

**Historical and Cultural Methods in Environmental Research**  
**University of Wisconsin-Madison**  
**Spring 2018**

**Environmental Studies 922, Course #35800**  
**Tuesday, 5:30-8:00 pm**  
**204 Bradley Memorial**

Instructor: Dr. Shari Wilcox  
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Office: Bradley Memorial 203; Office Hours: Tues 3:00-5:00 & by appt.  
Writing Group: Mon and Wed 7:00-9:00 a.m., Colectivo on State Street  
[Course Canvas Page](#)



**Course Description**

Environmental Studies 922 (3 credit hours) introduces graduate students from a wide array of departments and programs to different disciplinary and interdisciplinary methods for studying past environmental change and the human cultural contexts within which such change occurs. The course explores the disparate forms of evidence that can be used to reconstruct past environmental changes and their human meanings. The course also strives to build a strong sense of community among graduate students and faculty members at UW-Madison who share an interest in past environmental change by creating a context within which students from different departments and programs can work together while also getting to know faculty members associated with the Center for Culture, History, and Environment (CHE).

Over the course of the semester, we will welcome guest speakers to class who will offer their perspectives on the art and science of conducting research in Environmental History and the Environmental Humanities. In the spirit of the Center for Culture, History, and the Environment (CHE), our course will be truly interdisciplinary, and we will welcome guests from the Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences. Additionally, we will welcome speakers who will offer pragmatic guidance on conducting research and producing scholarly products beyond your thesis/dissertation.

Assignments for the seminar are designed to assist you in identifying and cultivating research skills to serve your academic work. The assignments for this course are designed so that you will end the semester with a number of products that will potentially assist you in your growth as a scholar in terms of research, publishing, teaching, and service.

Because the seminar strives to reflect and incorporate the interests of the enrolled graduate students, and also those of the many CHE faculty members who participate, this syllabus is being left somewhat open at the start of the semester. The syllabus may evolve as the goals and interests of seminar members become clearer, and as CHE faculty members contribute readings for the sessions in which they participate.

#### Learning Goals for Course:

- Introduce graduate students from a wide array of departments and programs to different disciplinary and interdisciplinary methods for studying past environmental change and the human cultural contexts within which it occurs.
- Explore the disparate forms of evidence that can be used to reconstruct past environmental change and its human meanings.
- Build a strong sense of community among graduate students and faculty members at UW-Madison who share an interest in past environmental change by creating a place within which grad students from different departments and programs can work together and become colleagues while getting to know faculty members associated with CHE.

#### Course Meetings

This class meets once for a 2.5-hour period each week over the spring semester and carries the expectation that students will work on course learning activities (reading, writing) for approximately 3-6 hours out of classroom for every class period. This syllabus will be updated with additional information about meeting times and expectations for student work as the semester progresses. [An up-to-date version of this document will be posted to Canvas.](#)

#### Course Requisites

Graduate Standing, Consent of the Instructor.

#### Rules, Rights & Responsibilities

Please visit the [Graduate Guide](#) and [CHE's Graduate Handbook](#) for more information on student rules, rights, and responsibilities.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

The University of Wisconsin-Madison supports the right of all enrolled students to a full and equal educational opportunity. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Wisconsin State Statute (36.12), and UW-Madison policy (Faculty Document 1071) require that students with disabilities be reasonably accommodated in instruction and campus life. Reasonable accommodations for students with disabilities is a shared faculty and student responsibility. Students are expected to inform me of their need for instructional accommodations by the end of the third week of the semester, or as soon as possible after a disability has been incurred or recognized. I will work either directly with you or in coordination with the [McBurney Center](#) to identify and provide reasonable instructional accommodations. Disability information, including instructional accommodations as part of a student's educational record, is confidential and protected under FERPA.

### **Diversity & Inclusion**

[Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison.](#) We value the contributions of each person and respect the profound ways their identity, culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and opinion enrich the university community. We commit ourselves to the pursuit of excellence in teaching, research, outreach, and diversity as inextricably linked goals. The University of Wisconsin-Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background – people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world.

### **Academic Integrity**

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW-Madison's community of scholars in which everyone's academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards for additional review. For more information, refer to the [Office of Student Conduct & Community Standards' webpage.](#)

### **Classroom Behavior**

Faculty and students each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment, and all members of this class are expected to treat one another with understanding, dignity, courtesy, and respect.

### **Contacting the Instructor**

The best way to reach me is by email or during office hours. Please give me 24 hours to respond to your emails (and 48 hours Friday to Sunday.)

### **Accessing Course Documents and Submitting Assignments**

[Canvas](#) will be our primary method of communication and for document sharing. Assignments may be submitted by email or a paper copy may be handed in to me on the day the assignment is due.

## Required Readings

All course readings will be distributed electronically, you can access them on the [Canvas page for this course](#). You should also check Canvas routinely for discussion questions, supplemental readings, and general announcements.

Although the majority of readings in this syllabus have been finalized, there may be additions as visiting CHE faculty members identify texts they want to discuss and as seminar members decide topics we would like to explore together. Some added readings could reflect the evolution of our conversations together, and some may be generated by the assignments you will be completing over the course of the semester. Whenever possible, students will be informed of readings at least a week ahead of time, and in general the total number of pages assigned in a week will be under 200 pages.

## Assignments and Grading

**Participation and Weekly Assignments:** (30%) This course is based on a seminar-discussion format. Each person in class needs to assume the responsibility of an active participant and learner. Success in the class depends largely upon the time, energy, and commitment you invest. You will be required to arrive at class having read the material assigned for the day and prepared to engage in a thoughtful and constructive conversation that is respectful of others in the classroom and takes seriously the issues and themes presented in the readings. At times, assigned work will also be a part of the preparation for the week's readings.

**Interdisciplinary Syllabus Design:** (20%). You will develop a college level course syllabus focused in your own discipline which incorporates some significant interdisciplinary element(s). You may choose whatever subject you wish, reflecting your own teaching interests. These syllabi may be collaboratively developed with a fellow student enrolled in the course.

**Edge Effects- Style Essay** (30%): You will be produce an essay or exhibit in a style similar to those produced for CHE's digital magazine, [Edge Effects](#), or another scholarly blog. These are pieces up to 2,000 words in length with images. We will also discuss the pitch process in class in the event that you would like to formally submit your work for consideration to *Edge Effects*. These essays may be collaboratively written with a fellow student enrolled in the course.

**Methods Statement** (20%): You will develop a statement of research suitable for inclusion in a grant application, scholarly article, or your thesis/dissertation. Each student should submit their own statement of methods.

**The following scale will be used to determine your final letter grade:**

A (92+); AB (87-91); B (82-86); BC (78-81); C (70-77); D (60-69); F (Below 60)

## **Guiding Questions**

The following questions are meant as a guide to help navigate us through the various topics, readings, and discussion sessions with CHE faculty participants over the course of the semester. Each session is oriented around a subset of the questions in this list, which should be taken as preliminary and evolving as we identify areas of interest and issues we would like to explore as a group.

### **Questions about Disciplines and Interdisciplinary Scholarship**

- What is a discipline, and how does one find one's bearings both within and between disciplinary spaces? How do our different disciplines conceive of time, space/place, and culture?
- What are the key ways we seek to know nature, both within and between academic disciplines, and in the rest of human life?
- What are the most interesting questions about past environmental change that tend to fall between the cracks when a single discipline tackles them on its own? (The answer to this question will likely vary from discipline to discipline, but are there also questions that tend to fall between the cracks for all disciplines?)
- What strategies are most effective when people with different disciplinary training try to work together on a common problem or project?
- In studying the environmental past and thinking about its relationship with the environmental present, how can we best resolve the creative tensions between scholarship and activism?
- How can we best communicate our scholarly and scientific insights beyond the boundaries of our discipline, both to our colleagues in other fields and to the larger public?

### **Questions about Methods and Evidence**

- What constitutes an interesting and important research question--and what shapes our judgment in deciding whether or not a question is "significant"?
- What different skills do we need for reading different kinds of scholarly communications? How does a scientific article, for instance, differ from an article in a humanities discipline like history or literature?
- What is evidence, and what constitutes forms of evidence in different disciplinary domains?
- What are the differences between quantitative and qualitative information, and how are they used differently across scholarly domains?
- How can interviews with people be incorporated into scholarly research in ways that are respectful of cultures, traditions, and the rights of human subjects?
- How do we tell stories, and what are the opportunities and hazards of narrative as a rhetorical form?
- How do we synthesize different analytical insights and different forms of knowledge to produce a unified argument?

Date	Theme(s)	Guest(s)	Readings (Posted to Canvas)	Assignments
1/30	Welcome	<a href="#">William Cronon</a> (History, Geography, Environmental Studies)	Weblinks: <a href="#">“The Trouble with Wilderness”</a> <a href="#">“Kennecott Journey”</a> <a href="#">“How we built this website” page from <i>Learning to Do Historical Research</i></a>	
2/6	Ecopoetics & Representing Nature and Nonhuman Others	Lynn Keller (English)	Ecopoetics and new ways of seeing the Anthropocene  Readings: Introduction and Chapter 4 <i>Recomposing Ecopoetics: North American Poetry of the Self-Conscious Anthropocene</i> (Keller, 2018)	Introduce Syllabus Assignment
2/13	Mixed Methods: Rhetoric and Science	Caroline Gottschalk Druschke (English)	Introduction, <i>The Places of Persuasion: Studying Rhetoric in the Field</i> (Rai and Gottschalk Druschke)  Proposal: Q-Rhetoric as Controlled Equivocation: Rehabilitating the Scientific Study of Subjectivity for Mixed Methods Environmental Collaboration (Gottschalk Druschke)	
2/17-2/18			<i>CHE Writing Retreat (optional)</i>	
2/20	Worldviews and Participant Observation	Larry Nesper (Anthropology and American Indian Studies)	Ojibwa Ontology, Behavior and World View Alfred Irving Hallowell Culture in History: Essays in Honor of Paul Radin,  Personal Equations: Reflections on the History of Fieldwork, with Special Reference to Sociocultural Anthropology (Kuklick)	Introduce <i>Edge Effects</i> Assignment  In-Class Workshop Syllabi

2/27	Guest Lecture: Please meet in 206 Ingraham Hall from 4:00- 6:00	Prof. Luis Garcia Pradanos	Talk title: "Counterhegemonic Cultures in Post-2008 Spain and The Pedagogy of Degrowth"	
3/6	Scholarship for public audiences  and  Theme TBA	Rebecca Summer (CHE Grad & Edge Effects Managing Editor)  and  Kata Beilin (Spanish and Portugese)	Edge Effects Documents (posted)  "Environmental Cultural Studies as Transdisciplinary Field; Latin American, Caribbean and Iberian Studies." Kata Beilin and Daniel Ares-López. (Intro <i>Environmental Cultural Studies Through Time</i> . Ed. Kata Beilin, Micah MacKay and Kathleen Connolly. Forthcoming in Vanderbilt UP).  "War between Soy and Amaranth; Interspecies Resistance to Transgenic Soy in Argentina." (Beilin and Suryanarayanan)  "How can Humanities Interventions Promote Progress in Environmental Sciences." Sally Kitch. <i>Humanities</i> , 2017, (6), 4. <a href="http://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/6/4/76/htm">http://www.mdpi.com/2076-0787/6/4/76/htm</a>	<b>Syllabus Assignment Due</b>
3/13	The Crisis of Positionality  and  The Writing Process	Shari Wilcox (CHE)	<i>Draft No 4: On the Writing Process</i> (McPhee)  Fieldwork Stories: Negotiating Positionality, Power and Purpose (Bourke, et al.)  Reflections on Researcher Identity and Power (Muhammad, et al)	
3/20	Studying the Nonhuman	Peter Boger (CHE)  and  Steel Wagstaff (CHE English)	"Looking at Animals" and "Performing Nature: Shamu at Sea World." In <i>Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World</i> . (Desmond)  "The Social Construction of Orangutans: An Ecotourist Experience." <i>Society and Animals</i> 3(Russell)	

3/27*			Spring Break	
4/3	<b>TBA</b>	Cathy Middlecamp (Nelson)  and  Sainath Suryanarayanan (Population Health Institute)	TBA  &  “Making Tracks,” <i>Seeing the Woods</i> Blog Post (Suryanarayanan)  Vanishing Bees: Science, Politics, and Honeybee Health (Suryanarayanan, et al.)  Intractosoma: Toward an Epistemology of Complexity Based on Intra-acting Bodies (Suryanarayanan)  The Human Sciences in a Biological Age (Rose)	
4/10*			Class will not meet in person; please see Canvas for assignment	
4/17	Cultural Landscapes and the Built Environment  and  Crafting your digital identity as a scholar	Anna Andrzejewski  and  Liz Anna Kozik	TBA	<b><i>Edge Effects-Style Essays Due</i></b>
4/24	Thinking with Animals  and  Crafting a Product for Public Radio	Gregg Mitman (History of Science, Medical History, Environmental Studies)  and  Marika Suval (Nelson Institute)	<i>Thinking with Animals</i> , Chapter TBA (Mitman)  <i>Reel Nature</i> , Chapter TBA (Mitman)	

5/1	Methodologies and Reflections			<p>Circulate draft of Methods Statements and be prepared to discuss others' statements</p> <p><b>Methods Statements Due 5/4</b></p>
5/14-5/17			<i>Place-Based Workshop</i>	