

Bergen Community College  
Division of Humanities  
Department of History & Geography

**Departmental Syllabus**

**HIS-103 Global Environmental History**

Date of Most Recent Syllabus Revision: Spring 2023

Course Typically Offered: Fall \_\_\_ Spring \_\_\_ Summer \_\_\_ Every Semester X Other \_\_\_\_\_

Syllabus last reviewed by: BCC General Education Committee \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

(Most courses need review Ad Hoc Committee on Learning Assessment \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

by only one of the following) Curriculum Committee: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Semester and Year: Fall 2023  
Course and Section Number: HIS-1XX-001  
Meeting Times and Locations: TBD

Instructor:  
Office Location: B-315  
Phone: 201-493-3548  
Departmental/Division Secretary:  
Office Hours:  
Email Address:

**Course Description**

This course is an historical overview of the interaction between humans and the environment from prehistory to the present on a global scale. Students will explore historical events on a planetary scale, microbial scale, and many scales in between. We will examine changing relationships among humans and nonhuman nature (plants, animals, germs, climate, topography) to understand the cultural, political, economic, and environmental processes and patterns that have shaped human history and continue to do so today.

Credits: 3 (lecture)  
Prerequisites: None  
Co-requisites: None  
General Education Course: Yes [proposed]  
Diversity Course: Yes [proposed]

## Student Learning Objectives & Means of Assessment

<b>Objectives:</b> Upon successful completion, the student will be able to:	<b>Means of Assessment:</b> This outcome will be measured by one or more of the following:
1) Identify and evaluate concepts and theories that environmental historians use to decipher the past.	Objective tests, essay questions, oral presentations, class discussions, and writing assignments
2) Examine how different human individuals and cultures have understood, shaped, and been shaped by the environment throughout history.	Objective tests, essay questions, oral presentations, class discussions, and writing assignments
3) Engage with the ethical considerations of human influence on natural systems in the past and today.	Objective tests, essay questions, oral presentations, class discussions, and writing assignments
4) Critically analyze the intersections among environmental change, economic activity, and social structures from a variety of time periods, cultures, and scales (local to global, microscopic to planetary).	Assignments or projects that require students to gather, interpret, and synthesize data from various sources and communicate their findings either in writing, orally, or both
5) Interpret and analyze arguments from historical and natural scientific scholarship to deepen critical thinking skills.	Assignments or projects that require students to gather, interpret, and synthesize data from various sources and communicate their findings either in writing, orally, or both
6) Express both orally and in writing the history, concepts, methods, and issues central to Environmental History	Oral presentations (individually or as part of a group), small group discussions, various writing assignments and examinations

## Course Texts and/or Other Study Materials

<p><b>Recommended Textbook:</b></p> <p>Headrick, Daniel R. <i>Humans versus Nature: A Global Environmental History</i>. Oxford University Press, 2020.</p> <p>ISBN: 9780190864729 (pbk: acid-free paper) ISBN 9780190864743 (epub)</p> <p><i>Supplemental materials including but not limited to readings, films, print or online sources to be determined at the discretion of the instructor.</i></p>
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## Course Content

The recommended sequence of theme and topics outlined below represents a general guideline. Instructors should feel free to modify this to suit their pedagogical approach and academic expertise.

- 1) Introduction
  - a) What is Global Environmental History?
  - b) Environmental History and the Anthropocene
- 2) Big History, Pre-History, Earliest Humans
  - a) Global Cooling
  - b) Diaspora & Extinctions
- 3) Ecology of Subsistence: Foragers, Farmers and Herders
  - a) Domestication of Plants, Animals, and Humans
- 4) Rise of Complex Societies: Eurasia in the Classical Age
  - a) Urbanization
  - b) Diseases
- 5) Medieval Eurasia and Africa
  - a) Arab Empire; China; Sub-Saharan Africa
  - b) Black Death
- 6) Biological Unification of the Planet
  - a) The Invasion of America & Columbian Exchange
  - b) Transformation of the Old World
- 7) Humans Take Over
  - a) Transition to an Industrial World
  - b) Technological Innovations & New Urban Environments
- 8) New Imperialism and Non-Western Environments: Late Victorian Holocausts
  - a) Western Demand & Tropical Products
  - b) Diseases & Climate Shocks
- 9) The Twentieth Century
  - a) War, Peace, & Consumerism
  - b) The Automobile
  - c) Industrial Agriculture
- 10) Plundering the Oceans
  - a) Marine Life & Marine Environments
- 11) Extinctions & Survivals
  - a) Causes & Vulnerable Biomes
- 12) The Great Acceleration & New Birth of Environmentalism
  - a) Climates of the Past
  - b) Politics & Climate Wars
  - c) History of Environmentalism
  - d) International Relations
- 13) Projections & Uncertainties
  - a) One Past, Many Futures or “What have we learned?”
  - b) Managing the Biosphere & Climate
  - c) A Choice of Futures

## Research, Thinking, Writing, and/or Examination Requirement(s)

### Writing Activity:

Students in this course will be expected to engage in multiple written assignment. These may be essay questions on one or more tests, an essay test, or several short reflection reports based on outside readings or activities.

### Critical Thinking:

Students would be encouraged, through classroom activities, to think about, analyze, and apply basic tools of environmental economics to current event issues. Memorization of key concepts and theories should be thought of as the first, not the final, stage of learning significant course materials.

### Student Evaluation:

Student grades will be based on a variety of different assessment measures such as writing assignments, objective tests and quizzes, and larger projects or research papers. The incorporation of at least one oral presentation is encouraged.

## Attendance Policy

### BCC Attendance Policy:

All students are expected to attend punctually every scheduled meeting of each course in which they are registered. Attendance and lateness policies and sanctions are to be determined by the instructor for each section of each course. These will be established in writing on the individual course outline. Attendance will be kept by the instructor for administrative and counseling purposes.

### Attendance Policy in this Course:

Attendance policies are to be determined by the instructor.

## Student and Faculty Support Services

Students: Portal Access & Moodle		<a href="https://bergen.edu/portalhelp/access-moodle/">https://bergen.edu/portalhelp/access-moodle/</a> or email <a href="mailto:citl@bergen.edu">citl@bergen.edu</a> or <a href="mailto:helpdesk@bergen.edu">helpdesk@bergen.edu</a>
IT Help Desk		201-879-7109
Cerullo Learning Assistance Center Writing Center Tutoring Center	Room L-125	201-447-7489 <a href="https://bergen.edu/tutoring/tutoring-center/">https://bergen.edu/tutoring/tutoring-center/</a> <a href="https://bergen.edu/tutoring/writing-center/">https://bergen.edu/tutoring/writing-center/</a>
The Sidney Silverman Library	Room L-226	201-447-7436 (Reference Desk) 201-879-7970 (Service Desk) <a href="https://bergen.edu/library/">https://bergen.edu/library/</a>

## Other College, Divisional, and/or Departmental Policy Statements

### Accommodations for Disabilities:

Bergen Community College aims to create inclusive learning environments where all students have maximum opportunities for success. Any student who feels he or she may need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability should contact the Office of Specialized Services at 201-612-5269 or via email at [ossinfo@bergen.edu](mailto:ossinfo@bergen.edu) for assistance.

### Statement on Mental Health and Wellbeing:

Mental health concerns or stressful events may lead to diminished academic performance or reduce a student's ability to participate in daily activities. Bergen Community College has licensed Personal Counselors available to assist you with addressing these and other concerns you may be experiencing. You can learn more about the confidential mental health services available on campus via the Health and Wellness Center at [www.bergen.edu/personalcounseling](http://www.bergen.edu/personalcounseling)

**Sample Course Outline and Calendar (subject to change at instructor's discretion)**

Wk	Topics & Readings	Assignments
1	<p>Introduction            What is Global Environmental History?            Environmental History &amp; the Anthropocene</p> <p><u>Readings:</u>            Headrick, 1-8            "The Ascent of the Anthropoi: A Story," Amitav Ghosh in <i>Altered Earth</i>, Julia A. Thomas, ed. (2022).</p> <p><u>Suggested Readings:</u>            J. Donald Hughes, "Defining Environmental History," <i>What Is Environmental History?</i>, 1-17, Wiley (2006).            Corona, "What is Global Environmental History? Conversation With Piero Bevilacqua, Guillermo Castro, Ranjan Chakrabarti, Kobus Du Pisani, John R. McNeill, Donald Worster." <i>Global Environment 2</i> (2008): 228-49.</p>	
2-3	<p>Big History, Pre-History, Earliest Humans            Global Cooling, Forest Habitats            What makes us human?            From Forests to Savannahs            Diaspora &amp; Extinctions</p> <p><u>Readings:</u>            Headrick, 9-34            Pyne, "Firestick History," <i>The Journal of American History</i>, Volume 76, Issue 4 (Mar, 1990), 1132-1141.</p> <p><u>Suggested Readings:</u>            Pyne, "Firestick History," <i>The Journal of American History</i>, Volume 76, Issue 4 (Mar, 1990), 1132-1141.            Glikson, "Fire and human evolution: the deep-time blueprints of the Anthropocene," <i>Anthropocene</i> 3 (2013), 89-92.            Harper, "Deep History and Disease: Germs and Humanity's Rise to Planetary Dominance" in <i>Altered Earth</i>, Julia A. Thomas ed. (2022).</p>	Reading Journal Check
4-5	<p>Ecology of Subsistence: Foragers, Farmers &amp; Herders            Spread of Farming &amp; Herding            Domestication of Humans; Humans &amp; Climate Change</p> <p><u>Readings:</u>            Headrick, 35-66            Neil Roberts, "The First Farmers," Chap. 5 <i>The Holocene</i>, 127-158.</p> <p><u>Suggested Readings:</u>            Diamond, "The Worst Mistake in the History of the Human Race," <i>Discover Magazine</i>, May (1999).            J.R. McNeill, "The World According to Jared Diamond," <i>The History Teacher</i>, 34:2 (Feb 2001), 165-174.</p>	Ancestor Footprint Essay Due

6-7	<p>Rise of Complex Societies: Eurasia in Classical Age  Population &amp; Urbanization  Diseases &amp; Sixth-Century Disasters  Medieval Eurasia and Africa  Medieval Climate Anomaly  Arab Empire; China; Sub-Saharan Africa  Black Death &amp; Little Ice Age</p> <p><u>Readings:</u>  Headrick, 93-154  J. Donald Hughes, "Deforestation, Overgrazing, and Erosion," <i>Environmental Problems of the Ancient Greeks and Romans</i>, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (2014).</p> <p><u>Suggested Readings:</u>  M. Williams, "Dark Ages and Dark Areas: Global Deforestation in the Deep Past," <i>Journal of Historical Geography</i> 26.1 (2000).  "The Little Ice Age and the Black Death," <i>Climate Change and the Course of Global History</i> (2014).  J. Donald Hughes, "Sustainable Agriculture in Ancient Egypt," <i>Agricultural History</i> 66.2 (1992).  Degroot, "Lessons for Today From Little Ice Age." <i>Washington Post</i>, February 20, 2018.</p>	Reading Journal Check
8-9	<p>Biological Unification of the Planet: The Invasion of America and Transformation of the Old World  The American Holocaust  Columbian Exchange Goes Both Ways  Plants &amp; Pathogens  Animals, Native and Invasive  Mines and Forests  Seventeenth-Century Crisis</p> <p><u>Readings:</u>  Headrick, 155-214  William Cronon, <i>Changes in the Land</i>, Chps. 1-4.</p> <p><u>Suggested Readings:</u>  McNeill, John, "Yellow Jack and Geopolitics: Environment, Epidemics, and the Struggles for Empire in the American Tropics, 1640-1830," <i>OAH Magazine of History</i>, 18:3 (April 2004), 9-13.  Hämäläinen, "The Politics of Grass: European Expansion, Ecological Change, and Indigenous Power in the Southwest Borderlands," <i>The William and Mary Quarterly</i> 67.2 (2010): 173-208 .  Flynn and Giráldez, "Cycles of Silver: Global Economic Unity through the Mid-Eighteenth Century," <i>Journal of World History</i> 13.2 (2002), 391-427.  selection of paintings of Tahiti by Paul Gauguin</p>	Midterm
10	<p>Transition to an Industrial World: The End of Sustainability  Technological Innovations &amp; Urban Environments in Great Britain  American Cotton Industry in North &amp; South  American Midwest, Plains, and Far West</p>	Project Proposal Due

	<p><u>Readings:</u>  Headrick, 215-250  David Christian, "Birth of the Modern World," <i>Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History</i></p> <p><u>Suggested Readings:</u>  Malm, "The Origins of Fossil Capital: From Water to Steam in the British Cotton Industry." <i>Historical Materialism</i> 21, no. 1 (2013): 15–68.  "From King Cane to King Cotton: Razing Cane in the Old South." <i>Environmental History</i> 12 (2007): 59-79 [History Cooperative].</p>	
11	<p>New Imperialism and Non-Western Environments: Late Victorian Holocausts  Western Demand &amp; Tropical Products  Plantation Agriculture / Irrigation  Diseases &amp; Climate Shocks</p> <p><u>Readings:</u>  Headrick, 251-282  Davis, "Political Ecology of Famine" and other selections from <i>Late Victorian Holocausts: El Nino Famines and the Making of the Third World</i> (2001).</p> <p><u>Suggested Readings:</u>  Gillen D'Arcy Wood, "The Volcano That Shrouded the Earth and Gave Birth to a Monster," <i>Nautilus</i> 31/12/2015.  Gilmartin, "Scientific Empire and Imperial Science: Colonialism and Irrigation Technology in the Indus Basin." <i>Journal of Asian Studies</i> 53 (1994): 1127-49.</p>	Reading Journal Check
12	<p>The Twentieth Century  War, Peace, &amp; Consumerism  Big Dams  The Automobile  Industrial Agriculture</p> <p><u>Readings:</u>  Headrick, 283-350  Tucker, "Containing Communism by Impounding Rivers: American Strategic Interests and the Global Spread of High Dams in the Early Cold War" in <i>Environmental Histories of the Cold War</i>, J.R. McNeill Ed. (2010).</p> <p><u>Suggested Readings:</u>  "Maddie Stone, "Central European Forests Are Regrowing After the Breakup of the USSR," <i>Gizmodo</i>, 15/7/2015.  Ralph Lutts, "The Trouble with Bambi: Walt Disney's Bambi and the American Vision of Nature," <i>Forest and Conservation History</i> 26/10/1991.  Rosner &amp; Markowitz, "A Gift of God? The Public Health Controversy over Leaded Gasoline during the 1920s" in <i>Dying for Work: Workers Safety</i> (1991).  DeLuca &amp; Demo, "Imagining Nature and Erasing Class and Race: Carleton Watckins, John Muir, and the Construction of Wilderness" <i>Environmental History</i> 6:4 (October 2001)</p>	



	Loo & Stanley, "And Environmental History of Progress: Damming the Peace and Columbia Rivers" <i>Canadian Historical Review</i> 92:3 (2001).	
13	<p>Plundering the Oceans Whales, Cod, Salmon, &amp; Other Fish Marine Environments Extinctions &amp; Survivals Extinctions &amp; Causes Vulnerable Biomes</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Headrick, 377-428; <a href="#">"Oceans in Three Paradoxes: Knowing the Blue through the Humanities,"</a> Virtual Exhibition 2021 (No. 2), <i>Environment and Society Portal</i>.</p> <p><u>Suggested Readings:</u> Ed Yong, "American Whalers Killed Way More Than Just Whales," <i>Atlantic</i>, 19/9/2016. Ronnie Hawkins, "Cultural Whaling, Commodification, and Culture Change," <i>Environmental Ethics</i> 23:3 (Fall 2001).</p>	<p>Project Due</p> <p>Presentations Begin</p>
14	<p>The Great Acceleration &amp; New Birth of Environmentalism Climates of the Past: Ice Age, Holocene, Anthropocene Global Warming Today: Consensus / Impact Environmentalism Pre-Industrial &amp; Colonial Environmentalism Environmentalism Before the 1960s Political Environmentalism International Relations</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Headrick, 351-376, 429-460 Rachel Carson, "A Fable for Tomorrow" through "Elixirs of Death" (Chapters 1-3) <i>Silent Spring</i> (1962).</p> <p><u>Suggested Readings:</u> Kinkela, "Green Revolutions in Conflict: Debating Silent Spring, Food, and Science during the Cold War," in <i>DDT and the American Century</i> (2011). Binnema and Niemi, "'Let the line be drawn now': Wilderness, Conservation and the Exclusion of Aboriginal People from Banff National Park," <i>Environmental History</i> (11/4) 724– 750. Scharff, "Are Earth Girls Easy? Ecofeminism, Women's History, and Environmental History," <i>Journal of Women's History</i>, 7 (1995), 164-75. Gwyn Kirk, "Ecofeminism and Racial Justice: Bridges Across Gender, Race, and Class" <i>Frontiers</i> 18:2 (1997).</p>	<p>Presentations Conclude</p> <p>Reading Journal Check</p> <p>Self-Assessment &amp; Reflection Due</p>
15	<p>One Past, Many Futures or "What have we learned?" The Past &amp; Triangle of Futures Managing the Biosphere &amp; Climate A Choice of Futures</p> <p><u>Readings:</u> Headrick, 461-474</p>	<p>Final Exam Review</p> <p>Final Exam</p>

	<p>Clive Hamilton, "Anthropocene Ethics, as Seen from a Mars Mission: A Story" and "Mutualistic Cities of the Near Future" in <i>Altered Earth</i>, Julia A. Thomas ed. (2022).</p> <p><u>Suggested Readings:</u>  Leiberman &amp; Gordon, "Projections and Uncertainties" and "Responses to Climate Change" <i>Climate Change and Human History</i> (second edition) (2022).  Lavoie, "<a href="#">Nowhere else to turn': First Nations Inundated by Oil Sands Projects Face Impossible Choices,</a>" <i>The Narwhal</i> 30 June 2018.  Brown, "The Pandemic is Not a Natural Disaster," <i>New Yorker</i>, 4/13/2020.  Ed Yong, "How the Pandemic Defeated America," <i>Atlantic</i>, 9/2020.</p>	
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The recommended sequence of theme and topics outlined below represents a general guideline. Instructors should feel free to modify this to suit their pedagogical approach and academic expertise.