

International History and Politics

Academic year 2021-2022

Competing Histories of Climate Change

HPI133 - Spring - 6 ECTS

Thursday 14h15 - 16h00

Course Description

This class provides a historical background to contemporary climatic issues, to help understand and assess the problems at stake in global environmental politics. We will examine different hypotheses about the human origins of climate change and discuss their intersection with the history of technology, development, and globalization. The program will focus in particular on the formation of the fossil fuel economy and its link to capitalism and rival economic systems, as well as on colonization and imperialism as agents of global environmental transformation. We will also explore and question grand-scale narratives about the long-term evolution of the human species, such as the enduring influence of early agricultural revolutions as processes that initiated the rise of humans to a geological force. Class participants will reflect on the implication of these different visions of climate change's past for the attribution of responsibilities and climate mitigation targets in international politics. To put this reflection into practice, the class will include a simulation of global climate negotiation jointly organized with Prof. Iris Borowy from the Centre for the History of Global Development in Shanghai. To prepare this simulation, class participants will build working groups with MA students from Shanghai University (SHU) and communicate on a digital basis.

PROFESSOR

Antoine Acker
Office hours: by
appointment only

ASSISTANT

Peter Buda
Office hours: by
appointment only

Syllabus

Please note that this syllabus is provisional. Changes may be brought, and an updated version will be presented in the introductory session.

Requirements

- Participating actively and regularly in the seminar. If you are unable to attend the first session, contact us in advance or immediately after
- Reading carefully all mandatory texts selected for each session
- (Co-)conducting a seminar session in the semester
- Writing a final paper of about 4000 words + bibliography.
- Participating in the climate negotiation simulation within an international working group, including the submission of a collective position paper

Submission deadlines

- (tba): submission of a position paper as a group
- June 8: final paper

Deadlines are not negotiable and late essays will not be graded. Plan to submit your final paper one week ahead of the deadline to avoid last minute complications and enjoy your holiday! You are very welcome to discuss your work in progress with me during my office hours.

Course outline and readings

1. 24 February: Introductory session

2. 3 March: Histories of climate before climate change

- Sardier, Thibaut, Nicolas Celnik. "Climate Change is Linked to Issues of Power, Debt and Conquest: Interview with Jean-Baptiste Fressoz and Fabien Locher" *Verso Books*, 20 April 2021 (Originally published: Sardier, Thibaut, Nicolas Celnik. "Les Rendez-vous de l'histoire de Blois «Le changement climatique est lié à des enjeux de pouvoir, de dette, de conquête»", *Libération*, 7 octobre 2020.) <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/5059-climate-change-is-linked-to-issues-of-power-debt-and-conquest-interview-with-jean-baptiste-fressoz-and-fabien-locher>
- "The Evolution of the Colonial Discourse on Deforestation and Climate Change, 1500-1940," of Grove, Richard. *Ecology, Climate and Empire*. Cambridge, UK : White Horse Press, 1997, 5-36.
- "Introduction" of White, Sam. *The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, 1-14.

Optional:

- Fressoz, Jean-Baptiste, Fabien Locher. *Les Révoltes du ciel. Une histoire du changement climatique XVe-XXe siècle*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 2020.
- Adamson, George C.D., Matthew J. Hannaford, and Eleonora J. Rohland, "Re-thinking the present: The role of a historical focus in climate change adaptation research", *Global Environmental Change* 48: 195-205.

3. 10 March: Hypothesis 1: human nature

- "Introduction: Growth, Punctuation, and Human Well-Being" of Brooke, John L. *Climate Change and the Course of Global History: A Rough Journey*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014, 1–14.
- Crosby, Alfred W. *Children of the Sun: A History of Humanity's Unappeasable Appetite for Energy*. New York: Norton, 2006. xiii-xv, 1-6, 60-98, 159-164.

4. 17 March: Hypothesis 2: fossil capitalism

- Malm, Andreas, "The Origins of Fossil Capital: From Water to Steam in the British Cotton Industry," *Historical Materialism* 21, no. 1 (2013): 15–68.

5. 24 March Fossil capitalism (continuation):

- Malm, Andreas, "China as Chimney of the World: The Fossil Capital Hypothesis," *Organization & Environment* 25, no. 2 (2012): 146–77.
- "Time to Pull the Plugs" of Malm, Andreas. *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam-Power and the Roots of Global Warming*. London, New York: Verso 2016 298-302.

Optional:

- Pomeranz, Kenneth. "Water, Energy and Politics: Chinese Industrial Revolutions in Global Environmental Perspective." In *Economic Development and Environmental History in the Anthropocene: Perspectives on Asia and Africa*, edited by Gareth Austin, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017, 271–90.

6. 31 March Hypothesis 3: Orbis / world-system

- Lewis, Simon L., Mark A. Maslin. "Defining the Anthropocene," *Nature* 519, no. 7542 (2015): 171–80.
- Pacheco, Jorge M.; Amélia Polonia. "Environmental Impacts of Colonial Dynamics, 1400-1800: The First Global Age and the Anthropocene." In *Economic Development and Environmental History in the Anthropocene: Perspectives on Asia and Africa*, edited by Gareth Austin, London: Bloomsbury, 23–50.
- Mitman, Greg, "Reflections on the Plantationocene: A Conversation with Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing," *Edge Effects*, June 18, 2019, <https://edgeeffects.net/haraway-tsing-plantationocene/>.
- "Anthropocene or capitalocene?" of Moore, Jason. *Capitalism In The Web Of Life: Ecology And The Accumulation Of Capital*. London: Verso, 2016, 73-95.

7. 7 April: Hypothesis 4: Methane anomaly

- Rudimann, W. F. *Plows, Plagues, and Petroleum: How Humans Took Control of Climate*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007, 5-12, 65-83, 95-114.

- Blaustein, Rich. "The Ruddiman Hypothesis: A Debated Theory Progresses Along Interdisciplinary Lines," *Global Policy Blog*, 24 February 2021, <https://www.globalpolicyjournal.com/blog/24/02/2021/ruddiman-hypothesis-debated-theory-progresses-along-interdisciplinary-lines>
- "Full Interview with William Ruddiman," *UQx Denial101x*, 12 May 2015, YouTube, <https://youtu.be/CaUHSV6yCA8>

Optional:

- "Interview with William Ruddiman," *ABC Radio National Australia*, Thursday 9 August 2007, <https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/archived/inconversation/william-ruddiman/3232486#transcript>
- Hamilton, Clive. "The Anthropocene as Rupture." *The Anthropocene Review* 3, no. 2 (2016): 93–106.
- Hamilton, Clive, Jacques Grinevald. "Was the Anthropocene Anticipated?" *The Anthropocene Review* 2, no. 1 (2015): 59–72.

8. SATURDAY 16 April 10h-12h: Joint online session with Shanghai University

9. 21 April easter break

10. 28 April: Shanghai-Geneva group meetings & reading week

11. 5 May: From Environmental to climate diplomacy

- Franchini, Matías, Eduardo Viola and Ana Flávia Barros-Platiau. "The Challenges of the Anthropocene: From International Environmental Politics to Global Governance," *Ambiente & Sociedade* 20 (September 2017): 177–202.
- Müller, Benito. "The Hague Climate Conference: Impressions of the North American Press Coverage." *Oxford Institute for Energy Studies*. Online at <http://www.wolfson.ox.ac.uk/~mueller> (2000).

Optional:

- Burke, Edmund III. "The Big Story: Human History, Energy Regimes, and the Environment." In *The Environment and World History 1500 BCE to 2000 CE.*, edited by Burke III, E. and K. Pomeranz. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008, 49-63.
- Bonneuil, Christophe, Jean-Baptiste Fresoz. *L'Événement Anthropocène: La Terre, l'histoire et nous*. Paris: Seuil, 2013. English translation: Bonneuil, Christophe; Jean-Baptiste, Fresoz. *The Shock of the Anthropocene: The Earth, History and Us*. London: Verso, 2017.
- Kander, Astrid, Paolo Malanima, and Paul Warde. *Power to the People: Energy in Europe over the Last Five Centuries*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

12. 12 May: Fabricating ignorance

- Bonneuil, Christophe, Pierre-Louis Choquet and Benjamin Franta. "Early Warnings and Emerging Accountability: Total's Responses to Global Warming, 1971–2021". *Global Environmental Change* 71 (2021): 1-10.
- Oreskes, Naomi, Erik M. Conway. *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues From Tobacco Smoking to Global Warming*. London: Bloomsbury, 2010, 169-215.

13. 19 May: what is behind the curve?

- Howe, Joshua P. *Behind the Curve: Science and the Politics of Global Warming*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016, 3-15.
- Skrydstrup, Martin, "Speaking Climate Change to Power," *BioSocieties*, 11, no. 3 (2016): 401–405.

14. Saturday 21 May: online double session, climate negotiation with Shanghai University 9h-13h

Assignments

1. LEAD A SESSION

This is a student-led course. Every course participant is expected to lead a seminar session alone or as a team.

What session leaders do:

- Prepare the session's organization (see below)
- At the start of the session, make sure that all participants have understood the readings: are there concepts that need to be clarified? Are all contextual references and vocabulary in the texts clear?
- Ask questions that trigger methodological, analytical, and theoretical reflections on the readings and the session's topic (i.e. questions about the readings' arguments, structure, interrelation, and relation to the seminar topics)
- Help the class identify the main challenges raised by the session's topic, elaborate framing questions, and express hypotheses to answer them
- Make sure that the discussion remains within the scope of the seminar and does not go off topic
- Make sure that everyone has a chance to speak

They can also:

- Trigger or enlarge the discussion with some new course material (see below in *preparation*)
- Ensure a smooth transition between the sessions (i.e. by asking the class to shortly synthesize the previous session, reflect on the link between different sessions or on possible learning goals for the following week)

They should never:

- Lecture
- Do a presentation
- Answer the questions themselves right away: instead, they should always give the class a chance to elaborate an answer together
- Dismiss an oral intervention by a course participant: if they feel that an intervention is off topic, leaders can reorient the discussion with new questions or comments
- Assume that the professor or TA will lead the session for them

How to prepare for conducting a session:

- Read and annotate carefully the mandatory texts
- Do the optional readings as well
- Check all unclear concepts or unclear contextual references in the text
- Identify the readings' structure and their main thesis
- Identify the academic context of the readings (what is the topic of the book/special journal issue in which the text was published? What is the profile of the text's author? Does the text explicitly respond to some specific theory or argument produced by other authors?)
- Prepare a set of questions to trigger, orientate, and fuel the class discussion. Be prepared to improvise some new questions
- Do additional research on the topics, places or periods addressed in the readings and come to the class with some contextual knowledge
- Meet the professor, TA or someone in the professor's team to prepare the session at least 48h in advance of it. Make sure you will have time between this meeting and the class to improve your preparation if necessary. If you are unable to meet, give us a phone call or send us a short course plan within the same deadline.

You can also:

- Gather additional material to be shown or discussed in class (i.e. audiovisual, graph, map, citations...), in relation with the session's theme and/or readings (we may also provide you with some material)
- Prepare specific exercises for your class (brainstorming, dividing the class into groups, organizing a debate with assigned roles, analyzing a primary source, etc.)
- You are very much encouraged to complete the readings with primary sources

2. GROUP ASSIGNMENT – POSITION PAPER (20% of the grade)

Mixed groups of students from the Graduate Institute and Shanghai University, built for the climate negotiation simulation in the second part of the semester, will need to submit a collective position paper ahead of the mock negotiation of May 21. The length and deadline for this assignment will be communicated during the semester.

3. FINAL PAPER (80%)

Your paper must address any aspect of the history of climate change, the history of the Anthropocene or the history of environmental diplomacy. I am available in my office hours to discuss your topic choice. The essay should have 4,000 words excluding abstract and bibliography. A +/- 10% variation from this length will be accepted, but please note that the ability to synthesize your research within a limited number of words is an essential research

skill and an expectation for this class. The paper consists of an introduction (which announces the topic, research question, main hypothesis or argument, addresses previous historiography and defines the perimeter of the research), several points coherently articulated to form an argumentation, and a conclusion (which synthesizes your research results). The core text must be preceded by an abstract of ca. 1,000 signs as well as followed by a bibliography and, whenever possible, an annex containing a reproduction of at least one primary source. If your essay is based on sources that cannot be reproduced on paper, please discuss this with us.

Submit the paper **on Moodle**. A **Word** or Word-compatible version must be provided to enable us to check the number of words (**no PDF**).

Assessment

- The session lead is never graded, as I encourage to think of it as a contribution to the class rather than an individual performance. However, leading a carefully prepared session is a condition to pass this class.
- To receive a grade above 4, the essay needs to follow the formal requirements of the IHP Department as well as the citation and bibliographical guidelines provided for this class on Moodle. If you have any doubt about the formal requirements, please ask the TA.

You will be assessed according to the following criteria:

Excellent (6): Paper is original (i.e. it contributes to the studied field with a novel approach and / or new empirical findings and analytical conclusions), based on a clear argument, structure is logic, writing is fluid and engaging, analysis is highly convincing and nuanced. Key issues and questions of the course have been understood, mobilized, and successfully articulated with the broader knowledge of the author. It bases on primary and secondary sources whose analysis follows scientific methods and serve the essay's core argument.

Good (5): Essay is based on a clear argument, structure is logic, and writing meets standard academic requirements. Key issues and questions of the course have been understood and mobilized. It bases on (at least one) primary and on secondary sources whose analysis follows scientific methods and serve the essay's core argument.

Pass (4): Essay follows a coherent structure and conveys efforts of the author to elaborate clear arguments. Writing meets academic standards, key issues and questions of the course have been understood and mobilized. It bases on (at least one) primary and on secondary sources whose analysis follow scientific methods.

Anything under 4 means that the essay does not fully meet these requirements. Half-points reflect nuances between the different thresholds described above.

Additional bibliography

- Blomfield, Megan. "Climate Change and the Moral Significance of Historical Injustice in Natural Resource Governance." In *The Ethics of Climate Governance*, edited by Aaron Maltais and Catriona McKinnon. London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015.
- Brooke, John L. *Climate Change and the Course of Global History: A Rough Journey*. New York 2014.
- Elliott, Lorraine. "Climate Diplomacy." In *The Oxford Handbook of Modern Diplomacy*, edited by Andres Fenton Cooper. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

- Gosh, Amitav. *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2016.
- Grevsmühl, Sebastian Vincent. "Visualising Climate and Climate Change. A Longue Durée Perspective." In *Climate and Culture. Multidisciplinary Perspectives on a Warming World*, edited by Feola, Giuseppe, Hilary Geoghegan, Alex Arnall et al. Cambridge, New Delhi, Singapore. 2019.
- Kutney, Gerald. "The player's association: The United Nations." In *Carbon Politics and the Failure of the Kyoto Protocol*, edited by Gerald Kutney. London: Routledge, 2014.
- McNeill, John R., Peter Engelke. *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945*. Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014.
- Oreskes, Naomi, Erik M. Conway. *The Collapse of Western Civilization: a View From the Future*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014.
- Regan, Patrick M. "Lessons to Learn: Ozone and CO2." In *The Politics of Global Climate Change*, by Patrick M. Regan, New York: Boulder Paradigm Publishers, 2015, 55-72.
- Sawyer, Stephen W. "Time after Time: Narratives of the Longue Durée in the Anthropocene," in: *Transatlantica* 1, 2015, 1-17.
- Smil, Vaclav. *Energy Transitions: Global and National Perspectives*. Santa Barbara, California: Praeger, an imprint of ABC-CLIO, LLC, [2017].
- Smith, Patrick Taylor. "International Domination and a Global Emissions Regime." In *The Ethics of Climate Governance*, edited by Aaron Maltais and Catriona McKinnon. London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015.
- The Lancet Commission, "The 2018 Report of the Lancet Countdown on Health and Climate Change: Shaping the Health of Nations for Centuries to Come," in: *The Lancet*, Vol. 392 December 8, 2018, p. 2484-2506. <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S0140-6736%2818%2932594-7>
- Tolba, Mostafa Kamal, Iwona Rummel-Bulska. *Global Environmental Diplomacy: Negotiating Environmental Agreements for the World, 1973-1992*. Cambridge, MA.: MIT Press, 1998.
- Urry, John. *Climate Change and Society*. Cambridge: Polity, 2012.
- Wallace-Wells, David. *The Uninhabitable Earth: Life after Warming*. New York: Random House, 2019.

Resources:

Anthony Costello et al.: Managing the health effects of climate change, *The Lancet*, Vol 373, May 16, 2009. www.thelancet.com

Chappatte (Charicatures)
<https://www.chappatte.com/en/>

ClimateWatch Data
<https://www.climatewatchdata.org/>

Deep Decarbonization Pathways Project
<http://deepdecarbonization.org/>

EcoLex
<https://www.ecolex.org/>

EcoAméricas
<https://www.ecoamericas.com/>

European Climate Foundation – Resources
<https://europeanclimate.org/resources/>

European Environmental Agency (EU)
<https://www.eea.europa.eu/data-and-maps>

E&E News

<https://www.eenews.net/>

GreenFILE

<http://web.a.ebscohost.com/ehost/search/basic?vid=0&sid=5a188b80-be01-42a4-be45-2783541c607b%40sessionmgr4006>

Homepage Climate Change Week (Latin America, Africa, Asia, Pacific)

<https://www.regionalclimateweeks.org/>

IHL Database Search (through ICRC)

<https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/customary-ihl/eng/docs/home>

IPCC

<http://ipcc.ch/index.htm>

IPCC Reports

<https://www.ipcc.ch/reports/>

National Climate Assessment (USA)

<https://nca2014.globalchange.gov/>

OECD Positions on Climate Change

<http://www.oecd.org/env/cc/>

Our World in Data – CO2 and other Greenhouse Gas Emissions

<https://ourworldindata.org/co2-and-other-greenhouse-gas-emissions>

Sustainable Development Solutions Network (A Global Initiative for the United Nations)

<https://www.unsdsn.org/>

UN Conferences

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/conferences>

UN System SDGs Action Database

<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/unsurvey/index.html>

World Bank Group – Climate Change Knowledge Portal

<https://climateknowledgeportal.worldbank.org/>

World Health Organization – COP24 Special Report: Health & Climate Change

<https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/276405/9789241514972-eng.pdf?ua=1>

World Resources Institute - Climate

<https://www.wri.org/our-work/topics/climate>

World Resources Institute, Climate Change explained in 10 Graphics,

<https://www.wri.org/blog/2017/04/climate-science-explained-10-graphics>.