

HH4006 The Green Earth: Topics in Environmental History

Nanyang Technological University

Semester 1, AY2018/19

Syllabus (August 12, 2018)



Figure 1: macOS 10.13 "High Sierra" wallpaper of the High Sierra region in California.

1 Course Details

Academic units: 4

Meeting time: Monday, 1:30pm–5:30pm

Venue: LHS-TR+33 (I am in the process of changing the venue to LHS-TR+17 at level B3 of the Hive)

Instructor: Dr Lin Qi Feng (Please call me Dr Lin. I am not a professor.)

Email: qflin@ntu.edu.sg

Office hours: by appointment

2 Course Description

We study the interaction between humans *and the rest of the environment* and its influence on history. The human is located in an environmental and natural context. However, concepts such as “environment” and “nature” are located in human thought. However, the environment, its well-being, and human dependence on it came to the fore during the mid-twentieth century as a result of major environmental insults. Studying environment history will enable us to locate the environmental

dimension in history in general and prepares us for an environmentally uncertain future.

3 Learning Objectives

By the end of the course, students should be able to

1. Appreciate the role of the environment in history and analyse the environmental dimension of historical events;
2. Understand how nature and the environment are understood in the West, and the ramifications in history; and
3. Appreciate the possible environmental trajectory of human society.

4 Student Assessment

Assessment consists of three components that are weighted similarly to ensure that you pay equal and painstaking attention to them. To do well in this course, you need to do well in all components.

4.1 Participation (30%)

Participation entails three dimensions.

Punctuality: Attendance will be taken at 1:30pm sharp. I would arrive 15 minutes before class.

In-class participation: Feel free to articulate your considered thoughts and questions in a respectful way in class, and to interrupt me at any moment. This is not a TED talk.

Reading response: Before each substantive class, please submit a reading response in NTULearn for the required readings that were assigned. This will require that you: 1) summarize the reading; 2) state the author's arguments; 3) articulate your views on the readings.

Reading responses are due on the Saturday before each class at 2359.

Please respond to all required readings.

Responses can be read by everyone. Please write your response before reading that of others to ensure your responses are original and not influenced by others.

You do not need to submit a reading response for the week (topic) in which you are presenting.

4.2 Individual presentation and write-up (35%)

Each student will deliver a **30-minute** presentation on an academic book or two academic articles (25%). After the presentation has ended, students are also required to briefly comment on their classmates' reading responses.

Students will also have to submit a write-up in which they summarize the presented academic work as well as provide reviews by other scholars and share their reflection (10%). These reports will be shared by the entire class. By the end of the semester, we would have accumulated a decent collection of summaries and reviews of academic works. The write-up is due the same day as your presentation.

An Important Note: First, preparation for a good presentation of a book or two journal articles require time and effort. Please start preparing for your presentation at least three weeks in advance. If you are scheduled to present during a particular week, make sure you are fully prepared and physically well. If you know you have commitments later in the semester, choose to present at the times that work best for you.

If you miss your opportunity to present, you will most likely not get it again and hence will score nothing if you do not present (25%) and do not submit a write-up (10%). See Section 7, "Concerning the Use of Medical Certificates".

You are more than welcome to look for articles, books, and whole topics to present. The suggested titles here are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

4.3 Group presentation and write-up (35%)

Students will work in groups on a chosen topic and deliver a 20-minute presentation (15%) as well as a brief report (15%). Peer review of professionalism accounts for the remaining 5%. We will discuss the details in class.

5 Plagiarism Policy

All assignments should be original work, consistent with the university's anti-plagiarism rules. Papers will be evaluated on rigor and depth of research, clarity and concision of writing, proper footnoting, and list of works cited using Chicago referencing style.

6 Late Policy

For each day for which an assignment is late, **15%** will be deducted from the overall marks. For example, an assignment that is late by a day will be graded out of 85%, while one that is late by two days will be graded out of 70%. In the event of extenuating circumstances, please refer to the university's leave policy for undergraduates.

7 Concerning the Use of Medical Certificates

Medical Certificates (MCs) are not “get out of jail free” cards. The presentation of a medical certificate does not automatically excuse an absence or late work. Depending on circumstances, I will usually ask you to complete additional work to make up for your absence or late work.

8 Required Texts

We will be reading the following title in its entirety. It will be available for loan in the reserves section at the Library Outpost and for purchase at the bookstore.

Ghosh, Amitav. 2016. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*: University of Chicago Press.

9 Course Schedule and Readings

Week 1, August 13 - Course Introduction

Voss, James F., and Jennifer Wiley. 2006. “Expertise in History.” In *The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance*, edited by K. Anders Ericsson, Neil Charness, Paul J. Feltovich, and Robert R. Hoffman, 569-584. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Worster, Donald. 1988. “Appendix: Doing Environmental History.” In *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*, edited by Donald Worster, 289–307. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mitman, Gregg. 2009. *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Film*. Seattle: University of Washington Press. Epilogue.

Mitman, Gregg. 2007. “The Hope and Promise of Birds.” *Environmental History* 12 (2): 343-345.

Winged Migration (89 min)

Week 2, August 20 - The Big Bang Theory and Images of the Earth

Weiner, Douglas R. 2005. “A Death-Defying Attempt to Articulate a Coherent Definition of Environmental History.” *Environmental History* 10 (3): 404-420. doi: 10.1093/envhis/10.3.404.

Christian, David. 2010. “The Return of Universal History.” *History and Theory* 49 (4): 6-27. doi: doi:10.1111/j.1468-2303.2010.00557.x.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-2303.2010.00557.x>.

Worster, Donald. 2016. *Shrinking the Earth: The Rise and Decline of American Abundance*: Oxford University Press. Epilogue.

Supplementary:

Hesketh, Ian. 2014. "The Story of Big History." *History of the Present* 4 (2): 171-202. doi: 10.5406/historypresent.4.2.0171.

Smail, Daniel Lord. 2005. "In the Grip of Sacred History." *The American Historical Review* 110 (5): 1337–1361. doi: 10.1086/ahr.110.5.1337.

Week 3, August 27 – Western Perspectives of Environment and Nature

White, Lynn, Jr. 1967. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." *Science* 155 (3767): 1203–1207. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1720120>.

Williams, Raymond. (1972) 2005. "Ideas of Nature." In *Culture and Materialism: Selected Essays*, 67-85. London; New York: Verso.

Supplementary:

Nelson, Michael Paul. 2016. "The Long Reach of Lynn White Jr.'s "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis"." *Nature Research Ecology & Evolution*. <https://natureecoevocommunity.nature.com/users/24738-michael-paul-nelson/posts/14041-the-long-reach-of-lynn-white-jr-s-the-historical-roots-of-our-ecologic-crisis>.

White, Lynn. 1973. "Continuing the Conversation." In *Western Man and Environmental Ethics: Attitudes toward Nature and Technology*, edited by Ian G. Barbour, 55-64. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co.

Whitney, Elspeth. 2015. "Lynn White Jr.'s 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis' After 50 Years." *History Compass* 13 (8): 396-410. doi: doi:10.1111/hic3.12254.

Peterson, Anna Lisa. 2001. "Not of the World: Human Exceptionalism in Western Tradition." In *Being Human: Ethics, Environment, and Our Place in the World*, 28-50. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Week 4, September 3: Southeast Asian Environmental History

Grundy-Warr, Carl, and Victor R. Savage. 2016. "Singapore: Sustaining A Global City-State and the Challenges of Environmental Governance in the Twenty-First Century." In *Routledge Handbook of the Environment in Southeast Asia*, edited by Philip Hirsch, 448–469. Routledge.

Savage, Victor. 2017. "Nature' Embodied, Transformed and Eradicated in Southeast Asian Development." In *Routledge Handbook of Southeast Asian Development*, edited by Andrew McGregor, Lisa Law, and Fiona Miller, 53–63. Routledge.

Bird, Isabella L. 1883. *The Golden Chersonese and the Way Thither*. New York; London: G.P. Putnam's Sons. <http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/3412>
Introductory Chapter

Innes, Emily. 1885. *The Chersonese with the Gilding Off*. London: R, Benteley and Son.
<https://archive.org/details/chersonesewithgooemilgoog>
Chapter 1



Figure 2: Windows Spotlight Wallpaper

Week 5, September 10: Urban Environmental History

Melosi, Martin V. 1993. "The Place of the City in Environmental History." *Environmental History Review* 17 (1): 1-23. doi: 10.2307/3984888.

Stephenson, Bruce. 2005. "Review Essay: Urban Environmental History: The Essence of a Contradiction." *Journal of Urban History* 31 (6): 887-898. doi: 10.1177/0096144205276991.

(Possibly Garden City of Singapore)

*Cronon, William. 1991. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: W.W. Norton.

- *Klinge, Matthew W. 2007. *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- *Lawrence, Henry W. 2006. *City Trees: A Historical Geography from the Renaissance through the Nineteenth Century*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- *Elliott, Paul A. 2016. *British Urban Trees: A Social and Cultural History, c.1800-1914*. Winwick, Cambridgeshire: The White Horse Press.

Supplementary:

- Rosen, Christine Meisner, and Joel Arthur Tarr. 1994. "The Importance of an Urban Perspective in Environmental History." *Journal of Urban History* 20 (3): 299-310. doi: 10.1177/009614429402000301.
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/009614429402000301>.
- Schott, Dieter. 2004. "Urban environmental history: what lessons are there to be learnt?" *Boreal Environment Research* 9: 519-528.
<http://www.borenv.net/BER/pdfs/ber9/ber9-519.pdf>.
- Tarr, Joel A. 2005. "The Material Basis of Urban Environmental History." *Environmental History* 10 (4): 744-746.
<http://www.jstor.org.ezlibproxy1.ntu.edu.sg/stable/3986174>.
- Goh, Daniel P.S., and Tim Bunnell. 2013. "Recentring Southeast Asian Cities." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37 (3): 825-833. doi: doi:10.1111/j.1468-2427.2013.01208.x.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1468-2427.2013.01208.x>.
- Massard-Guilbaud, Geneviève, and Peter Thorsheim. 2007. "Cities, Environments, and European History." *Journal of Urban History* 33 (5): 691-701. doi: 10.1177/0096144207301414.
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0096144207301414>.

Week 6, September 17: Sources of Environmentalism

- Worster, Donald. 2016. *Shrinking the Earth: The Rise and Decline of American Abundance*: Oxford University Press. chapters 7 and 8
- *Grove, Richard. 1995. *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- *Rajan, S. Ravi. 2006. *Modernizing Nature: Forestry and Imperial Eco-Development 1800-1950*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- *Guha, Ramachandra. 1989. *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*. Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press.

*Meadows, Donella H., Jørgen Randers, and Dennis L. Meadows. 2004. *The Limits to Growth: The 30-Year Update*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Pub. Co.

*Radkau, Joachim. 2014. *The Age of Ecology: A Global History*. Translated by Patrick Camiller. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.



Figure 3: Windows Spotlight Wallpaper

Week 7, September 24: Climate

The Great Derangement 3–66

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. 2009. “The Climate of History: Four Theses.” *Critical Inquiry* 35 (2): 197–222. doi: 10.1086/596640.
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/596640>.

*Carey, Mark. 2010. *In the Shadow of Melting Glaciers: Climate Change and Andean Society*. New York: Oxford University Press.

*Davis, Mike. 2001. *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*. London; New York: Verso.

(Articles are to be presented in pairs)

*Matthews, John A., and Keith R. Briffa. 2005. “The ‘Little Ice Age’: Re-Evaluation of an Evolving Concept.” *Geografiska Annaler: Series A, Physical Geography* 87

(1): 17-36. doi: 10.1111/j.0435-3676.2005.00242.x.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0435-3676.2005.00242.x>.

- *Miller, Gifford H., Áslaug Geirsdóttir, Yafang Zhong, Darren J. Larsen, Bette L. Otto-Bliesner, Marika M. Holland, David A. Bailey, Kurt A. Refsnider, Scott J. Lehman, John R. Southon, Chance Anderson, Helgi Björnsson, and Thorvaldur Thordarson. 2012. "Abrupt onset of the Little Ice Age triggered by volcanism and sustained by sea-ice/ocean feedbacks." *Geophysical Research Letters* 39 (2). doi: doi:10.1029/2011GL050168.
<https://agupubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1029/2011GL050168>.
- *Mann, Michael E., Zhihua Zhang, Scott Rutherford, Raymond S. Bradley, Malcolm K. Hughes, Drew Shindell, Caspar Ammann, Greg Faluvegi, and Fenbiao Ni. 2009. "Global Signatures and Dynamical Origins of the Little Ice Age and Medieval Climate Anomaly." *Science* 326 (5957): 1256-1260. doi: 10.1126/science.1177303.
<http://science.sciencemag.org/content/sci/326/5957/1256.full.pdf>.
- *Hodell, David A., Mark Brenner, Jason H. Curtis, Roger Medina-González, Enrique Ildelfonso-Chan Can, Alma Albornaz-Pat, and Thomas P. Guilderson. 2005. "Climate change on the Yucatan Peninsula during the Little Ice Age." *Quaternary Research* 63 (2): 109-121. doi: 10.1016/j.yqres.2004.11.004.

Week 8, October 11, Thursday: The Great Derangement

In lieu of class, we will attend Amitav Ghosh's talk at HSS Auditorium from 11:30am–1pm.

Finish *The Great Derangement*, 66–162

Supplementary

Pilling, David. 2015. "Lunch with the FT: Amitav Ghosh." *The Financial Times*, Feb 28, 2015. <https://www.ft.com/content/0e63a974-bc14-11e4-b6ec-00144feab7de>.

Week 9, October 15: American Environmental History

Cronon, William. 1995. "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." In *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, edited by William Cronon, 69–90, 479–482. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

*Cronon, William. 1983. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. New York: Hill and Wang.

*Crosby, Alfred W. 2003. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. Westport, Conn.: Praeger.

*Sutter, Paul. 2002. *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.

- *Cushman, Gregory T. 2013. *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- *Stoll, Mark. 2015. *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- *Barrow, Mark V. 2009. *Nature's Ghosts: Confronting Extinction from the Age of Jefferson to the Age of Ecology*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Week 10, October 22: Race and Gender

Miller, Daegan. 2013. "At Home in the Great Northern Wilderness: African Americans and Freedom's Ecology in the Adirondacks, 1846-1859." *Environmental Humanities* 2: 117-146. doi: 10.1215/22011919-3610378. <http://environmentalhumanities.dukejournals.org/content/2/1/117.full?sid=c4e280b8-53c4-4595-8575-11042f70fdcc>.

Merchant, Carolyn. 1990. "Gender and Environmental History." *The Journal of American History* 76 (4): 1117-1121. doi: 10.2307/2936589. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2936589>.

*Thomas, Keith. 1996. *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800*: Oxford University Press.

*Merchant, Carolyn. 1980. *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. San Francisco: Harper & Row.

*Merchant, Carolyn. 2010. *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England*. Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press. <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=732140>.

Supplementary

Martin-Hardin, Amanda. 2018. "Nature in Black and White: Summer Camps and Racialized Landscapes in the Photography of Gordon Parks." *Environmental History* 23 (3): 594-605. doi: 10.1093/envhis/emy009.

Sturgeon, Noel, Donald Worster, and Vera Norwood. 2005. "Retrospective Review: The Death of Nature." *Environmental History* 10: 805-815.

Week 11, October 29: Agriculture

Scott, James C. 2017. *Against the Grain: A Deep History of the Earliest States*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press. Chapters 1, 2, and 4.

*Soluri, John. 2005. *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

*Mintz, Sidney Wilfred. 1985. *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York, N.Y.: Viking.

Week 12, November 5: TBA

Week 13, November 12: Group Presentations