Hist 315 Themes in World History, Summer 2021

Climatic and Environmental Change

Time: Mon, Tue, Wed, Thu - 11:05am-1:35pm.
Place: Online

Instructor: Philip Gooding (him/his)
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COURSE OVERVIEW

This course seeks to explore a historical perspective on the greatest challenge currently facing humankind, which is (notwithstanding the current pandemic) global climate change. It being the case that the future of humanity will be indelibly shaped by how societies face up to the challenge of global warming, this course examines how climate changes have also affected past human societies. It focuses on the period c.1500-1900, thus mirroring the growth of Capitalist expansion from the ‘Age of Exploration’ to the ‘Scramble for Africa.’ This periodization will enable students to think about the answers to several questions: How has Capitalist expansion since c.1900 contributed to global climatic changes? How have societies in this context exacerbated or attempted to mitigate against the effects of a changing climate? How can historians methodologically insert climatic factors into world history? And how might historians be able to contribute to knowledge that could help mitigate the effects of global warming in the present and future?

THIS COURSE HAS 3 AIMS:

1. To contextualise the importance of climatic and environmental factors in world history.
2. To demonstrate the methods of climate history and interdisciplinary climate reconstruction.
3. To put these methods into use through close examination of four periods of climatic and environmental change in world history.

FORMAT

In line with current guidelines, this course will take place entirely online. Sessions will comprise a mixture of recorded lectures, recorded interviews, break-out discussions, and student presentations.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

This course has three components of assessment:

(1) Participation (10%)
Participation (10%): Students will be graded for their contributions to break-out discussions and responses.

Source Analysis Paper (25%): Students will write an answer to:

- Assess the usefulness of Gergis and Fowler’s ‘A history of ENSO events’ to world historians.

Essays should be **1,500 words** in length and conform to the style guidelines below. Due: 11:59pm on Thu 17 June.

Essay Response Paper (25%): Students will choose one of two questions to answer:

1) What were the features and contexts of the seventeenth-century ‘general crisis’?
2) How did climatic instability affect world history in the late ‘Little Ice Age,’ c.1780-1840?

Essays should be **1,500 words** in length and conform to the style guidelines below. Due: 11:59pm on Thu 24 June.

Final Essay (40%): Students will answer an answer to a question related climate and world history. Essays should be **2,500 words** in length and conform to the style guidelines below. The question will be released during class on Thu. 1 July. Answers are due: 11:59pm, Thu 8 July.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction and Key Concepts

Mon 7 June: Course outline; positionality statement

Tue 8 June: The ‘Anthropocene’ vs. ‘Capitalocene’ debate

Wed 9 June: Reconstructing past climates.

Thu 10 June: [Start time: 12:05pm] Writing Workshop

Readings

Week 2: The long seventeenth-century

Mon 14 June: Braudel’s Mediterranean ‘World’ (1556-1598)

Tue 15 June: Sam White’s ‘Mediterranean World’? and breakout discussion.

Wed 16 June: The ‘seventeenth-century crisis’

Thu 17 June: Break-out discussion and student responses.

Readings

- Jingyun Zheng, Lingbo Xiao, Xiuqi Fang, Zhixin Hao, Quansheng Ge, and Beibei Li, ‘How climate change impacted the collapse of the Ming Dynasty,’ *Climatic Change*, 127, 2 (2014), 169-82.

Additional Readings

- Philipp Blom, *Nature’s Mutiny: How the Little Ice Age of the long seventeenth century transformed the West and shaped the present* (New York: Liverwright, 2019)

* Source Analysis Paper Due: 11:59pm, Thu. 17 June.*

Week 3: The late ‘Little Ice Age,’ c.1780-1840.

Mon 21 June: The world to c.1780-1840

Tue 22 June: Damodaran et al., the 1780s-90s, and the late Little Ice Age

Wed 23 June: Break-out discussion and student responses.
Thu 24 June: Statutory Holiday: No Class.

Readings


Additional Readings

- Gwyn Campbell, Africa and the Indian Ocean World from Early Times to Circa 1900 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), Ch. 9 (pp. 176-98).

* Essay Response Paper Due: 11:59pm, Thu. 24 June. *

Week 4: ‘Late Victorian Holocauts’

Mon 28 June: Imperial expansion and global climatic change in the nineteenth century

Tue 29 June: Singh et al., and the 1876-8 Global Famine

Wed 30 June: The KNMI Climate Explorer

Thu 1 July: Statutory Holiday: No Class.

Readings


• Boyin Huang, Michelle L’Heureux, Zeng-Zhen Hu, Xungang Yin, and Huai-Min Zhang, ‘How significant was the 1877/78 El Nino?,’ *Journal of Climate*, 33, 11 (2020), 4853-69.


**Additional Readings**

• Fiona Williamson, ‘Responding to the extremes: Managing urban water scarcity in the late nineteenth-century Straits settlements,’ *Water History*, 12, 3 (2020), 251-63.


*Final Essay question released after class on Wed 30 Jun*

**Week 5:**

Mon 5 July: The climatic and human legacies of 1876-8

Tue 6 July: Conclusion and beginning of writing workshop

Wed 7 July: Ongoing writing workshop

Thu 8 July: Ongoing Writing workshop

*Final Essay Due: 11:59pm, Thu. 8 June.*