

HI2K2-30 Imperial Natures: Environments and Empires from c. 1450 to the present

26/27

Department

History

Level

Undergraduate Level 2

Module leader

Tom Simpson

Credit value

30

Module duration

22 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Early modern and modern empires reshaped nature through extracting, planting, and building on previously unprecedented scales. In turn, changing concepts of nature and diverse experiences of particular environments moulded empires. Starting from a selection of written and visual primary source material, each seminar on this course examines a distinct environment, exploring how various empires (including non-European ones) changed and were changed by these surroundings.

Module aims

- To give students with no prior engagement with environmental history an overview of global environmental history in the early modern and modern periods.
- To enable students to explore continuities and shifts between past modes of interacting with environments and the present age of environmental crisis.
- To give students research skills in environmental history, covering visual material and data

sets as well as written texts, and engaging with theories of nonhuman and more-than-human agency.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

AUTUMN TERM

Block 1: Introductory

1. No seminar
2. Empires and environments: an overview
 - William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007)
 - Joachim Radkau, *Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)
 - Christophe Bonneuil and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and Us*, trans. David Fernbach (London: Verso, 2016)
1. Thinking like an environmental historian
 - Sverker Sörlin and Paul Warde, 'The Problem of the Problem of Environmental History: A Re-Reading of the Field', *Environmental History*, 12, 1 (2007), pp. 107-30
 - J. R. McNeill, 'Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History', *History and Theory*, 42, 4 (2003), pp. 5–43
 - Gabriella Corona, conversation with Piero Bevilacqua, Guillermo Castro, Ranjan Chakrabarti, Kobus du Pisani, J.R. McNeill, Donald Worster, "What is Global Environmental History?" *Global Environment*, 2 (2009): 228–249

Block 2: Imperial environments

1. Plantations
 - Richard Grove, *Green imperialism: Colonial expansion, tropical island Edens and the origins of environmentalism, 1600-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)
 - Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore, *A history of the world in seven cheap things: A guide to capitalism, nature, and the future of the planet* (London: Verso, 2018)
 - John F. Richards, *The Unending Frontier: An Environmental History of the Early Modern World* (University of California Press, 2006)
1. Coasts
 - Bathsheba Demuth, *Floating Coast: An Environmental History of the Bering Strait* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2019)
 - Tamara Fernando, 'Seeing like the sea: A multispecies history of the Ceylon Pearl Fishery',

Past & Present, 254 (2022), pp. 127–160

- Debjani Bhattacharyya, *Empire and Ecology in the Bengal Delta: The Making of Calcutta* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018)

1. Reading week

2. Deserts

- Diana K. Davis, *The Arid Lands: History, Power, Knowledge* (Cambridge MA: The MIT Press, 2016)
- Jennifer Keating, *On Arid Ground: Political Ecologies of Empire in Russian Central Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022)
- Meredith McKittrick, 'Theories of "Reprecipitation" and Climate Change in the Settler Colonial World', *History of Meteorology*, 8 (2017), pp. 74-94

1. Mountains

- James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009)
- Bernard Debarbieux and Gilles Rudaz, *The Mountain: A Political History from the Enlightenment to the Present*, trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015)
- Julie Cruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005)

Block 3: Nonhuman life

1. Microbes and insects

- Rohan Deb Roy, *Malarial Subjects: Empire, Medicine and Nonhumans in British India, 1820-1909* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017)
- Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The biological expansion of Europe, 900–1900*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004)
- David A. Bello, 'To Go Where No Han Could Go For Long: Malaria and the Qing Construction of Ethnic Administrative Space in Frontier Yunnan', *Modern China*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (July, 2005), pp.283-317

1. Megafauna

- Jonathan Saha, *Colonizing Animals* (2022)
- Thomas R. Trautmann, *Elephants and Kings: An Environmental History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015)
- Alan Mikhail, *Under Osman's Tree: The Ottoman Empire, Egypt, and Environmental History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017)

SPRING TERM

1. Plants

- Stefanie Gänger, *A Singular Remedy: Cinchona across the Atlantic World* (Cambridge:

Cambridge University Press, 2020)

- S. Ravi Rajan, *Modernizing nature. Forestry and imperial eco-development 1800-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006)
- Gregory Barton, 'Empire forestry and the origins of environmentalism', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 27, 4 (2001), pp. 529–52

1. Assessment skills: environmental history for an interdisciplinary audience

- Julia Adeney Thomas, 'Humanities and Social Sciences: Human Stories and the Anthropocene Earth System', in *Altered Earth: Getting the Anthropocene Right*, ed. Julia Adeney Thomas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022) pp. 51-80
- Lukas M. Verburgt and Elske de Waal, 'Introduction: Rethinking History of Science in the Anthropocene', *Isis*, 113, 2 (2022), pp. 366–76
- Libby Robin, 'Environmental humanities and climate change: understanding humans geologically and other life forms ethically', *WIREs Climate Change* (2017), pp. 1-18

Block 4: Imperial interventions

1. Canals and dams

- Philipp Lehmann, *Desert Edens: Colonial Climate Engineering in the Age of Anxiety* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022)
- Rohan D'Souza, *Drowned and Dammed: Colonial Capitalism and Flood Control in Eastern India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006)
- Maya K. Peterson, *Pipe Dreams: Water and Empire in Central Asia's Aral Sea Basin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019)

1. Fuels and energy

- Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy*
- Sujit Sivasundaram, 'The oils of empire', in H.A. Curry, N. Jardine, J.A. Secord, and E.C. Spary (eds.), *Worlds of Natural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp.379-98
- Nathan Kapoor, 'Energy and Empire', in *The Routledge Handbook of Science and Empire*, ed. Andrew Goss (London: Routledge, 2021), pp. 97-106

1. Air and ocean

- Sunil Amrith, *Unruly waters: How mountain rivers and monsoons have shaped South Asia's history* (London: Allen Lane, 2018)
- Michael S. Reidy and Helen M. Rozwadowski, 'The Spaces In Between: Science, Ocean, Empire', *Isis*, 105, 2 (Jun., 2014), pp. 338-51
- Martin Mahony and Georgina Endfield, 'Climate and colonialism', *WIREs Climate Change*, 9 (2018), pp. 1-16

1. Reading week

Block 5: Knowing natures

1. Maritime and land empires

- Ruth Rogaski, *Knowing Manchuria: Environments, the Senses, and Natural Knowledge on an Asian Borderland* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2022)
- David Moon, *The Plough That Broke the Steppes: Agriculture and Environment on Russia's Grasslands, 1700–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)
- Anya Zilberstein, *A Temperate Empire: Making Climate Change in Early America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016)

1. Global visions

- Deborah R. Coen, *Climate in motion: Science, empire, and the problem of scale* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018)
- Richard Grove and George Adamson, *El Niño in World History* (London: Palgrave, 2018)
- Gregory T. Cushman, 'Humboldtian Science, Creole Meteorology, and the Discovery of Human-Caused Climate Change in South America', *Osiris*, 26, 1 (2011), pp. 19-44

1. Fears and environmentalisms

- Fabian Locher and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, 'Modernity's Frail Climate: A Climate History of Environmental Reflexivity', *Critical Inquiry*, 38, 3 (2012), pp. 579-598
- Meredith McKittrick, 'Talking about the Weather: Settler Vernaculars, and Climate Anxieties in Early Twentieth-Century South Africa', *Environmental History* 23 (2018), pp. 3-27
- Mike Davis, 'The Coming Desert: Kropotkin, Mars and the Pulse of Asia', *New Left Review* 97 (2016), pp. 23-43

1. Presentations to an interdisciplinary audience

SUMMER TERM

Block 6: Summing up

1. The Empireocene?

- Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, 'On the importance of a date, or decolonizing the Anthropocene' (2017)
- Rohan D'Souza, 'Environmentalism and the Politics of Pre-emption: reconsidering South Asia's environmental history in the epoch of the Anthropocene', *Geoforum*, 101 (2019), pp.242-9
- Iva Peša, 'A Planetary Anthropocene? Views From Africa', *Isis*, 113, 2 (2022), pp. 386–95

1. Doing history in a crisis

- Katie Holmes, Andrea Gaynor & Ruth Morgan, 'Doing environmental history in urgent times', *History Australia*, 17, 2 (2020), pp. 230–251
- Mark Carey, 'Science, Models, and Historians: Toward a Critical Climate History', *Environmental History*, 19, 2 (2014), pp. 354-64
- Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London: Verso, 2016)

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Critically engage with, and appropriately deploy, theories and methods of environmental history.
- Understand the historical co-constitution of empires and environments on large spatial and temporal scales.
- Relate micro, local, and regional case studies to macro, continental, and global scales of analysis.
- Gain expertise in relating historical analysis to audiences trained in a range of scientific and social scientific disciplines, and in turn learning and incorporating insights from these disciplines.
- Identify how past human-environment interactions and past forms of environmental knowledge can inform and enrich understandings of present-day environmental concerns and priorities.

Research element

See assessment components

Interdisciplinary

Highly interdisciplinary, drawing on primary material from across sciences and arts, and secondary material from a range of disciplines beyond history narrowly defined, including: anthropology, environmental humanities, history of science, geography, critical theory, science and technology studies, and Earth System science.

International

Truly global in scope, including oceans and land masses, every continent and polar regions. Furthermore, the course is planetary in the sense of focusing on atmospheric, earthy, and oceanic volumes.

Subject specific skills

See learning outcomes

Transferable skills

Presenting and writing to interdisciplinary audiences; focus on relating historical material to present-day concerns and perspectives; group presentation within seminars require coordinated teamwork; analytical skills and knowledge base appropriate to a second-year undergraduate course; clear and effective verbal and written communication skills.

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Lectures	20 sessions of 1 hour (7%)
Seminars	20 sessions of 1 hour (7%)
Tutorials	2 sessions of 1 hour (1%)
Private study	258 hours (86%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

History modules require students to undertake extensive independent research and reading to prepare for seminars and assessments. As a rough guide, students will be expected to read and prepare to comment on three substantial texts (articles or book chapters) for each seminar taking approximately 3 hours. Each assessment requires independent research, reading around 6-10 texts and writing and presenting the outcomes of this preparation in an essay, review, presentation or other related task.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You do not need to pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A1

Assessment component	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Seminar Contribution	10%		No
Reassessment component			
1000 word reflective essay in lieu of Seminar Contribution			Yes (extension)

	Weighting	Study time	Eligible for self-certification
Assessment component			
1500 word essay	10%		Yes (extension)
Reassessment component is the same			
Assessment component			
Presentation and 1000 word Portfolio	40%		Yes (extension)
Students will present a 15 minute presentation and submit a 1000 word portfolio.			
Reassessment component			
Podcast and 1000 word Portfolio			Yes (extension)
Assessment component			
7 day take-home essay with citations and a bibliography	40%		No
Reassessment component is the same			

Feedback on assessment

Written feedback provided via Tabula; optional oral feedback in office hours.

Availability

Courses

This module is Core optional for:

- Year 2 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History
- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy

This module is Optional for:

- Year 2 of UENA-VQ32 Undergraduate English and History

- Year 2 of UENA-VQ34 Undergraduate English and History (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UHIA-V102 Undergraduate History (Renaissance and Modern History Stream)
- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- Year 2 of UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
- Year 2 of UHIA-VM13 Undergraduate History and Politics (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)

This module is Option list A for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V100 Undergraduate History
- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V7 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V100 Undergraduate History
- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V7 Undergraduate History and Philosophy (with a term in Venice)
- Year 2 of UHIA-VM13 Undergraduate History and Politics (with a term in Venice)

This module is Option list D for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V100 Undergraduate History
- Year 2 of UHIA-V102 Undergraduate History (Renaissance and Modern History Stream)

This module is Option list E for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy
- Year 2 of UHIA-VM11 Undergraduate History and Politics
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL13 Undergraduate History and Sociology
- Year 2 of UHIA-VL15 Undergraduate History and Sociology (with a term in Venice)

This module is Option list F for:

- Year 2 of UHIA-V1V5 Undergraduate History and Philosophy