be posted on our course's Canvas site (<http://canvas.utexas.edu>). In addition to accessing course materials, you will also use Canvas to communicate and collaborate online, check grades, and submit assignments. Canvas support is available at the ITS Help Desk at 512-475-9400 and help@its.utexas.edu, M-F 8:00-6:00pm.

Assignments and Evaluation:

Participation	20%
Reflection Essays	20%
Timeline/StoryMap Projects	60%

Participation

Participation, first of all, means active involvement in class discussion and activities, both in lecture and discussion sections. This includes coming to class prepared to discuss course readings (reading actively, taking notes, bringing the texts and your notes for the day to class), speaking up to ask and answer questions during class, and collaborating actively with classmates in group activities. Participation also includes leading 3 class discussions: During most class periods, 2-4 students will serve as discussion leaders, submitting Reflection Essays (see below) on the day's readings and making a brief presentation at the start of class in order to start off our conversation. All students will also submit questions for discussion (ahead of time on a Canvas Discussion Board) based on the readings assigned for each class period.

To participate, you must also attend class. Regular class attendance is imperative to success in this course. It is your responsibility to sign the attendance sheet when you enter class. You are allowed 2 unexcused days of absence without penalty. Each additional absence will reduce your Participation by half a grade (5%). UT Austin policy requires you to notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class or assignment in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence. If you miss an in-class writing assignment for an official UT extracurricular activity, documented illness, or emergency, it may qualify as an excused absence, and you should discuss with me the possibility of making up the assignment at my office hours. If you miss a lecture or class activity, borrow notes from a classmate. Although I am happy to

discuss course material with you at my office hours, there is no way to make up a lecture or class activity.

Reflection Essays

These are brief, ~600 word essays or "think pieces" that you will complete periodically through the course and that you will share with the class on a Canvas Discussion Board. Late Reflections will earn half credit.

On the 3 days you sign up to be a discussion leader, you will be responsible for submitting a Reflection on the assigned readings (or other media) in order to lay the foundations for productive class discussion. In these Reflections you will:

- (1) Concisely summarize the main argument(s) and evidence (or types of evidence) used by each author.
- (2) Explain how the readings intersect. What are the key issues at stake? For example: Do the authors disagree? Do they have contrasting approaches to the same problem? Can you compare the different historical cases that they present? In other words, you should set out the major problems or questions that you think the class should explore during our discussion.
- (3) Finally, link the day's readings to questions and themes explored during previous weeks. Be specific: Which past readings do you think connect in an important way?

These Reflections will be due by noon on the day you lead discussion.

At several other points throughout the course, I will also ask the entire class to write Reflection Essays on something we have discussed, seen, or read for class; brainstorm about a problem we will be examining over coming weeks; or bring relevant outside material to bear on course materials.

Timeline/StoryMap Projects

Combining course material with outside research, you will create a timeline and a narrative map that will link several brief essays on global environmental history topics of your choice. These will comprise several brief essays (totaling ~3000 words), integrated and exhibited using the online tools TimelineJS and StoryMapJS.

Grading System

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	D-	F
100%	< 94%	< 90%	< 87%	< 84%	< 80%	< 77%	< 74%	< 70%	< 67%	< 64%	< 61%
to 94%	to 90%	to 87%	to 84%	to 80%	to 77%	to 74%	to 70%	to 67%	to 64%	to 61%	to 0%

Office Hours

I encourage you to meet with me to discuss course material, any concerns you may have about your progress in this class, or strategies for effective studying and writing. If you wish to dispute a grade, be aware that re-grading may result in a lower score.

My office is a gun free space (see Weapons Policy below). UT-Austin policy (HOP 8-1060, VII-C) requires me to give oral notice of my prohibition of concealed handguns in my office. For this reason, my door will remain closed during office hours so that I can provide notice

to visitors before they enter. I recognize that this makes for an awkward situation. Nevertheless, please know that I welcome you into my office for free and open discussion. Any student may email me to arrange for alternative accommodations.

Writing Center

In the University Writing Center (UWC), consultants offer free, individualized, expert help with writing for any UT undergraduate by appointment. Visit uwc.utexas.edu/appointments and log into UT's appointment-scheduling system, Symplicity. You can also call the UWC Front Desk at 512-471-6222. The UWC is located in the [PCL Learning Commons](#).

Documented Disability Accommodations

Any student with a documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact [Services for Students with Disabilities](#) (SSD) at 512-471-6259 (voice) or 1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Faculty are not required to provide accommodations without an official SSD accommodation letter.

Electronic Devices

In order to be fully attentive in class and avoid distracting your classmates, put away your phone (turn off or set to silent) and other electronic devices unless their use is an explicit part of a class activity. Using a laptop (with wifi disabled) or e-reader (but not a phone) to take notes and view assigned pdfs is permitted. Nevertheless, I strongly encourage you to make the investment in printing the readings and taking notes by hand—studies show that this is more effective. If you abuse your privilege to use electronic devices you will no longer be permitted to use them in our classroom. Audio or video recording in class is not permitted without an SSD accommodation and prior approval.

Weapons Policy

With the exception of licensed concealed handguns, no weapons may be brought into the classroom. Course participants with a license to carry a handgun must keep it concealed and on their person at all times. If you see a gun or any other weapon becomes visible, you should immediately leave the classroom and call 911 so that law enforcement personnel can take appropriate action.

Handguns may not be brought to the classroom in backpacks, bags, or purses. Course participants may be called upon at unpredictable times to move about the room, go to the front of the room and participate in a presentation, or otherwise be separated from their belongings. University policy and the implementation of the law would be violated by the separation of the gun owner from their weapon that would result from these required classroom activities.

No weapons of any kind may be brought into the professor's office. Course participants will be given oral notice excluding handguns from my office and will sign a statement acknowledging this notification.

If you have concerns, comments, or questions about UT's effort to comply with S.B. 11, I encourage you to contact those in charge of implementation: campuscarry.utexas.edu (bottom-right of page).

Behavior Concerns Advice Line

If you have concerns about the behavior or well-being of another member of the campus community, call [BCAL](#) at 512-232-5050.

Academic Integrity

Using the words and ideas of others without giving credit with an appropriate citation is plagiarism and a violation of the University of Texas Honor Code. Whether accidental or intentional, plagiarism will result in a failure of the assignment and could lead to further disciplinary action. Before the first essay is due, complete the plagiarism tutorial and quiz available on our Canvas site to be sure you understand what plagiarism is and to minimize your risk of committing it. Please feel free to come talk to me about effective note-taking and citation strategies.

Course Schedule

This syllabus represents my current plans. As we go through the semester, these plans may be adjusted to enhance class learning. I will communicate any such changes clearly in class and through Canvas. In addition, images, links and other resources not listed here may be posted on Canvas for your reference. Readings should be completed for discussion on the date where they are listed below.

Part 1: Big Pictures

Week 1: Introductions

January 18 Hughes, J. Donald. "Defining Environmental History." In *What is Environmental History*, 1-17. Wiley, 2006.

Corona, Gabriella. "What is Global Environmental History? Conversation With Piero Bevilacqua, Guillermo Castro, Ranjan Chakrabarti, Kobus Du Pisani, John R. McNeill, Donald Worster." *Global Environment 2* (2008): 228-49.

Week 2: Grand Narratives and Controversies

January 23 Penna, "Introduction," "1. An Evolving Earth," "2. Evolving Humanity."

Krech, Shepard. "Pleistocene Extinctions." In *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*, 29-44. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1999.

Martin, Paul Schultz. "Models in Collision: Climatic Change Versus Overkill." In *Twilight of the Mammoths: Ice Age Extinctions and the Rewilding of America*, 165-78. University of California Press, 2005.

January 25 Penna, "3. Foraging, Cultivating, and Food Production," "4. Populating the Earth: Diet, Domestication, and Disease."

Diamond, Jared. "The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race." *Discover* 8, no. 5 (1987): 64-66.

Watch: American Museum of Natural History. "Human Population Through Time." <https://youtu.be/PUwmA3Q0 OE>.

Watch: Oosthoek, Jan. "Malthus, Population Growth and the Resource Base." <https://youtu.be/4V09jl5WIvw?list=PLF1ZQTqrItsjSyHwTRadyBeluFAdx75XM>.

Week 3: Global Cities and a Detour to Street Level

January 30 Penna, "5. The Making of an Urban World."

Selections from Scott, James C. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998.

Browse: Gallini, Stefania, Laura Felacio, Angélica Agredo, and Stephanie Garcés. "The City's Currents: A History of Water in 20th-Century Bogotá," Environment & Society Portal Virtual Exhibition. <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/water-bogota>.

February **Reflection Essay: Reading Global Landscapes DUE**

Lewis, Peirce F. "Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene." *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes: Geographical Essays* (1979): 11-32.

Mitchell, Don. "New Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Paying Attention to Political Economy and Social Justice." 29-50. Springer, 2008.

Brown, Kate. "Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana Are Nearly the Same Place." *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 1 (2001): 17-48.

Play a round of Geoguessr: <https://geoguessr.com>. (Specific instructions TBA.)

Week 4: Economy and Environment

February 6 Penna, "6. Mining, Making, and Manufacturing," "7. Industrial Work."

Osborn, Matthew. "The Weirdest of All Undertakings": The Land and the Early Industrial Revolution in Oldham, England." *Environmental History* (2003): 246-69.

Rosen, Christine Meisner. "Knowing' Industrial Pollution: Nuisance Law and the Power of Tradition in a Time of Rapid Economic Change, 1840-1864." *Environmental History* 8, no. 4 (2003): 565-97.

Browse Burtynsky, Edward. Photographs. http://www.edwardburtynsky.com/site_contents/Photographs/introPhotographs.html.

February 8 Penna, "8. Trade and Consumption."

Bestor, Theodore C. "Supply-Side Sushi: Commodity, Market, and the Global City." *American Anthropologist* 103, no. 1 (2001): 76-95.

Brownell, Emily. "International Trash and the Politics of Poverty: Conceptualizing the Transnational Waste Trade." In *Nation-States and the Global Environment: New Approaches to International Environmental History*, edited by Erika Marie Bsumek, David Kinkela and Mark Atwood Lawrence, 252-74. Oxford University Press, 2013.

Week 5: Warming World

February 13 Penna, "9. Fossil Fuels, Wind, Water, Nuclear and Solar Energy," "10. A Warming Climate," "Epilogue."

Listen to: Rose, Christopher, and Sam White. "Episode 44: Climate Change and World History," 15 Minute History. <http://15minutehistory.org/2014/02/26/episode-44-climate-change-and-world-history/>.

Interactive Maps TBA

February 15 **Timeline Essay DUE**

Week 6: Ecological Imperialism

February 20 TBA

February 22 Crosby, "Preface to the New Edition," "Prologue," "Pangaea Revisited," "The Norse and the Crusaders," "The Fortunate Isles, Winds."

Week 7: Animals and Plants

February 27 Crosby, "Within Reach, Beyond Grasp," "Weeds."

McCann, James. "Maize and Grace: History, Corn, and Africa's New Landscapes, 1500-1999." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43, no. 2 (2001): 246-72.

Carney, Judith A. "African Rice in the Columbian Exchange." *The Journal of African History* 42, no. 3 (2001): 377-96.

March 1 Crosby, "Animals."

García Garagarza, León. "The Year the People Turned Into Cattle: The End of the World in New Spain, 1558." In *Centering Animals in Latin American History*, edited by Martha Few and Zeb Tortorici, 31-61. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013.

White, Sam. "From Globalized Pig Breeds to Capitalist Pigs: A Study in Animal Cultures and Evolutionary History." *Environmental History* 16, no. 1 (2011): 94-120.

Specht, Joshua. "The Rise, Fall, and Rebirth of the Texas Longhorn: An Evolutionary History." *Environmental History* 21, no. 2 (2015): 343-63.

Enjoy Spring Break! March 13-15: No Class Meetings

Week 8: Illness and Agency

March 6 Crosby, "Ills."

McNeill, J. R. "Yellow Jack and Geopolitics: Environment, Epidemics, and the Struggles for Empire in the American Tropics, 1650-1825." *OAH Magazine of History* 18, no. 3 (2004): 9-13.

Sutter, Paul. "Nature's Agents or Agents of Empire? Entomological Workers and Environmental Change During the Construction of the Panama Canal." *Isis* 98, no. 4 (2007): 724-54.

March 8 Crosby, "New Zealand," "Explanations," "Conclusions."

Week 9: Neo-Ecological Imperialism

March 20 Cushman, xiii-108.

March 22 Cushman, 109-204.

Week 10: Guano Happens

March 27 Cushman, 205-350.

March 29 TBA

Part 3: Knowing and Acting

Week 11

April 3 StoryMap presentations/peer review

April 5 StoryMap presentations/peer review

Week 12: Wild(erness) Ideas

April 10 Guha, Part I.

Cronon, William. "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (1996): 7-28.

Benson, Etienne. "From Wild Lives to Wildlife and Back." *Environmental History* 16, no. 3 (2011): 418-22.

Listen to selections (TBA) from: BackStory, "Environmental Crisis: The History of Disappearing Nature." <http://backstoryradio.org/shows/the-history-of-disappearing-nature/>

Browse: "Wilderness Babel," Environment & Society Portal. <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/wilderness/overview>.

April 12 Field trip TBA

Week 13: Environmentalisms

April 17 Guha, Part II: Prologue, Chapter 4, Chapter 5.

Stoll, Mark. "Rachel Carson's Silent Spring, a Book that Changed the World," Environment & Society Portal. <http://www.environmentandsociety.org/exhibitions/silent-spring>. (Focus especially on "Industrial and agricultural interests fight back," "Silent Spring, an international best seller," "Why Europe responded differently from the United States," "Legacy of Silent Spring.")

TBA

April 19 Guha, Part II: Chapter 6, Chapter 7, Chapter 8.

Langston, Nancy. "In Oregon, Myth Mixes With Anger." *The New York Times*, 6 January 2016.

Selections from "#StandingRockSyllabus" <https://nycstandswithstandingrock.wordpress.com/standingrocksyllabus/>.

TBA

Week 14: Living in the Anthropocene

April 24 "Part 10: The Anthropocene: How Can We Live in a World Where There is No Nature Without People?" In *The Future of Nature: Documents of Global Change*, edited by Libby Robin, Sverker Sörlin and Paul Warde, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013.

Robin, Libby, and Will Steffen. "History for the Anthropocene." *History Compass* 5, no. 5 (2007): 1694-1719.

April 26 **Final StoryMap DUE**

Week 15: History for the Future

May 1 Selections from Oreskes, Naomi, and Erik M. Conway. *The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View From the Future*. Columbia University Press, 2014.

Selections from Weisman, Alan. *The World Without Us*. New York: Thomas Dunne Books/St. Martin's Press, 2007.

Donlan, C. Josh, et al. "Pleistocene Rewilding: An Optimistic Agenda for Twenty-First Century Conservation." *The American Naturalist* 168, no. 5 (2006): 660-81.

Nash, Roderick Frazier. "Island Civilization: A Vision for Human Occupancy of Earth in the Fourth Millennium." *Environmental History* 15, no. 3 (2010): 371-80.

Crumb, Robert. "A Short History of America" and "Epilogue," *Co-Evolution Quarterly* (1979, 1980).

May 3 **Reflection Essay: Environmental History of the Future DUE**