

**Environmental History of Modern Europe / Empires**  
**HIST 294-03 / ENVI 294-05**

**Spring 2016**

**Old Main 002**

**Tuesdays and Thursdays, 9:40-11:10**

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Office hours: Wednesdays 11-2

**COURSE DESCRIPTION and TOPICS**

From Chernobyl radiation to London smog, we can tell the environmental history of modern Europe as a series of dangers and disasters created by both capitalist and communist economies. It is also possible to tell a counter-history, one of (sometimes surprising) environmental protection legislation by states and environmentalist movements by citizens, within and across national borders. Through course readings, source findings, intensive discussion, and a variety of individual writing assignments, you will build enduring understandings of the parts played by living and non-living nature in the history of modern Europe and its empires, and will be able to contextualize histories of environmental problems, protests, and protection within deeper histories of human interaction with the earthly infrastructures of modern European states.

We will be reading about water, microbes, food, uranium, and trash; animals as diverse as the tsetse fly in Africa and the reindeer in the Arctic; ways in which rivers, forests, sands, soils, and carbon shape human geographies in war and peace; gender roles and ethnic divisions in the management and exploitation of natural resources; and changing scientific and spiritual attitudes towards humans' relationship with the physical world in the last three centuries of European history.

**COURSE GOALS and OUTCOMES**

From the eighteenth through the twentieth centuries, the European state has developed in tandem with certain ways of managing disease and hygiene, human sexuality and population size, along with forests, rivers, and nonrenewable energy sources. When we talk about environmental history, we are talking about power, and you are encouraged to relate our class discussions to others in your humanities and social sciences courses. Some of the skills emphasized here are those of all history courses: we will regularly discuss how historians present arguments about causality, and evaluate how different historians formulate and respond to historical questions. We will also focus on political stakes and environmental-political legacies of the ways in which people of the past posed questions about the physical world in their quest to understand, protect, or master it. In order for you eventually to create your own research questions and identify the private and public *interests* inherent to that question, we will model identification and analysis of textual, numerical, and visual sources in class. As in any history course, it is impossible to formulate analytical questions in the absence of a knowledge base of key trends and how they develop and change over time, so another goal of this class will be for students to build a narrative of an environmental history of modern Europe and its empires.

*By the end of the course, you will be able to*

- discuss ways in which human interaction with non-manmade things shapes history, and articulate what we learn about the history and present of Europe by studying the environment that we would not learn by studying politics, society, economy, or culture alone
- recall major events and developments in European and imperial histories since the eighteenth century in which humans' changing roles in the physical world were central, or which we can identify as key points in modern states' developing relationship to the environment (e.g. Napoleonic Europe and riverscapes; the French Empire in Algeria and the invention of race science; World War II and the mass production of insecticides and antibiotics)
- explain how political power in the modern European state has developed in relation to environmental management, and appraise arguments about causality in the relationship between state power and the environment—particularly in relation to the topics of European imperialism—and of similarities and differences in environmental approaches by democratic capitalist, fascist, and communist regimes, and by the European Union
- examine how and why certain groups have disproportionate access to natural resources while others have disproportionate proximity to environmental risk, either economic or physical, and evaluate the consequences of this inequality
- interpret and analyze different kinds of sources, methods, and arguments in environmental history
- examine the reasons for your (and your professor's) own attitudes and convictions about the global environment, and assess intended and unintended consequences of our beliefs and actions
- situate environmental history as a field of historical inquiry in relation to the history of science, technology, and medicine; economic history; and diverse approaches to the history of human difference (racial, sexual, religious, and cultural) with which you are familiar
- formulate your own research questions in response to an existing body of background information, and construct persuasive research proposals based on what political and economic interests are at stake in seeking answers to your particular research questions
- “denaturalize” the concept of *Nature* as a unitary thing existing outside of human emotions and ideologies, and historicize humans' place as *part of* the material world, rather than separate from nature; while articulating the reasons why human emotions about Mother Nature remain politically important for environmental citizenship in the world today
- apply the conceptual frameworks from this class to ongoing events and discussions in world news or to other coursework in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences

## **ASSIGNMENTS and ASSESSMENT**

### Participation – 25%

Approximately one quarter of this class will be in the form of an interactive lecture, often with a multimedia component. That means that the majority of class time will be spent in intensive discussion of assigned and in-class readings. It is therefore essential to complete the reading, underlining important passages and jotting down thoughts or questions, and to come to class and participate

productively. Productive participation means not just answering my questions but also: posing your own questions; listening to your fellow students and responding to their comments and questions; having specific passages in the assigned reading underlined or highlighted in order to illustrate your points when you speak in large- and small-group discussions; and **bringing that assigned reading with you to class**. There will be opportunities for students with different personalities to participate in different ways.

#### Response papers – 25% (5% each)

Over the course of the semester you will write two-page, low-stakes response-reviews on any five readings of your choice. No more than two to three sentences of these papers should consist of a summary of the reading. Instead, you will offer general reactions and assessments and pose further questions. You will also use these papers to think through how the material connects to other texts, discussions, or course themes and objectives, and why those connections may be historically significant. For full credit, email your paper to me by 9 p.m. the evening *before* the text will be discussed. Your responses should be in paragraphs with transitions that I can follow--no bullet points or individual paragraphs on disjointed topics--but beyond that they will not be assessed on style.

You must complete all three of these response papers in order to pass the class. You may write additional response papers for extra credit. For example, if you complete six in total instead of four, your entire grade for the class will be out of 1100 rather than 1000, with a higher percentage of that grade coming from low-stakes writing.

#### Midterm paper – 25%

There will be a five-page analytical paper due by midnight on March 11. You may use primary sources that we examine in class in addition to the readings listed below, but you do not to seek out additional materials for this paper. The purpose of this paper is to show that you can execute on your own the kind of close reading and analytical thinking that we will be modeling in class discussion. I am happy to comment on introductory paragraphs and/or outlines, but I will not give feedback on entire drafts.

#### Final project: mock research proposal – 25%

The final project and largest single component of your grade for this class will be a ten-page paper written as a research proposal to a real or imaginary person or agency. You will formulate a research question around a topic relating to the class that you would like to explore further, and articulate how your proposed research is of interest to your imagined reader/potential funder. This reader can be anyone from a real Macalester alum who works in environmental law to a local history club in Hitler's Germany. The important thing is that you identify and elaborate on what is at stake in research question. You may submit one draft and/or outline to me for comments and advice prior to midnight on May 5. The final version is due to my office by noon on May 7.

For purposes of designing your research methodology, you may assume knowledge of languages and access to places and sources that you do not in fact have. However, you must choose a subject on which it is possible to conduct the background research in languages that you know – if you have reading skills in a European language or language of a former imperial domain of a European country, you are encouraged to use them! – and with books that you can access. You should have no fewer than six sources for the background section of your proposal (not including texts on the course syllabus), at least three of which must be full-length books. You and I will meet individually in the middle of the semester to discuss your project and strategies for extracting the contents of entire books, and then you will present your work-in-progress to the class and receive feedback in mid to late April. These presentations should be about eight minutes in length and should acquaint the class with the general

topic, research question(s), how your research question(s) will lead you to certain primary sources, and possible findings of interest. One fifth of the grade for your final project will be based on this presentation combined with your feedback – in the role of the potential funder of the research – on classmates' presentations.

## **POLICIES and SUPPORT**

I ask that you arrive on time to each class and refrain from consuming food or gum (beverages are fine). In addition to this, it is expected that each student will know and use the preferred names and gender pronouns of everybody in the class. This is essential for creating the community of civility that is part of a liberal arts learning environment. Attentive participation (as described above), punctuality, and attendance will have an impact on your grade. Even if you complete all assignments, you may have no more than three unexplained absences in order to pass the class.

Your mobile phone should be on silent (not vibrate) or switched off and out of sight during class. Especially in a small class, it is obvious when someone is using a computer or tablet for something other than taking notes or looking at digital readings. If you are using your computer or tablet for something other than class purposes, you also will not be participating productively, so your grade will be affected.

When the length of an assignment is given in page numbers, you should use one-inch margins all around, double-space your writing, and use a font equivalent in size to Times New Roman 12 or Cambria 11.5. *If you prefer to write in a larger font, your paper should be longer than the number of pages stated.* I will not accept late response papers. For the high-stakes writing assignments, I will accept late submissions with a penalty of half a grade for each twelve hours that the assignment is late.

If you are struggling in the class, you should first consult me and/or one of your classmates. I am available in 20-minute appointment blocks on Wednesdays between 1:30 and 3:30, but you may also arrange to meet in my office or at Café Mac (I enjoy institutional dining) or the Grille on another day of the week. While it is important that you let me know if you feel you are struggling, you may wish to go directly to the Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center, located in Kagin Commons. The MAX Center has peer tutors available for students in all stages of their writing. Hours are 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., Sunday through Thursday. You may drop in or call 651-696-6121 during the day or 651-696-6193 in the evening to schedule an appointment.

Students with disabilities are protected from discrimination. To ensure accommodation in this and other classes, please work with Macalester's [Disability Services](#) office.

Learning what is entailed in maintaining academic integrity and abiding by the rules of scholarly inquiry are central to the college experience. This class will follow Macalester's [policies and procedures](#) for dealing with plagiarism or other breaches in academic integrity.

Macalester College is committed to fostering a safe and productive learning environment for all students. As a faculty member, it is my goal that you feel able to share information about your experiences as a student; however, please know that I am required to report any disclosure of harm to self or others, or any reported sexual misconduct of any kind, to the appropriate college personnel who are responsible for responding to such reports.

WELCOME!

## **BOOKS for PURCHASE**

Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment* (2008)

## **SCHEDULE and READING ASSIGNMENTS**

### **January 21. Introduction**

#### **January 26. Seeing nature like a state: values of environmental history**

- James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed*, 11-24 and 45-59
- Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment*, 15-27 and 32-35

#### **January 28. Environmental limitations to growth in early modern Europe**

- John Post, "The Mortality Crises of the Early 1770s and European Demographic Trends," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 21, no. 1 (Summer, 1990): 29-62
- "Fuel Resources and Wastelands in the Netherlands around 1800," *Northern Europe: An Environmental History*, 165-175
- Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment*, 117-127 and 136-142

#### **February 2. Mining in the making of an early modern world trade**

- Kris Lane, *Colour of Paradise: The Emerald in the Age of Gunpowder Empires*, selected pages

#### **February 4. Rivers in the making of nations and regions**

- David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany*, 75-85 and 93-119
- Catherine Evtuhov, *Portrait of a Russian Province: Economy, Society, and Civilization in Nineteenth-Century Nizhnii Novgorod*, 23-27 and 32-44
- Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment*, 127-131 and 136-142

#### **February 9. Irrigation and empire**

- Alan Mikhail, *Nature and Empire in Ottoman Egypt: An Environmental History*, 38-82
- Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment*, 87-93, 97-103

#### **February 11. Networks of nature and science**

- Staffan Müller-Wille, "Walnuts at Hudson Bay, Coral Reefs in Gotland: The Colonialism of Linnaean Botany," 34-48
- Donal McCracken, *Gardens of Empire: Botanical Institutions of the Victorian British Empire*, viii-x, 1-3, 132-154, 159-162, 176-177
- IN CLASS: locate, select, and read one 19th-century article (2-3 pages) from the [Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information](#) (see link to library) that provide insight into imperial transplantation

#### **February 16. The politics of climate change and erosion science in Eurasia land empire**

- David Moon, *The Plough that Broke the Steppes: Agriculture and Environment on Russia's Grasslands, 1700-1914*, 1-10, 89-93, 116-172

#### **February 18. Interpreting weather, vegetation, and economies in empires**

- Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*, 1-16
- Caroline Ford, "Reforestation, Landscape Conservation, and the Anxieties of Empire in French Colonial Algeria," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 2 (April, 2008): 341-362
- Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment*, 103-117

### February 23. Environmental history and the European exceptionalism argument

- Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*,\* read “Weeds,” AND EITHER “Ills,” OR “Animals”  
\*on reserve at DeWitt Wallace Library
- Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment*, 157-169 and 184-195

### February 25. Gender, state power, and the forest in France and India

- Peter Sahlins, *Forest Rites: The War of the Demoiselles in Nineteenth-Century France*, 1-24, 29-34, 48-60, 103-110
- Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment*, 169-177
- Find, select, read, and bring to class one short (< 10 pages) primary source or short selection of a longer piece related to 19<sup>th</sup>-century forestry in Europe or empires

### March 1. Modernizing England

- John Perlin, *A Forest Journey: The Story of Wood and Civilization*, 227-245
- James Winter, *Secure from Rash Assault: Sustaining the Victorian Environment*,\* read a total of two chapters: EITHER “Upland Moors” OR “The Hungry Ocean,” AND EITHER “Holes” OR “Heaps”  
\*on reserve at DeWitt Wallace Library

### March 3. Climate and health in urban southern Europe

- Frank Snowden, *Naples in the Time of Cholera, 1884-1911*, 11-44, 59-66, 104-121, 185-190, 220-230

### March 8. Oil and water at war

- Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*, 1-27, 44-65, 144-158

### March 10. The environment in World War I, the Russian Revolution and Russian Civil War

- Marco Armiero, “Nationalizing the Mountains: Natural and Political Landscapes in World War I,” *Nature and History in Modern Italy*, 231-245
- Stephen Brain, *Song of the Forest: Russian Forestry and Stalinist Environmentalism, 1905-1953*, 54-78
- Find, select, read, and bring to class one short (< 10 pages) primary source or short selection of a longer piece from 1914-1922 Europe or the (former) Russian Empire’s imperial peripheries

**\* MARCH 11. MIDTERM PAPER DUE AT 5 PM BY EMAIL TO ME \***

### March 22. Interpreting and producing animals

- Sarah Amato, “The White Elephant in London: An Episode of Trickery, Racism and Advertising,” *Journal of Social History* 43, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 31-66

OR

- James MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation, and British Imperialism*, 225-256

AND

- Andy Bruno, “Making Reindeer Soviet: The Appropriation of an Animal on the Kola Peninsula,” *Other Animals: Beyond the Human in Russian Culture and History*, 117-137

OR

- Tiago Saraiva, “The Production and Circulation of Standardized Karakul Sheep,” *New Natures: Joining Environmental History with Science and Technology Studies*, 135-150

### March 24. Nitrogen, peasants, and food

- Vaclav Smil, *Enriching the Earth: Fritz Haber, Carl Bosch, and the Transformation of World Food Production*, 199-222
- Michael Bess, *The Light-Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960-2000*, 38-57

### March 29. Assessing Hitler and Stalin in environmental history

- David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany*, 251-293  
OR
- Paul Josephson, *Industrialized Nature: Brute Force Technology and the Transformation of the Natural World*, 15-40
- *Turksib* (silent documentary film, 1929)

### March 31. Wetlands and World War II: landscape, violence, and DDT

- Chris Pearson, *Scarred Landscapes: War and Nature in Vichy France*, 68-92
- Erhard Geissler and Jeanne Guillemin, "German flooding of the Pontine Marshes in World War II," *Politics and the Life Sciences* 29, no. 1 (March, 2010): 2-23
- Marcus Hall, "Environmental Imperialism in Sardinia: Pesticides and Politics in the Struggle against Malaria," *Nature and History in Modern Italy*, 70-84

### April 5. Flex day / library session

#### April 7. Nuclearity, national identity, and empire

- Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II*, 1-17 and 241-270
- Michael Bess, *The Light-Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960-2000*, 161-171
- Gabrielle Hecht, *Being Nuclear: Africans and the Global Uranium Trade*, 1-29 and 55-78

#### April 12. Soviet nuclearity and the Cold War

- Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters*, 133-140, 172-177, 189-203, 231-246, 282-286, 319-339

#### April 14. Fire in Europe's past and present

- Cathy Frierson, *All Russia is Burning! A Cultural History of Fire and Arson in Late Imperial Russia*, 15-39
- Stephen Pyne, *World Fire: The Culture of Fire on Earth*, 310-319, 322-327, and read one additional chapter as selected/assigned in class on Sweden, Greece, Russia, or Iberia
- Find, select, read, and bring to class one short (< 10 pages) primary source or short selection of a longer piece related to fire in Europe or European empires

#### April 19. Trash and socialism in Central Europe

- Zsuzsa Gille, *From the Cult of Waste to the Trash Heap of History: The Politics of Waste in Socialist and Postsocialist Hungary*, 41-78 and 168-202

### Presentations of final projects-in-progress to mock grant board

#### April 21. Food and nature

- Melissa Caldwell, *Dacha Idylls: Living Organically in Russia's Countryside*, 74-100
- *GMOs – Will Europe Ever Agree?* (short documentary)

- Find, select, read, and bring to class one short (< 10 pages) primary source or short selection of a longer piece related to European/global food politics since the 1980s

**April 26. Sustainable consumerism in urban Europe**

- “Consumer Revolution and Green Reaction: Economics, Ecology, and Environmentalism since World War II,” *Northern Europe: An Environmental History*, 133-164
- Timothy Beatley, ed., *Green Cities of Europe*, read EITHER “Copenhagen” OR “Helsinki,” AND EITHER “Venice” OR “Vitoria-Gasteiz”

**April 28. Contemporary perspectives on a supranational Europe and post-imperial world: elemental and political**

- Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment*, 265-280
- Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, 14-22 and 103-122
- Find, select, read, and bring to class one short (< 10 pages) contemporary primary source on any topic related to class

**May 7. Final paper due at noon**

