HIST 1800 – Introduction to Global History: Environmental History of the Modern World  
Spring 2019

Professor  
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Office Hours: MW, 1:00-2:00 pm or by appointment  
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HIST 1800 is a course designed to introduce History majors (and minors) to broad themes in global history. Each section of 1800 is taught with a particular topical focus. This course will focus on the field of environmental history, which examines how humans have both shaped and been shaped by environmental settings and forces over time. More specifically, this course will examine one of the most important dimensions of the history of the world since 1500: the profound and rapid growth of the human presence upon the planet and the acceleration of human impacts, direct and indirect, upon environmental systems. We will focus on themes such as population growth and migration, natural resource use, industrialization, urbanization, energy systems, hunting and fishing, food and agricultural modes of production, disease, colonialism and imperialism, the rise of environmental thought and politics, disasters, and climate change.

The guiding and overarching concept for the course will be the “Anthropocene”: the notion that, over the last century (or longer for some), human activity on earth has become such a dominant and pervasive force that it ought to be recognized as the signature characteristic of our current geological epoch. We will talk about this concept in much greater detail throughout the semester, but the central purpose of the course will be to think critically about the historical dimensions of this concept.

The course will be divided into four sections. The first section, and the briefest, is titled “Human History to 1500,” and it will examine the deep human past and human history since the end of the last ice age and the development of agriculture. The second section, “The Emergence of the Modern World,” turns to the significant changes that began to occur between 1500 and 1800, what many historians call the Early Modern period. The third section, “The Modern World,” will examine the profound powers that humans began to gain over the natural world (and each other) through industrialization and its associated developments between 1800 and 1950. The final section, “The Great Acceleration,” will look at the rapid increase in human environmental impacts since 1950, particularly in the so-called developing world, as well as the rise of global environmental responses.

This course is animated by my conviction that we are facing profound environmental challenges in the early twenty-first century. But my goal in this course is not a political one. Rather, it is to insist that we cannot make sense of our current environmental crises without understanding the past, environmental and human.

Required Texts:
- Gillen D’Arcy Wood, Tambora: The Eruption that Changed the World
- Nathaniel Rich, Losing Earth: A Recent History
All books are available at the CU Bookstore as well as from the usual online outlets. There will also be a series of articles and chapter length readings that will be available online or on Canvas. I will likely add a few additional short readings and will post an updated syllabus when I do.

Course Work

Students will be expected to attend class regularly, to carefully read each of the assigned texts, and to participate in class discussions. A significant portion of your grade – 20% – will be based on your attendance and classroom performance. I will take attendance every day, and your attendance grade will be based on the percentage of the classes that you attend. While I appreciate knowing when you will miss a class, I generally do not excuse absences – a missed class is a missed class, and students can still get an attendance grade in the A range with a few absences. Students will also be penalized for arriving late to class, so please arrive on time. Your participation grade will be more subjective but will reflect my sense of your overall engagement during class time as well as the quality of your contributions to class discussions and activities.

There will be two exams – a midterm exam and a final exam. Each exam will test you on the material from half of the course, though the final exam will also include a take-home essay. I will provide study guides as the exams approach.

You will also be asked to write a series of one-page reaction essays, which will be due on days when we have discussions. You should use these essays as your chance to think through aspects of the reading that you would like to discuss in class. Please avoid summarizing the readings; while I do want you to demonstrate that you have read the material, I am more interested in hearing what you thought about it and what you would like to talk about in class. Do not be fooled by the length of these essays. They may be short, but they demand time and care. There are two other important rules for these reaction essays:

- You must stick to the one-page limit; essays that spill beyond one page will not be accepted! This means that you will have to express yourself with efficiency if you are going to say something substantial and interesting. Essays must be double-spaced and in 12-point type with normal 1-inch margins.

- Essays are due prior to class on the days when they are due, and they should be submitted through Canvas. Late essays and essays from students who do not attend the discussion section, or who arrive substantially late, will not be accepted. The only exceptions will be in cases where students make arrangements with me significantly in advance – by which I mean at least a couple of days ahead of time. Please also bring a paper copy of your essays to class.

Student Learning Objectives

I have several general learning objectives for this course

First, you should learn a substantial amount of content, the stuff of history – the names, dates, events, concepts, etc., that constitute the foundation of historical knowledge.

Second, we will think critically about historical narratives, both those deployed by professional historians and those that the larger public use to make sense of the world around them. I am particularly interested in how the concept of the Anthropocene challenges several well-established grand historical narratives.
Third, you should come to understand that historians are not merely interested in past facts, but also in how to use such information to explain change over time (and its opposite, continuity) and causation. In making those arguments, historians tend to be committed to three additional C’s: complexity, contingency, and context. We will discuss these commitments across the semester.

Fourth, you should come to a deeper appreciation of how history is fundamentally an interpretive discipline, and that to “do” history is to use evidence (or primary sources) to make arguments about the past. In particular, you should also learn how to engage with and assess the historical arguments of other scholars (which we call secondary sources) with an attention to how they are constructed and how logical their interpretations are.

Finally, you should come away from this course with an enhanced historical literacy, or a trained sense of how the world around you is a product of the past and how people deploy historical arguments to shape contemporary memory of the past.

**Grading Breakdown**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Exam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reaction Essays</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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**Grading Range:**

A = 93+; A- = 90-92.9; B+ = 87-89.9; B = 83-86.9; B- = 80-82.9; C+ = 77-79.9; C = 73-76.9; C- = 70-72.9; D+ = 67-69.9; D = 63-66.9; D- = 60-62.9; F = <60

**Letter Grade Equivalents:**

A = 95; A- = 92; B+ = 88; B = 85; B- = 82; C+ = 78; C = 75; C- = 72; D+ = 68; D = 65; D- = 62; F = 0-60 (any F given will have a specific numerical value attached to it)

**General Grading Policy for Essays**

Below is a general outline of how we will grade written work:

**A – Excellent Work** is: original, exceptionally insightful, very well written/presented, efficiently organized, and thorough, with very few mistakes and a professional appearance.

**B – Good Work** is: insightful, clearly written/presented, organized, and thorough, with few mistakes and a professional appearance.

**C – Satisfactory Work** is: solid but unremarkable in terms of insight, lacking some organization and/or clarity, and adequately written/presented, with several mistakes.

**D – Poor Work** is: lacking insight, disorganized, poorly written, mistake-ridden, and reflective of a general lack of effort.

**F – Failing Work** is: work that fails to meet the most basic requirements of the assignment.

I encourage you to ask questions about these guidelines and to speak with me if they are unclear, or if you are confused or frustrated about a grade. I am open to reconsidering a grade, though you must make an argument for why I should do so.
Technology Policy

**I do not allow the use of laptops, tablets, or other electronic devices in class.** This is my policy for several reasons. First, I find that students are easily distracted when they have the temptation of internet connectivity. Second, I find that laptops and tablets, even when used appropriately, tend to suck students’ attention into the device, diminishing engagement with others in the class. Finally, research has shown that writing class notes by hand leads to greater retention of information than does computer notetaking.

Course Schedule

**PART 1 – HUMAN HISTORY TO 1500**

August 28 – When Does History Begin? Environmental History and Deep History
August 30 – DISCUSSION
   - Read: Ellis, 1-74
   - *Reaction Essay 1 Due*

September 2 – NO CLASS – Labor Day
September 4 – The First Great Transition: The Rise of Agriculture and Its Impacts
   - Read: Jared Diamond, “The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race”
September 6 – DISCUSSION
   - Read: Ellis, 75-160
   - * Reaction Essay 2 Due*

September 9 – Collapse: Pre-Modern Parables of Environmental Decline
September 11 – 1491: The Americas (and the rest of the world) on the Threshold of Globalization
   - Read: Charles Mann, “1491”

**PART 2 – THE EMERGENCE OF THE MODERN WORLD to 1800**

September 13 – The Columbian Exchange: The Biological Expansion of Europe and Africa

September 16 – The Age of the Ocean
September 18 – The Unending Frontier
September 20 – DISCUSSION
   - READ: Cronon, 3-81
   - * Reaction Essay 3 Due*

September 23 – The Unending Frontier: Case Studies
September 25 – The World Hunt
September 27 – DISCUSSION
   - READ: Cronon, 82-170
   - * Reaction Essay 4 Due*

September 30 – Settler Societies
October 2 – Plantation Societies
October 4 – Catch-Up
PART 3 – THE MODERN WORLD, 1800-1950

October 7 – The Second Great Transition: Britain and the Industrial Revolution
October 9 – Forests and Deforestation
October 11 – MIDTERM

October 14 – NO CLASS (alternative assignment tbd)
October 16 – Modern Agriculture and the Fertilizer Revolution
October 18 – New Ways of Thinking About Nature

October 21 – Urbanization
October 23 – Conservation and the Global Environment
October 25 – DISCUSSION – READ: Wood, 1-120
  * Reaction Essay 5 Due

October 28 – Health, Disease, and Famine
October 30 – The Nature of Imperialism
November 1 – DISCUSSION – READ: Wood, 121-234
  * Reaction Essay 6 Due

PART 4 – THE GREAT ACCELERATION, 1950 TO THE PRESENT

November 4 – What Is the Great Acceleration?
November 6 – Warfare and Nature
November 8 – The Politics of Global Population

November 11 – Health and the Epidemiological Transition
November 13 – The Green Revolution
November 15 – NO CLASS (alternative assignment tbd)

November 18 – The History of Climate Science
November 20 – The Empty Ocean
November 22 – DISCUSSION – READ: Rich,
  * Reaction Essay 7 Due

Thanksgiving Break – November 25-29

December 2 – Water Development
December 4 – New Energy and Resource Landscapes
December 6 – DISCUSSION – READ: Rich
  * Reaction Essay 8 Due

December 9 – The Many Faces of Environmentalism
December 11 – Conclusion

FINAL EXAM – Saturday, December 14 – 4:30-7:00
University Policies

Accommodation for Disabilities
If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the Disability Services website. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Medical Conditions under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

Classroom Behavior
Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. For more information, see the policies on classroom behavior and the Student Code of Conduct.

Honor Code
All students enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu; 303-492-5550). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the Honor Code Office website.

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation
The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct intimate partner abuse (including dating or domestic violence), stalking, protected-class discrimination or harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, anonymous reporting, and the campus resources can be found on the OIEC website.

Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

Religious Holidays
Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. If you have any such conflicts during the semester, please let me know ahead of time and I will do my best to accommodate you.

See the campus policy regarding religious observances for full details.