

HIST/GEOG 377

Environmental History

Simon Fraser University
Fall 2015



Lectures: Wednesdays 2:30-5:20 pm, AQ 3005

Tutorials: Thursdays 9:30-10:20 am, AQ 2120; 10:30-11:20 am, AQ 5035;
12:30-1:20 pm, AQ 5035; 1:30-3:20 pm, AQ 5047

Canvas: <https://canvas.sfu.ca/courses/22987>

Instructor: Dr. Tina Adcock (tina.adcock@sfu.ca)

Office hours: Mondays 11 am-12 pm & Wednesdays 1-2 pm, AQ 6236

Teaching Assistant: Leah Wiener (contact via Canvas)

Office hours: Wednesdays 12-2 pm, AQ 6214D

Course description

We live, it's often said, in a country with too much geography and not enough history. Yet no corner of Canada remains pristine, or untouched by people; even the most remote places bear traces of human activity throughout time. This course explores Canada's geography and history through the lens of environmental history, an interdisciplinary field that studies the reciprocal relationships between humans and the non-human world in the past. We will consider the following key questions: how have non-human actors (plants, animals, microbes) and factors (topography, climate) shaped human affairs in the northern half of North America? How have different Indigenous and settler communities understood and represented Canadian environments through science and art? How and why have Canadians made changes, both accidental and deliberate, in the lands around them—and with what consequences? We'll also discuss some historiographical and methodological issues central to the field, including the relationship between environmental history and environmental activism, and the unfortunate tendency of environmental history to depress rather than inspire its readers. Together, we'll try to construct critical but "hopeful" environmental histories that will equip you to make thoughtful, historically-informed choices and interventions as Canadian and global citizens.

Course objectives

By the end of this course, you will be able:

- To assess how human and non-human actors and factors have altered Canadian environments over time, and with what consequences
- To analyze how social and cultural interpretations of Canadian environments have changed over time, and to situate these in appropriate historical and cultural contexts

- To discuss key historiographical and methodological issues in the field of environmental history with reference to course content
- To practice and hone the skills of interpreting, evaluating, and synthesizing primary and secondary documents in oral and written forms.

Course readings

There are no required texts for this course. All readings are available on the SFU Library website via the links provided on Canvas website. Assigned readings should be completed before tutorials on Thursdays. The success of tutorials depends on everyone having done the readings.

Course evaluation

Your final grade will be determined as follows:

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Participation | 15% |
| Ecological imperialism paper | 20% |
| Place “biography”: | |
| Essay | 25% |
| Oral presentation | 5% |
| Final exam | 35% |

Your **participation** will enhance your enjoyment of this course, contribute to a dynamic and mutually profitable classroom environment, and greatly increase your understanding and retention of the material. You should plan to attend every lecture and tutorial. Leah will take attendance weekly in tutorials. Please come to tutorial with the readings in hand or with the files on your laptop or tablet, having read them carefully and thoughtfully.

We expect you to be ready to reflect critically on lectures, readings, and primary sources in written and spoken form, to listen to your peers and engage with their viewpoints, and to practice expressing your ideas and arguments clearly, concisely, and convincingly. Participation grades will be based on your tutorial attendance and preparedness, active participation in large and small group discussions, and an end-of-term self-evaluation of your contributions to lectures and tutorials.

If you have to be absent from a lecture or tutorial unexpectedly, please contact me (if it’s a lecture) or Leah (if it’s a tutorial) and let us know. If you know you will have to miss a meeting due to religious observances/practices or another such conflict (e.g. athletic competitions, interviews for professional programs), please let me know as soon as possible.

Course assignments & examinations

You will complete two written assignments in this course. We will discuss both in class, at which point I will provide you with detailed instructions. The first assignment asks you to engage critically with one of the key concepts in environmental history: ecological imperialism. You will read several classic and recent papers that lay out and critique this concept, consider the merits and demerits of each author’s perspective, and reflect on how this concept enhances our historical understanding of Canadian environments. This **paper on ecological imperialism** should be **4-6 pages long** and will be due on **Wednesday, October 7**.

For your second assignment (and with thanks to my colleague Claire Campbell for the idea), you will write a “**place biography**” on a site of your choice located anywhere in Canada. This might be a place to which you have a special connection, or one that you’ve always wanted to visit. You will research, and reflect upon, the material, social, and imaginative history of your chosen place, using various kinds of documents and research methods. You must submit a **short statement of your chosen place** and the sources you intend to consult in writing its biography by **Wednesday, October 21**. This statement will not be graded, but failure to submit it will result in 10% being deducted from the paper’s final grade. The paper should be **8-10 pages long** and will be due on **Wednesday, November 18**. You will also distill your paper into a **5-minute talk**, which you will present to your peers in tutorial.

This course will conclude with a **final closed-book examination**, which will consist of a mix of short-answer and essay questions. These will test your comprehension and mastery of course material, and will ask you to synthesize this material in order to make broad arguments about the course’s overarching themes. You may make use of any course materials to answer the questions, including readings, lecture notes, excerpts from primary sources, video clips or films, and so on. The examination is scheduled at **12:00-3:00 pm** on **Wednesday, December 9**.

Policies regarding assignments

All assignments are due by the start time of your tutorial. You must save your assignment as a PDF document and submit it using the Canvas website. Please include your name, the date, and some kind of descriptive title on the first page. A separate title page is not necessary. Please also number the pages of the assignment. All assignments must be word-processed, using standard 1-inch margins, double-spacing, and 12-point font. Please use Chicago style (notes and bibliography) for footnotes or endnotes, and for lists of works cited. If you are not familiar with this style of citation, here is a quick general guide:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html

A late assignment will have **5%** of its final mark subtracted for each day it is late, up to a maximum of **four days** or **20%**. After that point, assignments will not be accepted. Extensions must be requested at least 72 hours in advance of an assignment’s due date. Please do not request an extension unless personal or medical circumstances seriously warrant one.

Academic honesty

By enrolling in classes at SFU, you have consented to a student contract that includes a commitment to academic honesty:

<http://www.sfu.ca/students/calendar/2015/spring/fees-and-regulations/student-contract/academic-honesty.html>

It is your responsibility to ensure that you understand what constitutes academic dishonesty, which includes but is not limited to plagiarism. This guide clarifies what actions are considered academically honest and dishonest at SFU:

<http://www.sfu.ca/students/academicintegrity/resources/academichonestyguide.html>

Communication policies

Leah and I normally respond to messages within 24 hours, except on weekends and holidays. To contact Dr. Adcock, please use her SFU email address: tina.adcock@sfu.ca.

To contact Leah, please use the messaging feature on Canvas. Emails sent to her SFU address are liable to get lost in her inbox.

Classroom etiquette

Please arrive to class in a timely fashion to avoid disrupting our learning environment. Please also do not leave the room during class unless it is absolutely, physically unavoidable.

Please turn your cell phones to silent and refrain from using them during class. Feel free to use your laptop, tablet, or netbook to take notes or look up things, but please don't use such devices in ways (Facebook, YouTube, etc) that will disrupt the attention of other students around you. A little courtesy toward your classmates and me goes a long way.

I may make changes to the syllabus during the term. I will always notify you of these. You will always be able to find the most recent version of the syllabus on the course's Canvas website.

Course schedule: Topics, readings, and due dates

Week 1: What is environmental history?

Lecture: Wednesday September 9

Tutorial: Thursday September 10

Readings: William Cronon, "The Uses of Environmental History," *Environmental History Review* 17.3 (1993): 1-22
Sally Hermansen and Graeme Wynn, "Reflections on the Nature of an Urban Bog," *Urban History Review* 34.1 (2005): 9-27

Week 2: Indigenous spaces & contact zones

Lecture: Wednesday September 16

Tutorial: Thursday September 17

Readings: Douglas Deur, "Rethinking Precolonial Plant Cultivation on the Northwest Coast of North America," *The Professional Geographer* 54.2 (2002): 140-157
Victoria Dickenson, "Cartier, Champlain, and the Fruits of the New World: Botanical Exchange in the 16th and 17th Centuries," *Scientia Canadensis* 31.1-2 (2008): 27-47

Week 3: Fish, furs, empires

Lecture: Wednesday September 23

Tutorial: Thursday September 24

Readings: Peter Pope, "Transformation of the Maritime Cultural Landscape of Atlantic Canada by Migratory European Fishermen, 1500-1800," in *Beyond the Catch: Fisheries of the North Atlantic, the North Sea and the Baltic, 900-1950* (2008), 123-154
Adam R. Hodge, "'In Want of Nourishment for to Keep Them Alive': Climate Fluctuations, Bison Scarcity, and the Smallpox Epidemic of 1780-82 on the Northern Great Plains," *Environmental History* 17.2 (2012): 365-403

Week 4: Countrysides

Lecture: Wednesday September 30

Tutorial: Thursday October 1

- Readings:* Colin Coates, "Like 'The Thames towards Putney': The Appropriation of Landscape in Lower Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 74.3 (1993): 317-343
 Liza Piper, "Backward Seasons and Remarkable Cold: the Weather over Long Reach, New Brunswick, 1812-1821," *Acadiensis* 34.1 (Autumn 2004): 31-55

Week 5: Cityscapes

- Lecture:* Wednesday October 7
Tutorial: Thursday October 8
Readings: Michèle Dagenais, "The Urbanization of Nature: Water Networks and Green Spaces in Montreal," in *Method and Meaning in Canadian Environmental History* (2007), 216-235
 Sean Kheraj, "Animals and Urban Environments: Managing Domestic Animals in Nineteenth-Century Winnipeg," in *Eco-Cultural Networks and the British Empire: New Views on Environmental History* (2014), 263-288
 Joanna Dean, "'Said tree is a veritable nuisance': Ottawa's Street Trees 1869-1939," *Urban History Review* 34.1 (2005): 46-57

***Ecological imperialism paper due Wednesday, October 7**

Week 6: Hinterlands

- Lecture:* Wednesday October 14
Tutorial: Thursday October 15
Readings: Jocelyn Thorpe, "To Visit and to Cut Down: Tourism, Forestry, and the Social Construction of Nature in Twentieth-Century Northeastern Ontario," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 19.1 (2008): 331-357
 Kathryn Morse, "The Nature of Gold Mining," in *The Nature of Gold: An Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush* (2003), 89-114

Week 7: Conservation

- Lecture:* Wednesday October 21
Tutorial: Thursday October 22
Readings: Lissa Wadewitz, "The Scales of Salmon: Diplomacy and Conservation in the Western Canada-U.S. Borderlands," in *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories* (2010), 141-164
 Theodore (Ted) Binnema and Melanie Niemi, "'Let the Line Be Drawn Now': Wilderness, Conservation, and the Exclusion of Aboriginal People from Banff National Park in Canada," *Environmental History* 11.4 (2006): 724-750

***Statement of place biography topic and sources due Wednesday, October 21**

Week 8: Automobility

- Lecture:* Wednesday October 28
Tutorial: Thursday October 29
Readings: Stephen Davies, "'Reckless Walking Must Be Discouraged': The Automobile Revolution and the Shaping of Modern Urban Canada to 1930," *Urban History Review* 18.2 (1989): 123-138
 Ben Bradley, "Behind the Scenery: Manning Park and the Aesthetics of Automobile Accessibility in 1950s British Columbia," *BC Studies* 170 (2011): 41-65

Steve Penfold, "Are we to go literally to the hot dogs?' Parking Lots, Drive-ins, and the Critique of Progress in Toronto's Suburbs, 1965-1975," *Urban History Review* 33.1 (2004): 8-23

Week 9: Modernization & its discontents

Lecture: Wednesday November 4

Tutorial: Thursday November 5

Readings: Tina Loo, "Disturbing the Peace: Environmental Change and the Scales of Justice on a Northern River," *Environmental History* 12.4 (2007): 895-919
Danielle Robinson, "Modernism at a Crossroad: The Spadina Expressway Controversy in Toronto, Ontario ca. 1960-1971," *Canadian Historical Review* 92.2 (2011): 295-322

No class (Remembrance Day): Wednesday, November 11. There will be no tutorial on Thursday, November 12.

Week 10: Environmentalism

Lecture: Wednesday November 18

Tutorial: Thursday November 19

Readings: Frank Zelko, "Making Greenpeace: The Development of Direct Action Environmentalism in British Columbia," *BC Studies* 142/143 (2004): 197-239
Jennifer Read, "'Let us heed the voice of youth': Laundry Detergents, Phosphates and the Emergence of the Environmental Movement in Ontario," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 7.1 (1996): 227-250

***Place "biography" due Wednesday, November 18**

Week 11: Pipelines & power lines

Lecture: Wednesday November 25

Tutorial: Thursday November 26

Readings: Sean Kheraj, "Historical Background Report: Trans Mountain Pipeline, 1947-2013" (2015)

Week 12: Climate change in the Arctic

Lecture: Wednesday December 2

Tutorial: Thursday December 3

Film: "Qapirangajuq: Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change" (2010)

Readings: James D. Ford et al., "Climate change policy responses for Canada's Inuit population: The importance of and opportunities for adaptation," *Global Environmental Change* 20 (2010): 177-191
Emilie Cameron, Rebecca Mearns and Janet Tamalik McGrath, "Translating Climate Change: Adaptation, Resilience, and Climate Politics in Nunavut, Canada," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 105.2 (2015): 274-283

Final examination: Wednesday, December 9, 12-3 pm, location TBA