

## What is world history? space, nature, history

History 704/ ES 900  
Fall 2015  
Fridays, 9:30-11:45  
Room 202-204 Bradley Memorial

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Office Hours: TBD, 5110 Humanities

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

From space, Earth appears whole, a discrete unit. But viewed from the grounded perspectives of historians, geographers, or anthropologists, it is complex, differentiated. This seminar uses recent work on space, nature, and time to ask how scholars attuned to the particularities of life can make sense of the world, and how that understanding can be shared with undergraduate students who are less familiar with specific disciplinary perspectives/theoretical/analytical tools. In this seminar, we will focus on two core questions: (1) Just what is the global scale and what is at stake in the ways we narrate global history? (2) How might we best teach world history, world regional geography, or an introduction to global studies, when our research specialties are often much more specialized/narrow?

This seminar will explore these questions through the frame of global environmental history—an emerging interdisciplinary field focused on changing relationships among people and the environment around the world—using a balanced mixture of theoretical readings and focused case studies. We will consider work on space and scale, commodification, imperialism, water, and food as threads to follow as we trace our way through world history.

Each week, in addition to reading about different approaches to thinking through the global scale, we will read about course design and teaching strategies. The course design and teaching strategies we will discuss—including backward design, learner-centered activities, and strategies for getting to know and assessing your students—will help to train you for teaching assistantships, solo teaching, and the academic job market. The communication skills on which these techniques rest will serve you both inside the classroom and outside the world of academia.

As a class, we will collaborate to build a public “Teaching the Globe” website with resources for conceptualizing and teaching global courses, including book reviews of potential texts, sample syllabi, and specific lesson plans. These products will be the major deliverables for this class. You will contribute content and editorial guidance for the site, but will not be responsible for building it. The goal of the site is to establish a communal resource to help you and other teachers as you prepare global courses in the future. More information on this is below.

## **Overarching Learning Objectives**

Learning objectives for this seminar fall into two categories: theoretical training and teaching and communication skills. Class participants will:

### Theoretical Training

- Survey key foundational texts for developing a framework for thinking through the global scale
- Learn skills for analytical reading and discussion
- Analyze theoretical approaches for thinking the global scale as a historical construct with political implications
- Apply theoretical insights to evaluate contemporary examples of global environmental history

### Teaching & Communication

- Evaluate and compare current approaches to global-scale classes in their field
- Design a sample syllabus for a global-scale class in their field\*
- Apply theoretical frameworks to pose a central question for guiding their class's route through world history
- Learn how to pitch this sample class as if in a job interview
- Write book review for potential reading for this class\*
- Design a lesson plan with learner-centered activity and assessment for their class\*
- Collaborate to plan and develop a public "Teaching the Globe" website with course design and teaching resources for global courses across a variety of disciplines.  
(\* = See Assessment plan below for more detail)

## **ASSESSMENT PLAN**

The course is organized around producing material for the website—the majority of your deliverables will become content for the site. We will space these out over the course of the semester and you get feedback from me and your peers before any content becomes public. In addition, you will be asked to lead class discussion in pairs once during the semester and to complete short weekly assignments, as outlined below.

### **Class Discussion Leaders 10%**

In pairs, sign up to lead class discussion for one week of the semester. I will circulate a sign-up sheet the first day of class. Discussion leaders will be responsible for (a) giving a quick (5 minute) overview of the week's texts; (b) reviewing everyone's reading responses before class and acknowledging key points to help orient class discussion; and (c) posing 3-4 questions to kick off and guide class discussion. You may tweak this presentation style to make it more creative as long as you cover these major objectives.

### **Weekly Assignments 15%**

These will vary in form as outlined by week below, from the classic reading response (see explanation below) to a syllabus review, to an interview-style class pitch. I will provide more detailed explanation of expectations. Everyone is required to read all the weekly responses before class. To give us time to do this, **these assignments will be due 24 HOURS before class starts unless otherwise noted. In other words, Thursday**

**mornings at 9:30 a.m.** To submit, you should send them to the class listserv. The assignments below will be just for class, not part of the website project.

### Reader's Response

Respond to the week's readings in one single-spaced, typed page. These reading responses should not summarize the text. Instead, they should identify and discuss a major theme, puzzle, or provocation that interests you. At the end, pose one or two lingering questions you would like to discuss in class. **You should do four of these over the course of the semester.**

### Syllabus Review

On Sept. 11, you will write a one-page review of an existing syllabus of your choosing for a global class in your field. You will need to find this syllabus and submit it with your review. (I can help steer you to some online repositories, but Googling common class names is a good tactic.) This review should discuss how the instructor approaches his/her topic, what the learning objectives are (if any are stated), what major themes are covered, the temporal and spatial breadth, what texts are used, how many pages of reading are assigned, what the assignment and assessment structure are, etc. Discuss what you like and dislike about this approach. What ideas would you like to borrow if you were teaching this course? What ideas do you have for doing it differently?

### Pitching a Class

On Sept. 25, you will write a 5-point description (read: 5 sentences, maybe 6) for the global class you would like to teach. Think of this as a very short first draft of your sample syllabus. Follow the model outlined by Karen Kelsky in her hyper-useful blog, *The Professor Is In*, "How to Describe a Course in an Interview":

<http://theprofessorisin.com/2011/12/29/how-to-describe-a-course-in-an-interview/>

## **"Teaching the Globe" Website Project**

### Book Review 15%

Write a 1,000-word review of a book of your choice that could be used to teach a global course. This book will form the basis for your lesson plan. I will provide a list of possible titles, but you are welcome to choose your own book. You will also do peer edits of these reviews.

### Lesson Plans 25%

One of the key deliverables for this class will be the development of a student-centered lesson plan for teaching some aspect of global history, as would be appropriate for your discipline(s). (We will discuss what student-centered learning methods entail as the course progresses. Short answer: you cannot write a lecture, even if it is accompanied by great images, for this assignment.) I will provide a template for developing your lesson plan.

### Final Component 35%

You may choose from two options for the final individual project. You should do this by

the **mid-point of the semester**, and **discuss your choice with me in office hours**.  
Deadlines and peer review work will be oriented around each option.

Option 1: Annotated Sample Syllabus

The first option is to create a sample semester-length syllabus for a global course in your field. The syllabus should contain an engaging title and course description, learning objectives (following the principles of backward design), assessment structure, and weekly plan for course readings and assessments. Annotate the syllabus by providing a brief (2-3 sentence) rationale for how you organize each week and why you are assigning each of the readings you have chosen. (You do not need to get into the nitty gritty of what pages of each reading you assign. But do keep in mind disciplinary norms [e.g., historians will be expected to assign some primary texts] and that undergrads appreciate variety in the type and density of texts [it's OK to watch documentaries, have them go see a play, etc.] and will certainly balk at more than 100 pages of reading a week. (Seriously, if you can get them to actually read 100 pages a week you have achieved something very special.) The goal is not only to provide a sample syllabus to flesh out a fresh approach to teaching a global course, but also to be able to use this sample syllabus if you go on the academic job market.

Option 2: "What is the global?" 3,000 word essay

The second option is to write a 3,000-word scholarly magazine-type essay (think *Aeon* or severely abbreviated *New Yorker*) using course readings and the theories we've discussed as the basis for your answer to the question "What is the global?" The essays could, for example, address the history of how your discipline has approached global teaching (e.g., the development of the regional approach in Geography), give your assessment of this approach based on recent theoretical discussions, and offer a proposal for a new route forward. They could review one possible approach for tracing our way around the globe—for example, theorizing the benefits of following commodities and providing a short review of three or so sample texts with which to do this. **These essays may involve some critique, but they should be oriented toward offering a proposal for thinking through or teaching "the global" in a fresh way.** These essays will likely require additional research, although your topic will determine what form that takes.

## REQUIRED READINGS

Suggested purchases:

Ashley Carse, *Beyond the Big Ditch*, Boston: MIT Press, 2014, 298 pp.

Gregory Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, 416 pp.

Therese Huston, *Teaching What You Don't Know*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009, 314 pp.

Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, 454 pp.

Doreen Massey, *For Space*, London: SAGE, 2005. 222 pp.

Anna Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005, 321 pp.

Richard Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007, 267 pp. (Concise Revised Edition)

Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disaster*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 406 pp.

I've asked the library to put these on reserve at College Library in Helen C White. Copies for purchase are available at the University Bookstore and, of course, Amazon. Unfortunately, we don't have a large enough enrollment for the Rainbow Co-op to order for us. Some of the titles will be available used, but a couple are recent releases. \*\*If cost is prohibitive, we will coordinate to be sure everyone has access.\*\*

## WEEKLY COURSE PLAN

### Week 1 (Sept 4): Introductions

No readings.

### Week 2 (Sept 11): What is Global Environmental History?

Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," *Critical Inquiry* 35 (Winter 2009), pp. 197-222.

Gabriella Corona, "What is Global Environmental History? Conversation With Piero Bevilacqua, Guillermo Castro, Ranjan Chakrabarti, Kobus Du Pisani, John R. McNeill, Donald Worster." *Global Environment* 2 (2008): 228-49.

J.R. McNeill, "Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History," *History and Theory*, Issue 42 (December 2003), pp. 5-43.

Libby Robin and Will Steffen, "History for the Anthropocene." *History Compass* 5, no. 5 (2007): 1694-1719.  
<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.ezproxy.library.wisc.edu/enhanced/doi/10.1111/j.1478-0542.2007.00459.x/>

Richard White, "The Nationalization of Nature," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 86, No. 3, December 1999, 12 pp.  
[http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/history/faculty/henryyu/Hist597/White\\_Nature.pdf](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/history/faculty/henryyu/Hist597/White_Nature.pdf)

Eric Wolf, "Introduction," *Europe and the People without History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010 [1982]. Also read the Foreward by Thomas Eriksen. pp. ix-xviii; 3-23.

Therese Huston, "Introduction," "Chapter 1: The Growing Challenge," and "Chapter 2: Why It's Better than it Seems," *Teaching What You Don't Know*, Cambridge:

Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 1-55.

Assignment Due: Syllabus Review [bring hardcopy to class]

### **Week 3 (Sept 18): Capital and the World as System**

Steven Stoll, "A Metabolism of Society: Capitalism for Environmental Historians" in *Handbook of Environmental History*, Andrew Isenberg, editor. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 369-397

Jason Moore, "Capitalism as World-Ecology," *Organization & Environment*, Vol. 16 No. 4, December 2003, pp. 431-458  
[http://www.jasonwmoore.com/uploads/Moore\\_Capitalism\\_as\\_World-Ecology\\_Braudel\\_and\\_Marx\\_on\\_Environmental\\_History\\_O\\_E\\_2003\\_.pdf](http://www.jasonwmoore.com/uploads/Moore_Capitalism_as_World-Ecology_Braudel_and_Marx_on_Environmental_History_O_E_2003_.pdf)

Jason Moore, "The Modern World-System as environmental history? Ecology and the rise of capitalism" *Theory and Society* 32: 307-377, 2003.  
[http://www.jasonwmoore.com/uploads/Moore\\_The\\_Modern\\_World-System\\_as\\_Environmental\\_History\\_Theory\\_Society\\_2003\\_.pdf](http://www.jasonwmoore.com/uploads/Moore_The_Modern_World-System_as_Environmental_History_Theory_Society_2003_.pdf)

Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II, Vols. I and II*. New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1966 [1949],

**Skim** the following selections:

Table of Contents (Vols. I and II)

Preface to the First Edition, pp. 17-24

Part One: The Role of the Environment

Chapters 2 and 3: Mainland Coastlines and The Islands, pp. 138-162

Part Two: Collective Densities and General Trends

Chapter 3: Is it Possible to Construct a Model of the Mediterranean Economy?, pp. 418-461

Part Three (Vol. II): Events, Politics, and People

Chapter 2: War in the Mediterranean and outside the Mediterranean, pp. 918-931

Immanuel Wallerstein, "The New European Division of Labor, C. 1450-1640" in *The Modern World-System*, New York: Academic Press, 1974, pp. 66- 131 [**Skim**]

Therese Huston, first half of "Chapter 4: Teaching and Surviving" *Teaching What You Don't Know*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 82-110.

### **Week 4 (Sept 25): The Spatial Turn and Environmental History**

Henri Lefebvre, Chapters 1 and 2, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, pp. 1-168.

Henri Lefebvre, "The Worldwide and the Planetary" in *State, Space, World*, edited by Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden; Translated by Gerald Moore, Neil Brenner, and Stuart Elden. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009, pp. 196-209.

HariPriya Rangan and Christian Kull, "What makes ecology 'political'? rethinking 'scale' in political ecology," *Progress in Human Geography* (2008) pp. 1-18

Therese Huston, second half of "Chapter 4: Teaching and Surviving" *Teaching What You Don't Know*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 111-137.

Assignment Due: Class Pitch

### **Week 5 (October 2): Can a single place be global?**

Ashley Carse, *Beyond the Big Ditch*, Boston: MIT Press, 2014, 298 pp.

\*Author-meets-readers: Ashley Carse will join us in class for a discussion focusing on his book and other reading this week.

Latour, B. "Introduction to Part II, How to Keep the Social Flat, Localizing the Global," *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp. 159-190.

### **Week 6 (October 9): Independent Book Reviews**

Assignments: First, choose a book to read independently for your book review. Select one from the list I will circulate, or choose your own with instructor approval. These should be books you could assign or use to teach a global course.

You should also decide which option you would like to complete for your final project and set up a time to visit me in office hours to discuss.

### **Week 7 (October 16): Rethinking Globalization**

Anna Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005, 321 pp.

Ferguson, J. "Introduction and Globalizing Africa?" *Global Shadows: Africa in the Neoliberal World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1999, pp. 1-49.

Therese Huston, second part of "Chapter 6: Teaching Students You Don't Understand" *Teaching What You Don't Know*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 192-206.

**Week 8 (October 23): A Regional Approach**

Paul Sutter, "The Tropics: A Brief History of an Environmental Imaginary" in *Handbook of Environmental History*, Andrew Isenberg, editor. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 178-204.

Richard Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007, 267 pp. (Concise Revised Edition)

Therese Huston, "Chapter 5: Thinking in Class" *Teaching What You Don't Know*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 138-165.

Assignment Due: Book Review [bring hard copy to class]

**Week 9 (October 30): Science and the Globe**

Michael Lewis, "And All Was Light?—Science and Environmental History" in Andrew Isenberg, editor, *Handbook of Environmental History*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 207-226

Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disaster*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, 406 pp.

Therese Huston, first part of "Chapter 6: Teaching Students You Don't Understand" *Teaching What You Don't Know*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 166-191.

**Week 10 (November 6): A Global Commodity**

Gregory Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, 416 pp.

Nilson, L. B. "Matching Teaching Methods with Learning Outcomes." *Teaching at its Best: A Research-Based Resource for College Instructors*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010. Chapter 11, 103-112.

Assignment Due: Draft Lesson Plan



**Week 11 (November 13): Peer Reviews [No Class (4S)]**

This week, meet with your partner to peer review each other's book reviews.

Get a head start on reading *For Space* and work on writing your syllabus or essay. Social Science Cites Podcast Interview with Massey, 2013 (PDF transcript also available)

<http://www.socialsciencespace.com/2013/02/podcastdoreen-massey-on-space/>

**Week 12 (November 20): Space, Politics, and Possibility**

Doreen Massey, *For Space*, London: SAGE, 2005. 222 pp.

Therese Huston, "Chapter 7: Getting Better" *Teaching What You Don't Know*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 207-234.

Assignment Due: Draft Annotated Syllabus or Essay

**Week 13 (November 27): Thanksgiving Break**

**Week 14 (December 4): Lesson Plan Demos**

Each student will present a 10-minute chunk of their lesson plan, followed by five minutes of feedback and discussion. Other students will provide peer evaluation from two vantage points: (1) the perspective of an undergrad student in the class and (2) the perspective of an instructor who wants to replicate the activity in her own classroom.

**Week 15 (December 11): Lesson Plan Demos**

Same as above.

**FINAL PROJECT DUE: December 18, Noon.**

**Final copies of book review, lesson plan, and annotated syllabus or essay due electronically.**