

## Global Environmental History

HTY 4XX  
Fall 2016  
(Time)  
(Location)

Dr. Mark McLaughlin  
(Office and Telephone Number)  
Email: XXX  
Office Hours: XXX or by appointment

### Course Description:

Environmental history is the study of past interactions between humans and nature, and this course examines environmental historical processes on the global scale by comparing and contrasting on the local, regional, and national scales over time. While it is impossible to cover the environmental history of the whole globe, in-depth explorations of seven major themes, including agriculture and settlement, biological exchanges, and urbanization and industrialization, will thoroughly introduce students to the subfield of global environmental history. Students will also have the opportunity to analyze at length specific environmental historical subject matter and improve their digital literacy through group website projects. Prerequisites: 6 credits of history or permission. 3 credits.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

- identify and interpret the historical consequences of human-nature interactions on a global scale.
- compare and contrast various major environmental historical themes on the local, regional, and national scales.
- deconstruct and analyze the social, economic, political, ecological, and other factors that account for temporal and spatial commonalities and differences among the various major themes.
- determine connections between present-day problems and outcomes to past human-nature interactions.
- evaluate and debate historical processes, trends, and ideas through both oral and written forms of analysis.
- develop and improve a range of digital literacy skills as they relate to website construction.
- devise alternative means to organize historical information and explain it to a broader audience.

### Required text:

J.R. McNeill and Erin Stewart Mauldin, eds., [A Companion to Global Environmental History](#)

Note: While this is the main text for the course, some additional readings will be made available electronically and at the Fogler Library's Reserve Desk.

### **Grading:**

Students are responsible for understanding the material presented in the lectures, in the texts, and in the discussions. All assignments must be submitted to receive a passing grade. The assignments and their values are as follows:

- Class Participation: 20%
- Group Website Project: 40%
- Midterm Exam: 20%
- Final Exam: 20%

### **Participation:**

Student participation is required, even during classes scheduled as lectures, so attendance is strongly encouraged. 15% of the 20% participation mark will be based mainly but not exclusively on student involvement during the website development sessions and the discussion meetings. The readings for the discussion meetings will be in the required text or made available electronically and at the Fogler Library's Reserve Desk. The other 5% of the 20% will be determined by the other members of your group, based on your individual contribution to the website project. Peer grading of individual contributions will be done anonymously during the last week of classes, after the website presentations.

### **Group Website Projects:**

A significant portion of the course evaluation revolves around group website projects. The goals of the assignment are: to engage students' research, analysis, and critical thinking skills through a means other than the usual major research paper; to get students thinking about ways to organize and communicate historical information for a broader audience; to foster the development of additional abilities in digital literacy; and to make available a final digital product that students could potentially use in academic or professional portfolios.

During the first website development session at the end of week #1, students will organize themselves into groups of 3-4 people; if needed, I can assist with the formation of groups. One person in the group will be designated the project coordinator, to manage the progress of the website project, and another person will be designated the group reporter, to provide 2-minute oral progress reports at the beginning of each website development session. Of course, it is expected that each person in the group will contribute equally to the project.

The first steps in the project are to come up with a topic and submit a website proposal. The topic for your website can be almost anything, as long as it falls within the realm of

global environmental history. It is important that your topic not be too broad that it becomes overwhelming, but also not too specific that it limits your analysis. If a group is having a hard time coming up with a topic, you can consult with me during the first couple of website development sessions, during my office hours, or via email. Once a topic is decided upon, the group will submit a website proposal of approximately 500 words (2 double-spaced pages, 12-point font) at the beginning of the website development session in week #5. The proposal will outline your topic, your analytical approach, and how the website will present the information to the public.

The website will be constructed using free, online software. It is strongly suggested that students rely on WordPress.com or Wix.com, although other sites can be used if preferred but you have to check with me first. We will discuss how to access and navigate such sites during the first couple of website development sessions.

The format of your website will be generally left to the group's discretion, but it must contain at least a few basic elements. The website must have a home page with an analytical statement of, at minimum, 300 words, describing your interpretation of the subject matter, the broader historical context, and how your website provides a fuller understanding of the historical narrative. The home page must also contain at least 2 visual sources, such images, videos, or maps. In addition, the website must have a background page that explains how you came to the topic and why the website was created. There will also be a bibliography page containing, at minimum, 5 primary sources and 10 secondary sources. The rest of the design is up to you, but there should be at least 10 visual sources (including the 2 on the home page) throughout the website. As with a major research paper, borrowed visuals, information, and ideas must be referenced, either with captions or with footnotes that adhere to the Chicago Manual of Style; a useful citation guide is available here: [www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html).

During week #15, each group will present their website to the whole of the class. The presentation will be 5-10 minutes long, and will at once be an introduction to the group's chosen topic and their website. Each person in the group will also have to write an individual reflection paper of 750-1000 words (3-4 double-spaced pages, 12-point font), discussing how the group came up with the topic, the process by which the group conducted its research (such as the sources consulted), how and why the group made certain decisions about the presentation of information as part of the website, and your overall role and participation within the group project. The individual reflection papers are due at the beginning of the class in which your group presents its website.

In terms of grading, the group website project is worth 40% of your final class mark. 5% of the 40% will be based on the group's website proposal and 10% of the 40% will be based on your individual reflection paper. The other 25% of the 40% will be determined by the quality of the group's website. Creativity is strongly encouraged!

**Exams:**

Both the midterm and final exams will consist of essay questions. The midterm exam will be given during scheduled class time, while the final exam will be held during the exam week at the end of the semester (TBD).

**Late Assignments:**

An assignment must be handed in at the beginning of the class on the date that the assignment is due. Assignments handed in after the due date, without prior arrangement, will be considered late. Late assignments will be penalized 5% per overdue day on the final grade of the assignment. Extensions to help students organize their work may be given without penalty if requested at least a week in advance. Extensions within a week of the due date will require presentation of a physician's note/medical certificate.

**Absenteeism:**

Absenteeism is strongly discouraged, as you cannot achieve a good class participation mark without being present. Please be advised that you are responsible for keeping abreast of all lectures, discussions, and disseminated information, including course changes and special announcements made in class. I may take steps to accommodate absence from class upon presentation of a physician's note/medical certificate.

**Academic Honesty:**

Academic honesty is very important. It is dishonest to cheat on exams, to copy term papers, to submit papers written by another person, to fake experimental results, or to copy or reword parts of books or articles into your own papers without appropriately citing the source. Students committing or aiding in any of these violations may be given failing grades for an assignment or for an entire course, at the discretion of the instructor. In addition to any academic action taken by an instructor, these violations are also subject to action under the University of Maine Student Conduct Code. The maximum possible sanction under the student conduct code is dismissal from the University.

**Students with Disabilities:**

If you have a disability for which you may be requesting an accommodation, please contact Disabilities Services, 121 East Annex, 581-2319, as early as possible in the term.

**Sexual Discrimination Reporting:**

The University of Maine is committed to making campus a safe place for students. Because of this commitment, if you tell a teacher about an experience of **sexual**

**assault, sexual harassment, stalking, relationship abuse (dating violence and domestic violence), sexual misconduct, or any form of gender discrimination** involving members of the campus, **your teacher is required to report** this information to the campus Office of Sexual Assault & Violence Prevention or the Office of Equal Opportunity.

**If you want to talk in confidence** to someone about an experience of sexual discrimination, please contact these resources:

- For *confidential resources on campus*: **Counseling Center: 207-581-1392** or **Cutler Health Center: at 207-581-4000**.
- For *confidential resources off campus*: **Rape Response Services: 1-800-310-0000** or **Spruce Run: 1-800-863-9909**.
- **Other resources**: The resources listed below can offer support but may have to report the incident to others who can help:
- For *support services on campus*: **Office of Sexual Assault & Violence Prevention: 207-581-1406**, **Office of Community Standards: 207-581-1409**, **University of Maine Police: 207-581-4040 or 911**. Or see the OSAVP website for a complete list of services at <http://www.umaine.edu/osavp/>.

### **Course Schedule:**

Disruption Clause: In the event of an extended disruption of normal classroom activities, the format for this course may be modified to enable its completion within its programmed time frame. In that event, you will be provided an addendum to the syllabus that will supersede this version.

Course format: The course will cover seven major themes in global environmental history, with two weeks dedicated to each theme. With a three-class-per-week schedule, the first two classes of each week will be lectures, for a total of four per theme, which will follow a rough chronology and compare and contrast how environmental historical processes unfolded in different parts of the globe to provide students with a general understanding of each particular theme. The last class of each week will alternate between website development sessions and discussion meetings. The website development sessions will be class time dedicated to group progress reports, going over technical aspects of the website project, and working on the actual websites. The discussion meetings will center around assigned readings related to the major themes. The final week, week #15, will be reserved for presentation of the group website projects to the whole of the class, review of what was covered over the semester, and preparation for the final exam. It should be noted that the website proposals are due at the beginning of the website development session at the end of week #5, while the individual reflection papers are due at the beginning of the class in which your group presents its website.

#### **Week #1: Migrations**

- website development session

Week #2: Migrations (continued)

- discussion meeting

Week #3: Agriculture and Settlement

- website development session

Week #4: Agriculture and Settlement (continued)

- discussion meeting

Week #5: Forests and Forestry

- website development session
- website proposals due

Week #6: Forests and Forestry (continued)

- discussion meeting

Week #7: Water and Waterways

- website development session

Week #8: Water and Waterways (continued)

- discussion meeting
- midterm exam

Week #9: Biological Exchanges

- website development session

Week #10: Biological Exchanges (continued)

- discussion meeting

Week #11: Urbanization and Industrialization

- website development session

Week #12: Urbanization and Industrialization (continued)

- discussion meeting

Week #13: The Anthropocene

- website development session

Week #14: The Anthropocene (continued)

- discussion meeting

Week #15: Website presentations, review of semester, and final exam preparation

- individual reflection papers due on day of your group's presentation
- peer grading of individual contributions to the group website projects

TBD: Final Exam