

Hist 204: A Global History of Climate Change

Fall 2015, Professor Dagomar Degroot (Dagomar.Degroot@Georgetown.edu)

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursdays, 2:30 PM, 617B ICC

Course Website: <http://hist204.weebly.com>

Course Description:



Global warming caused by human activity is transforming our world today. However, climate change is not a new phenomenon. In this course, we will explore how natural and anthropogenic climate change has shaped human history, from the emergence of our species to the rise of ISIS. We will contemplate how climatic variability comes to influence human beings, reconstruct past climatic trends using interdisciplinary sources, and discover why climate changes. We will

use case studies to investigate why some societies are vulnerable and others more resilient to climatic shifts. We will trace how climate change influenced organized violence, social upheaval, technological progress, and artistic responses. Finally, we will learn how scientists first detected global warming, examine what their models tell us about its future, and consider how it is already affecting our lives today.

Course Goals:

Like other courses offered by Georgetown University's Department of History, this course will help you:

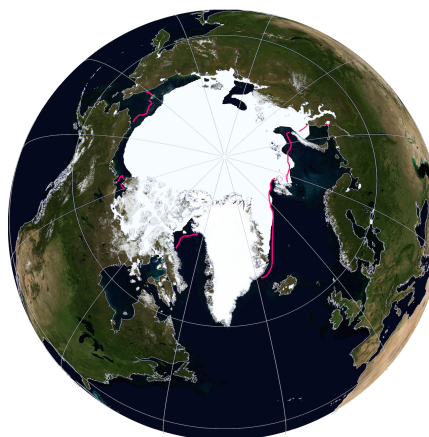
1. Gain a better appreciation of the nature and practice of history as a discipline, and as the study, based on evidence, of human experiences, interactions, and relationships as they change over time.
2. Learn to appreciate that history does not consist of a simple succession of self-evident facts, and that evidence-based interpretation and analysis are central to all historical work.
3. Hone reading, writing, and oral communication skills.
4. Develop your ability to think historically: to situate events and developments in their historical context for the purpose of critical analysis.
5. Expand your ability to engage with complex causal analysis, and to articulate arguments that integrate supporting evidence and analytical commentary.
6. Learn to view the world from perspectives other than your own.

This course in particular will also help you:

1. Appreciate the significance and deep context of modern climate change.
2. Understand complex relationships between climate change and humanity.
3. Broaden your appreciation for diverse scholarly disciplines, and their distinct ways of deciphering the past.

Breakdown:

Participation:	20%
Museum Assignment:	15%
Primary Source Essay:	35%
Exam:	30%



Evaluation:

Participation:

After our first lecture of every week, starting in October, you will break into groups to work on a project. We will either: 1) create a map that depicts past and present climate changes, and their human consequences, or 2) create a timeline that does the same. I will evaluate your group participation.

Our second class of every week will usually take the form of a discussion seminar. You will earn participation marks for the quantity and especially the quality of your comments.

Museum Assignment:

DUE DATE: 1 OCTOBER 2015

Venture beyond the classroom, and find a museum exhibit. Now, write a five-page essay that argues that the topics in the exhibit are linked to the history of climate change. Begin your paper by describing the exhibit and what it represents. Support your paper with at least four books or articles. A scholar who is not a historian (for example, a scientist, an anthropologist, etc.) must have written at least one of your articles or books. When searching for secondary sources on climate history, use this site as your starting point: <http://climatehistorynetwork.com/bibliography>.

You will give a five-minute, in-class presentation on your assignment. We will begin these presentations on 8 October.

Primary Source Essay:

SEND ME A PROPOSAL BY: 1 NOVEMBER 2015.

DUE DATE: 1 DECEMBER 2015

Choose a topic relevant to the history of climate change. Be as creative as possible! Next, hunt for primary and secondary sources that will let you write an essay about your topic. You can find primary sources online, for example at <http://climatehistorynetwork.com/bibliography>. However, you can also search through Georgetown's libraries, the National Archives, the Library of Congress, and other resources in the city. Your secondary sources should include at least six books, where one book is equivalent to two articles. A scholar who is not a historian must have written at least two of your books (or four of your articles).

Now, write me an email that briefly describes: 1) your thesis, and 2) your primary sources, and how they will support your thesis. I must receive this email by 1 November 2015.

If I approve your topic and sources, write an original, 15-page environmental history of climate change. Primary sources should be central to your thesis, but your interpretation of these sources, and your investigation of their context, should be supported by secondary sources. Be sure to contextualize your thesis in light of the arguments raised in your secondary sources (we will discuss how to do this in class).

Write a one-paragraph, single-spaced abstract of your essay. With your permission, I will post your abstracts on HistoricalClimatology.com. You will be able to browse one another's abstracts, and people from around the world will learn about climate history through your research.

Exam:

DATE: TBA

The exam will be divided into two parts:

1. Multiple choice and/or short answer.
2. Essay answer. You will be required to write an essay about a primary source given in your exam booklet.

Grading Criteria:

Each of these criteria will be worth approximately a third of your grade:

Clarity:

Are you using words that appropriately and formally express your meaning? Are your points sourced correctly? Do your sentences precisely express your meaning, and are they grammatically correct? Is there a clear thesis that presents an argument and outlines how that argument will be defended? Is there a coherent organization that culminates in a conclusion that references the thesis?

Research:

Are your secondary sources serious works of scholarship, and are they relevant to your argument? Do your primary sources illuminate the issue you are investigating, and to what extent? Are those primary sources relevant to your argument, and do you present them in the context of your secondary sources? Is your interpretation of your primary sources creative but nuanced?

Ideas:

How creative and nuanced are your arguments? Are you merely repeating the claims of other scholars, or are you evaluating them against their colleagues, and against primary sources (where you are asked to use them)? To what extent can you build new knowledge rather than re-interpret old ideas?

Required Course Texts:

Brooke, John L. *Climate Change and the Course of Global History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Edwards, Paul N. *A Vast Machine: Computer Models, Climate Data, and the Politics of Global Warming*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2010.

Parker, Geoffrey. *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*. London: Yale University Press, 2013.

Schwartz, Stuart B. *Sea of Storms: A History of Hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean from Columbus to Katrina*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

Notes:Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism is not just about copying someone else's writing. Any time you present ideas without correctly citing them, you are committing plagiarism. This is academia's most serious intellectual offense, and it is taken very seriously by Georgetown University.

It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the [Georgetown University Undergraduate Honor System](#). It is my duty to refer academic misconduct - including plagiarism - to the Honor Council. If the Council decides that you have plagiarized, you will fail this class and suffer additional penalties.

Submitting Assignments:

Assignments are due *at the beginning of class*. Any assignment submitted after the first 15 minutes of class is late. Give me a paper copy, and then send an electronic copy (in PDF format) to Dagomar.Degroot@georgetown.edu. Late assignments will receive a 5%/day penalty.

Extensions:

You may ask me for an extension, but your request will only be granted in exceptional circumstances (compassionate grounds, illness, etc.). The length of the extension granted will be judged on a case-by-case basis, and you may be asked for written verification. Contact your deans in case of absences, problems with due dates, and other problems.

Missing Classes:

If you think that you will need to miss several classes for significant and predictable reasons (such as religious observances or University-sponsored athletic events), you must inform me of the specific circumstances and dates *at the start of the term*. I will try to accommodate requests for a reasonable number of such absences, but I cannot guarantee that you will in any case be able successfully to complete all required class work. You must therefore make sure that the details of the situation are clear to both you and me early on, so that you may have a chance to enroll in a different class if accommodation should prove impossible.

Beyond the Course:

Please know that as a faculty member I am committed to supporting survivors of sexual misconduct, including relationship violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault. However, university policy also requires me to report any disclosures about sexual misconduct to the Title IX Coordinator, whose role is to coordinate the University's response to sexual misconduct.

Georgetown has a number of fully confidential professionals who can provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and other forms of sexual misconduct. They include:

Jen Schweer, MA, LPC, Associate Director of Health Education Services for Sexual Assault Response and Prevention. Contact: (202) 687-0323, jls242@georgetown.edu.

Erica Shirley, Trauma Specialist, Counseling and Psychiatric Services (CAPS). Contact: (202) 687-6985, els54@georgetown.edu.

More information about campus resources and reporting sexual misconduct can be found at: <http://sexualassault.georgetown.edu>.

Schedule:

- *This schedule is approximate and may be changed by your professor.*
- *If possible, complete these readings in the order in which they are listed.*

Section 1: Introducing the Environmental History of Climate Change

Week 1: Introduction

3 September: Course introduction.

Reading:

1. Carey, Mark and Philip Garone, "Forum Introduction." *Environmental History* 19 (2014): 282-293.
2. White, Sam. "Climate Change in Global Environmental History." In *A Companion to Global Environmental History*, edited by John McNeill and Erin Maulden, 394-410. London: Blackwell, 2012.
3. Brazdil, Rudolf et al. "Historical Climatology in Europe - the State of the Art," *Climatic Change* 70 (2005): 363-430.

Week 2: Definitions and Concepts, Methods and Meanings

8 September: What is climate change? Why does climate change? How can we trace its changes? What are climate history and environmental history?

10 September: Interdisciplinarity in climate history. Conceptualizing how climate change influences humanity.

Reading:

1. Pfister, Christian. "Climatic Extremes, Recurrent Crises and Witch Hunts: Strategies of European Societies in Coping with Exogenous Shocks in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *The Medieval History Journal* 10, 1&2 (2007), 33-73.
2. Endfield, Georgina H. "Exploring Particularity: Vulnerability, Resilience, and Memory in Climate Change Discourses." *Environmental History* 19 (2014): 303-310.
3. Carey, Mark. "Science, Models, and Historians: Toward a Critical Climate History." *Environmental History* 19 (2014): 354-364.

Section 2: Eight Million Years of Climate History

Week 3: Climate Prehistory

15 September: Prehistory in a changing climate.

17 September: Bronze Age crisis: was climate change to blame?

Reading:

1. Brooke, John L. *Climate Change and the Course of Global History*, xix-164.
2. Stewart, J. R. and C. B. Stringer. "Human Evolution Out of Africa: The Role of Refugia and Climate Change." *Science* 335:6074 (2012): 1317-1321.

Week 4: Ancient Civilizations

22 September: GIS lab in the Dublin Room.

24 September: The rise and decline of classical civilizations.

Reading:

1. Brooke, John L. *Climate Change and the Course of Global History*, 261-349.
2. Armit, Ian et al. "Rapid climate change did not cause population collapse at the end of the European Bronze Age." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 111:48 (2014): 17045–17049.
3. Cullen et al., "Climate change and the collapse of the Akkadian empire: Evidence from the deep sea." *Geology* 28 (2000): 379-382.

Week 5: Medieval Anomalies*MUSEUM ASSIGNMENT DUE*

29 September: The rise of the Roman, Han, and Mayan Empires.

1 October: Imperial collapse and the 536 CE Event.

Reading:

1. Brooke, John L. *Climate Change and the Course of Global History*, 350-392.
2. Turner, B. L. and Jeremy A. Sabloff, "Classic Period Collapse of the Central Maya Lowlands: Insights About Human–Environment Relationships for Sustainability," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 109 (2012): 13908–14
3. Media-Elizalde, Martín and Eelco J. Rohling. "Collapse of Classic Maya Civilization Related to Modest Reduction in Precipitation." *Science* 335 (2012): 956-59.

Week 6: Workshops and Presentations

6 October: Workshop: guide to library resources.

8 October: Museum assignment presentations.

Reading:

1. Astrid Ogilvie and Graham Farmer, "Documenting the Medieval Climate." In *Climates of the British Isles*, edited by Mike Hulme and Elaine Barrow, 112-133. London: Routledge, 1997.
2. Barlow, L. K. et al. "Interdisciplinary Investigations of the End of the Norse Western Settlement in Greenland," *The Holocene* 7 (1997): 489-99.
3. Dugmore, Andrew J. et al. "Cultural Adaptation, Compounding Vulnerabilities and Conjectures in Norse Greenland," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 109 (2012): 3658-63.
4. Stothers, Richard B. "Climatic and Demographic Consequences of the Massive Volcanic Eruption of 1258." *Climatic Change* 45:2 (2000): 361-374.

Section 3: Disaster and Opportunity in the Little Ice Age

Week 7: Medieval Warming

13 October: The Medieval Climate Anomaly.

15 October: Warming, Cooling, and the Viking Example.

Reading:

1. Brooke, John L. *Climate Change and the Course of Global History*, 413-466.
2. Parker, Geoffrey. *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*, xv-25.

Week 8: Cooling and Crisis

20 October: Collapse! The case for a Little Ice Age.

22 October: Cooling and social unrest.

Reading:

1. Parker, Geoffrey. *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*, 26-113.

Week 9: Adaptation and Resilience

27 October: The Dutch exception.

29 October: Waging war in the Little Ice Age.

Reading:

1. Parker, Geoffrey. *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*, 485-506; 587-667.

Week 10: The Cultural Reception of Climate Change

3 November: Perceiving a Little Ice Age.
 5 November: Cultural and technological responses.

PAPER PROSPECTUS DUE

Reading:

1. Culver, Lawrence. "Seeing Climate Through Culture." *Environmental History* 19 (2014): 311-318.
2. Schwartz, *Sea of Storms*, ix-109.

Week 11: Empire and the End of the Little Ice Age

10 November: Climate (change) and European imperialism.
 12 November: Climate change, race, gender, and class.

Reading:

1. Schwartz, Stuart. *Sea of Storms*, 110-225.

Section 4: The Warming Anthropocene

Week 12: Discovering and Dealing with Warming

17 November: Climate history from the French Revolution to the Second World War.
 19 November: Global warming: the discovery, the science, and the IPCC.

Reading:

1. Schwartz, Stuart. *Sea of Storms*, 226-338.

Week 13: A Changing World

PRIMARY SOURCE ESSAY DUE

24 November: Climate science and climate history since 1945.
 26 November: Thanksgiving!

Reading:

1. Edwards, Paul N. *A Vast Machine*, xiii-xxvii; 83-186.

Week 14: Marketing Doubt; Predicting the Future.

3 December: Merchants of Doubt?

8 December: Beyond Earth, beyond the present. Exam review.

Reading:

1. Edwards, Paul N. *A Vast Machine*, 337-449.
2. McNeill, J. R. "Can History Help Us with Global Warming?" In *Climatic Cataclysm: The Foreign Policy and National Security Implications of Climate Change*, edited by Kurt M. Campbell, 26-48. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2008.