

Introduction to Environmental History

Fall 2018 HIS 381/LAS 386
GAR 1.122 M 3-6pm

Professor Megan Raby
meganraby@austin.utexas.edu
512-475-7925

Office Hours: GAR 0.114, M 10:10am-12pm and by appointment

Course Description:

Environmental history is a rapidly growing, in-demand subfields of history. At the same time, it is an interdisciplinary field, drawing insight from geography, ecology, cultural studies, and other areas in order to understand changing human relationships with nature over time. This seminar will introduce you to the historiography and diverse methods of environmental history. We will read and discuss a variety of classic and cutting edge texts, with an emphasis on global, transnational, and comparative studies.

Readings:

The following books are available for purchase at the [Co-op](#). They are also [on reserve at PCL](#):

- Bonneuil, Christophe, and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz. *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and Us*. Verso Books, 2016.
- Bsumek, Erika Marie, David Kinkela and Mark Atwood Lawrence, (eds.) *Nation-States and the Global Environment: New Approaches to International Environmental History*. Oxford University Press, 2013.
- Carse, Ashley. *Beyond the Big Ditch: Politics, Ecology, and Infrastructure at the Panama Canal*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2014.
- Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1983.
- Latour, Bruno. *Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climatic Regime*. John Wiley & Sons, 2017.
- Malm, Andreas. *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots Of Global Warming*. Verso Books, 2016.
- McNeill, John Robert. *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914*. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Melville, Elinor G. K. *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- Schwartz, Stuart B. *Sea of Storms: A History of Hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean from Columbus to Katrina*. Princeton University Press, 2015.
- Scott, James C. *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States*. Yale University Press, 2017.
- Tsing, Anna. *The Mushroom at the End of the World*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Wakild, Emily, and Michelle K. Berry. *A Primer for Teaching Environmental History: Ten Design Principles*. Duke University Press, 2018.

- White, Richard. *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River*. Hill and Wang, 2011.
- Wilson, Robert M. *Seeking Refuge: Birds and Landscapes of the Pacific Flyway*. University of Washington Press, 2010.

Article and chapter-length readings will be posted on our course's Canvas site (<http://canvas.utexas.edu>). See the end of this syllabus for a list of additional recommended resources. You will also use Canvas to communicate with the class, check grades, and submit assignments.

Assignments and Evaluation:

Leading Discussions (10%)

Book Reviews (20%)

Participation (30%)

Final Project (40%)

Participation

This is a discussion-centered seminar, so it is imperative that you attend and are prepared to actively participate during every class session. Read and bring the assigned texts, your notes, and a curious and questioning mind. This is a history course, but the approaches and participants will come from many disciplines. Respect these differences and please feel free to ask if you have questions about the norms and expectations for reading and writing in history. (Edwards' "How to Read a Book" is highly recommended.)

As one component of participation, each student will **write at least one discussion question** about the day's assigned readings and **post it on the Canvas discussion board** for that date **at least 1 hour before class**. This discussion question may **(a)** focus on a specific quote or section of one of the readings, **or (b)** draw a connection or comparison across the day's readings or with a reading from a previous week. You are responsible for reading your peers' discussion questions in preparation for class.

Leading Discussions

You will sign up to **introduce and lead the class discussion twice** during the semester, with 1-2 other students as partners. On these dates, you and your partner(s) will collaborate to provide a **~10 minute introduction** to the assigned texts at the beginning of class. You may use images, but this is not required. This introduction will:

- (1)** Describe who the authors are. (What is their disciplinary background? What major works are they known for? This will require some research.)
- (2)** Briefly state each author's thesis and describe the types of evidence used to support it. (Pay attention to the primary sources cited. Is the evidence archival? Archeological? Biological? Geographic? What specific types of documents, artifacts, or natural phenomena do they draw on?)
- (3)** Contextualize the readings within the larger scholarly community. (This means closely considering the secondary sources referenced by each author—who are they in conversation with? This also means locating a selection of published reviews of the assigned book(s), and perhaps also reviews of key works cited by the author. Pay attention to what journals these reviews appear in. This gives a clue to which scholarly

communities the books are in conversation with.)

(4) Identify key themes, cross-cutting ideas, or major points of contention among the texts. Offer a few (3-5) questions about these to start discussion off on the right foot.

Book Reviews

You will write **3 book reviews** over the course of the semester, on assigned books of your choice. These can be, but don't have to be, for the dates you lead discussion. Your book reviews will follow the length, formatting, and style guidelines for reviews in the journal *Environmental History*—see https://academic.oup.com/envhis/pages/Book_Review_Guidelines.

At least 1 of your book reviews should also follow the audience guidelines for a book recommendation post on the department's *Not Even Past* site (<https://notevenpast.org/category/books>). We will workshop these reviews as a class. You will then revise this piece and are strongly recommended to submit it for possible publication on *Not Even Past*.

Each book review will be **due by 1 hour before** the class period during which we discuss the book, **posted on the Canvas board** for that date. You are also responsible for reading your peers' book reviews in preparation for class.

Final Project

You have a choice of final projects for this course, which should be geared toward your future research and teaching goals:

- (1) You may write a 6,000–8,000 word historiographic essay, including Chicago Style footnotes and bibliography, on a topic or theme in environmental history (e.g. the marine environment, environmentalism, health and disease, etc.). This essay must draw on all relevant course texts, as well as additional secondary research. It should evaluate the current state of the field, identifying major historiographic problems and potential directions for future scholarship. See the reference handbooks under “Recommended Resources” at the end of this syllabus for examples of historiographic essays. I strongly suggest using this project to explore a dimension of historiography relevant to your dissertation/dissertation proposal.
- (2) You may create a syllabus, course description, and portfolio of teaching materials for an undergraduate environmental history course (6,000–8,000 words in total). Students choosing this option must read Wakild and Berry's *A Primer for Teaching Environmental History*. The portfolio of teaching materials must include one week of (footnoted) lecture notes/lesson plans/presentation materials and one writing assignment prompt. The scope, era, and/or topic (e.g. Latin American, Early Modern, Environmental Justice, etc.) is up to you, but you should make plans for a class size/format in which some lecturing would be appropriate. Many academic job applications require such a teaching portfolio.
- (3) You may discuss with me the possibility of an alternative assignment relevant to your home discipline (though still fundamentally historical), of equivalent length and rigor to the above options. You must meet with me and have this option approved **before** submitting your proposal.

I encourage you to discuss your project with me at my office hours. Be prepared to share work-in-progress with your peers periodically throughout the semester. The following will

be submitted on Canvas no later than 3pm on the following due dates:

ASAP or by September 24: Project choice and 1-page proposal.

October 8: Annotated bibliography of at least 10 relevant sources identified so far (see “How to Write an Annotated Bibliography” www.trentu.ca/history/node/159).

October 22: Outline and at least 5 draft pages.

November 26: Complete (not “rough”) 1st draft.

December 10: Revised and polished final project.

Office Hours

I encourage you to meet with me to discuss course material, your progress in this class, or strategies for effective research, reading, and writing.

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

The University Writing Center (UWC) provides free programs to support and empower all UT graduate students. UWC consultants provide one-on-one feedback on any project at any stage of your writing process. To schedule an appointment, go to: <http://uwc.utexas.edu/grad>
The UWC is located in PCL 2.330.

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 and 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. 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 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: <https://campuscarry.utexas.edu> (bottom-right).

Behavior Concerns Advice Line

If you have concerns about the behavior or well-being of another member of the campus community, call [BCAL](https://www.utexas.edu/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. Please feel free to come talk to me about effective note-taking and citation strategies to help you avoid plagiarism.

Course Schedule

Note: This schedule is subject to modification. I will announce any changes.

Week 1: September 3 *Labor Day Holiday—No Class Meeting*

For our first meeting on September 10, please post a question on Canvas and be prepared to discuss the readings.

Week 2: September 10 *What is Environmental History?*

Williams, Raymond. "Nature." In *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society (Routledge Revivals)*, 184-189. Taylor & Francis Group, 2002. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/lib/utxa/reader.action?ppg=184&docID=1112409&tm=1529592489325>

Worster, Donald. "[Doing Environmental History.](#)" In *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*, edited by Donald Worster, 289-307. Cambridge University Press Cambridge, 1988.

Cronon, William. "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative." *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (1992): 1347-1376. <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/stable/2079346>

Crosby, Alfred W. "The Past and Present of Environmental History." *The American Historical Review* 100, no. 4 (1995): 1177-1189. <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/stable/2168206>

White, Richard. "Environmental History: Watching a Historical Field Mature." *The Pacific Historical Review* 70, no. 1 (2001): 103-11. <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/stable/10.1525/phr.2001.70.1.103>

Hoffmann, Richard C., Langston, Nancy, McCann, James C., Perdue, Peter C. and Sedrez, Lise. "AHR Conversation: Environmental Historians and Environmental Crisis." *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (2008): 1431-1465. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/10.1086/ahr.113.5.1431>

Recommended: Edwards, Paul N. "How to Read a Book," <https://pne.people.si.umich.edu/PDF/howtoread.pdf>

Week 3: September 17 Deep History

Scott, *Against the Grain*.

Diamond, Jared. "The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race." *Discover* 8, no. 5 (1987): 64-66. <http://discovermagazine.com/1987/may/02-the-worst-mistake-in-the-history-of-the-human-race>

Russell, Edmund. "Coevolutionary History." *The American Historical Review* 119, no. 5 (2014): 1514-28. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/10.1093/ahr/119.5.1514>

Zakariya, Nasser. "Is History Still a Fraud?" *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 43, no. 5 (2013): 631-41. <http://hsns.ucpress.edu.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/content/43/5/631>

Week 4: September 24 Landscapes of Colonization

Cronon, *Changes in the Land*.

Melville, *A Plague of Sheep*.

Proposal Due

Week 5: October 1 Disease and Agency

McNeill, *Mosquito Empires*.

Nash, Linda. "The Agency of Nature or the Nature of Agency?" *Environmental History* 10, no. 1 (2005): 67-69. <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/stable/3985846>

Sutter, Paul S. "Nature's Agents or Agents of Empire? Entomological Workers and Environmental Change during the Construction of the Panama Canal." *Isis* 98, no. 4 (2007): 724-754. <https://doi-org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/10.1086/529265>

Week 6: October 8 Animal Histories

Horowitz, Roger. "Making the Chicken of Tomorrow: Reworking Poultry as Commodities and as Creatures, 1945-1990." In *Industrializing Organisms: Introducing Evolutionary History*, edited by Susan R. Schrepfer and Philip Scranton., New York, NY: Routledge, 2004. <https://catalog.lib.utexas.edu/record=b5897016~S29>

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. <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/stable/23050648>

Chapters by [Martha Few](#) and [Reinaldo Funes Monzote](#) in Few, Martha and Zeb Tortorici, (eds.) *Centering Animals in Latin American History*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2013. [<https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1231717/files/folder/Readings?preview=46815796> & <https://utexas.instructure.com/courses/1231717/files/folder/Readings?preview=46815829>]

Benson, Etienne. "Animal Writes Historiography, Disciplinarity, and the Animal Trace." In *Making Animal Meaning*, edited by Linda Kalof and Georgina M. Montgomery, 3-16. Michigan State University Press, 2011. <https://www.jstor-org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/stable/10.14321/j.ctt7zt85w.4>

Annotated Bibliography Due

Week 7: October 15 "Natural" Disasters

Carlos E. Ramos Scharrón, UT Department of Geography & the Environment, will be our guest. Please be prepared with questions.

Schwartz, *Sea of Storms*.

Ramos-Scharrón, Carlos E. "Where History, Science, and Coral Reef Conservation Meet: A Case Study From St. John, U.S. Virgin Islands." *Portal* 11 (2016): 6-9. <https://lilasbensonmagazine.org/2016/07/29/where-history-science-and-coral-reef-conservation-meet-a-case-study-from-st-john-u-s-virgin-islands>

Week 8: October 22 Political Ecology

Manuel Valdés Pizzini, Social Sciences Department, University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, will be our guest. Please be prepared with questions.

[Selections from Robbins, Paul. *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004.](#)

[Brannstrom, Christian. "What Kind of History for What Kind of Political Ecology." *Historical Geography* 32 \(2004\): 71-87.](#)

[Valdés Pizzini, Manuel. "Historical Contentions and Future Trends in the Coastal Zones." In *Beyond Sun and Sand: Caribbean Environmentalisms*, 44-64. Rutgers University Press, 2006.](#)

[Valdés-Pizzini, Manuel, and M. T. Schärer-Umpierre. *People, habitats, species, and governance: an assessment of the social-ecological system of La Parguera, Puerto Rico*. Mayagüez: Interdisciplinary Center for Coastal Studies, University of Puerto Rico, 2014.](#)

Outline and 5+ Pages of Final Project Due

Week 9: October 29 Envirotech

Pritchard, Sara B. "Toward an Environmental History of Technology." In *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History*, edited by Andrew C. Isenberg, 227-58. Oxford University Press, 2014. <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/lib/utxa/reader.action?ppg=203&docID=1768608&tm=1534803906679>

White, *The Organic Machine*.

Carse, *Beyond the Big Ditch*.

Week 10: November 5 Conservation, borders, and scale

Wilson, *Seeking Refuge*.

Wakild, Emily. "Border Chasm: International Boundary Parks and Mexican Conservation, 1935–1945." *Environmental History* 14, no. 3 (2009): 453-475. <https://www-jstor-org.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/stable/40608500>

Week 11: November 12 Environmental History Roundtable

UT Environmental Historians Erika Bsumek, Janet Davis, and Sumit Guha will be our guests. Please be prepared with questions.

Bsumek, Kinkela, and Lawrence, *Nation-States and the Global Environment*. [Focus on the chapters by our guests.]

Browse <https://radicalhopesyllabus.com/2018/06/29/infrastructures-of-hope>, especially contributions by Erika Bsumek.

[Guha, Sumit. "Claims on the commons: Political power and natural resources in pre-colonial India." *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 39, no. 2-3 \(2002\): 181-196.](#)

Week 12: November 19 Unearthing the Anthropocene

Malm, *Fossil Capital*.

Bonneuil and Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene*.

Week 13: November 26 No Class Meeting

Final Project Complete 1st Draft Due

Week 14: December 3 Futures

Latour, *Facing Gaia*.

Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*.

Week 15: December 10 The State of the Field

Paul Sutter et al., "State of the Field: American Environmental History," *Journal of American History*, 100:1 (June 2013), 94-148. <https://academic-oup-com.ezproxy.lib.utexas.edu/jah/issue/100/1#81996-747851>

Recommended, required if your final project is #2: Wakild, Emily and Berry. *A Primer for Teaching Environmental History*.

Final Project Due

Recommended Resources

Major journals in the field:

- *Environmental History*: <https://academic.oup.com/envhis>
- *Environment and History*: <http://www.whpress.co.uk/EH.html>
- *Global Environment*: <http://www.whpress.co.uk/GE.html>

Scholarly societies and other sites with bibliographies, teaching and research materials, additional links, etc.:

- American Society for Environmental History: <https://aseh.net>
- European Society for Environmental History: <http://eseh.org>
- Forest History Society and Research Portal: <https://foresthistor.org>, <http://prestohost26.inmagic.com/Presto/home/home.aspx>
- International Consortium of Environmental History Organizations: <http://www.iceho.org>
- Learning to Do Historical Research: A Primer for Environmental Historians and Others: <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching>
- Rachel Carson Center Environment & Society Portal: <http://www.environmentandsociety.org>
- Radical Hope Syllabus: <https://radicalhopesyllabus.com>
- Sociedad Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Historia Ambiental: <http://solcha.org>
- The Syllabus Project: Diversifying the Environmental History Syllabus: <https://thesyllabusproject.weebly.com>

Resources for book reviews, essays, interviews, and news in the field:

- *Edge Effects* digital magazine and podcast: <http://edgeeffects.net>
- H-Environment Network: <https://networks.h-net.org/h-environment>
- New Books Network, New Books in Environmental Studies: <http://newbooksnetwork.com/category/environmental-studies>

Reference handbooks and introductory texts:

- Hughes, J. Donald. *What is Environmental History?* John Wiley & Sons, 2016. (Ebook: <http://catalog.lib.utexas.edu/record=b9253682~S29>)
- Isenberg, Andrew C., ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History*. Oxford University Press, 2014. (Ebook: <https://catalog.lib.utexas.edu/record=b9012757~S29>)
- McNeill, John Robert, and Erin Stewart Mauldin, eds. *A Companion to Global Environmental History*. John Wiley & Sons, 2014. (Ebook: <https://catalog.lib.utexas.edu/record=b8208101~S29>)