



ANTH 280A3-001 HUMANS & EXTINCTIONS SYLLABUS 2024

LECTURE TIME & PLACE: TUESDAY/THURSDAY 12:30–1:45PM EDDY 200

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Instructor: Andrew Du, Ph.D.

Email: Andrew.Du2@colostate.edu

Pronouns: he/him

Office Location: General Services Building 312

Office Hours: Wednesday 1:00–4:00pm,
or by appointment

Communication is very important to me, and I am available to you in person immediately before or after class and in person or virtually during office hours. If that is not convenient for you, you can either set up an alternative meeting time with me or post general, class-related questions to our CANVAS discussion board. If you need to contact me for more specific or personal questions, please email me. I will respond to you within 36 hours during the week and within 72 hours over the weekends. Please remember that email to faculty members should be conducted in a **professional manner** and is not the same as emailing/texting family or friends. When utilizing email for course communications and to ensure that I receive your email, please include:

- 1) a **subject** line with the following: **ANTH280_your LAST name_a short description of your question**. Otherwise, you run the risk of not receiving a reply as your email may be deleted or sent to spam
- 2) **sign** your name to the email (do not rely on the email address to identify you)

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Extinctions represent a contemporary challenge to our global society, the biodiversity of the planet, and the longevity of our species (*Homo sapiens*). Preparing students to understand the challenges of human-induced extinction and its impact on our world is an increasingly necessary educational endeavor. Towards this end, this course examines the patterns and proposed drivers of extinctions from the perspective of human (pre)history.

Topics include:

- the general biological “rules” surrounding evolution and extinction,
- history of extinctions, as inferred from the fossil record,
- extinctions of ancient human species (hominins) and the history of hominin-induced extinctions,
- the current anthropogenic sixth mass extinction,
- recent and ongoing extinction of cultures, religions, and ethnic groups,
- past, present, and future pandemics,
- ethical considerations surrounding extinctions,
- the imagined extinction of our own species.

The span of fields covered by this course is vast and includes evolutionary biology, ecology, geology, paleontology, atmospheric science, anthropology, demography, conservation biology, epidemiology, computer science, sociology, history, philosophy, and others. As such, this course will not do an in-depth analysis of each field but will instead cover each in a broad fashion, as these fields relate to the topic of extinction. Relatedly, this course will not emphasize the memorization of facts (e.g., which dinosaur species went extinct) but will instead emphasize critical thinking skills (e.g., critiquing the evidence and methods used to infer extinction, data literacy). The idea is to move away from a black and white understanding of extinction-related topics and to move towards a more nuanced mode of thinking that emphasizes provisional explanations and uncertainty.

COURSE GOALS

Upon the completion of this course, you should be able to:

1. define and understand extinction in the context of species and cultures,
2. outline the diversity of life and culture throughout Earth's history and the impacts of its extinction,
3. critique the various ways researchers analyze extinctions and their drivers,
4. analyze perspectives on extinction through critical thinking and (sometimes) quantitative reasoning,
5. describe the role of humans in past, present, and future extinctions,
6. evaluate the topic of extinctions in contemporary media and conversations.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK

***The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History.* Kolbert, E. ISBN: 0805092994**

Readings from other sources will be posted on Canvas.

CREDIT HOURS

This course is three (3) credit hours per week. Thus, in accordance with the definitions of the Federal and CSU Credit Hour, students should expect that each **credit hour in class** will require approximately **two to three hours** of effort per week to accomplish readings, out-of-class assignments, and memorization and learning of the materials in preparation for successful completion of the course requirements. Therefore, for this 3-credit hour course, you should study a minimum of **6–9 hours per week** according to CSU and Federal guidelines.

GRADING

As a college student, you are responsible for your education. As a student enrolled in this course, one of your responsibilities is to submit course work by or on the due dates listed in the Course Schedule. That said, I take my role as your instructor very seriously. I care about how well you do in this course and that you have a satisfying, rewarding experience. If you are having issues with any aspect of the class, do not hesitate to contact me as soon as possible, so we can discuss methods or strategies to improve or help your efforts in this course.

ASSIGNMENT	GRADE PERCENTAGE
Group Term Paper	30%
Group Presentation	15%
Packback Discussion Posts (13)	20%
Short Essays (6)	30%
In-Class Participation	5%
Total:	100%

ASSIGNMENT DETAILS

*All assignments are due on the mentioned dates at **11:59pm MT**.

Group term paper (30%) & presentation (15%): You will work in groups of 4–5 to complete a final project for this course. You may pick your own group, or I can randomly assign you to a group. The final project consists of (1) a term paper and (2) a PowerPoint presentation (details below). The project topic can be anything related to extinction (so you can pick a topic that is not covered in the course!). The final project consists of three parts:

1. Sort yourselves into groups of 4–5 and submit on Canvas:
 - a. who is in your group (I believe I have enabled a feature in Canvas for this),
 - b. one 4–5 sentence paragraph, describing your project topic.I will then approve of your topic, or you must pick another. This assignment is **due on March 25**.
2. Your group will create a 12–15 minute PowerPoint presentation, describing what you researched. Your presentation will:
 - a. cover background on your research topic/question, including why the topic is important and interesting,
 - b. clearly state your research topic/question,
 - c. describe what you found in your research,
 - d. summarize the implications of your findings, as they relate to the larger topic of extinctions.

Every person in the group must speak during the presentation. There will be ~5 minutes after each presentation for questions and comments. Presentations will take place **during the last two weeks of class (April 30 & May 2)**. I will randomly assign groups to presentation dates, which you will be notified of in class on April 30.

3. The purpose of your term paper is to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of a topic related to extinctions. Your group will submit **ONE** paper on your project topic. The structure of the paper will essentially be a fleshed-out version of your presentation (so focus on the four subpoints above). Your paper will be submitted through Canvas and is **due on May 8**. Formatting requirements for your paper are as follows:
 - a. 9–11 pages, double spaced. This does not include a title page if you choose to include one, the list of cited references, or any images/tables you choose to use.
 - b. Times New Roman font, with 1-inch margins and page numbers.
 - c. a list of at least 10 cited references. Try to include some primary, peer-reviewed literature (e.g., journal articles, chapters from edited volumes), but secondary sources are okay, given the 200-level of this course. For the list of cited references, use single-spacing and APA citation format.

More details about how to structure your term paper can be found on this assignment's corresponding Canvas page.

Packback discussion posts (20%): The Packback Questions platform will be used for online discussion about class topics. Specifically, I will pose a question/prompt, which you will then respond to. Packback Questions is an online curiosity community where you can be fearlessly curious and ask BIG questions about how what we are studying relates to life and the real world.

Writing thoughtful questions and answers on Packback will:

- Help you develop writing skills necessary for any career path,
- Reinforce the crucial skill of justifying thoughts and claims with credible evidence and then citing the evidence,

- Enhance critical thinking sought out by employers,
- Deepen your understanding of the course content by gaining diverse insights and perspectives from your peers.

Packback submissions will be due every **Monday at 11:59pm MT** (see *Course Schedule* below). Your posts will be based primarily on that week's lecture material, but because some of the course material is cumulative, feel free to refer to past lectures. To receive full points for a given week, you should submit the following before each deadline period:

- **ONE** response to my question/prompt with a minimum Curiosity Score of 50,
- **ONE** response to a student's post, with a minimum Curiosity Score of 50,
- Half credit will be provided for questions and responses that do not meet the minimum curiosity score.

Packback will provide you with real-time feedback as you write your Question and Responses, so you can see whether your posts need to be modified before submission in order to achieve a Curiosity Score of at least 50.

There are a total of **13** Packback Discussion assignments throughout the semester. At the end of the semester, I will drop your **TWO** lowest Packback grades. This means that you can skip two Packback discussion assignments if you are happy with your grade for the other 11.

Before you start posting, be sure to read the Community Guidelines

(<https://www.packback.co/resources/packback-questions-community-guidelines/>) found in the tutorial on Packback. If your post does not follow the guidelines, there is a chance that it will be removed, and you will not receive points for your post.

If you have any questions or concerns about Packback throughout the semester, please read their FAQ at <http://help.packback.co/>. If you need more help, contact their customer support team directly at help@packback.co.

Short essays (30%): There will be **six** short essay assignments throughout the semester, which will be written and submitted using Packback's Deep Dives feature (for assignment due dates, see *Course Schedule* below). Deep Dives is Packback's AI-powered platform for written assignments that provides instant feedback to students while they write. This will assist the grammar and logical flow of your essays.

Each essay will be **~300-500 words in length**, and their purpose is to foster critical thinking and explore certain class topics in depth. Three essays will be responses to the three documentaries we will watch in class (*Ancient Earth: Inferno*, *Extinction: The Facts*, and *Influenza 1918*; for documentary viewing dates, see *Course Schedule* below). Two essays will encourage you to engage with analytical reasoning when thinking about certain concepts in extinction (i.e., Gambler's Ruin and exponential growth). The last essay asks you to critically thinking about criteria for genocide and how they apply to one historical/current event of your choice.

In-class participation (5%): Throughout the semester, I will utilize multiple active learning exercises (e.g., writing down ideas/sketches in response to my queries, brainstorming in pairs/groups, answering my questions). None of these exercises are explicitly graded, but students should demonstrate a good faith effort in participating in these activities. Many of these exercises require that students voice their answers and opinions. I understand that speaking in front of others can be anxiety-inducing, but I will do my best to create an inclusive class environment, where all students feel comfortable speaking. Moreover, I do not expect that students speak every time, but they should attempt to speak at least some of the time (say, at least three

times throughout the semester). The activity that will require the most speaking and participation is the in-class discussion on whether extinctions are good or bad.

TECHNICAL SUPPORT

Need technical assistance with your online course material? Try the following:

- Visit Canvas Student support (<https://canvas.colostate.edu/student-support/>).
- Visit Technical Support services (<https://it.colostate.edu/help/>).
- Call 970-491-7276.
- Email [Help Desk Support](#).

GRADE DESCRIPTION

I **WILL NOT** curve individual assignment grades. If necessary, I may curve final grades. Our department does not do pluses or minuses.

Excellent Performance:	A Grade = 90-100%
Very Good Performance:	B Grade = 80-89.9%
Average Performance:	C Grade = 70-79.9%
Poor Performance:	D Grade = 60-69.9%
Failed Performance:	F Grade < 60%

ATTENDANCE & MAKE UP POLICY

Students should attend all classes for which they are registered to obtain maximum educational benefits. Absence or lateness does not excuse students from required course work. I do not take attendance, but as an adult, it is your choice to attend the class that you and/or your family are paying for. You are strongly encouraged to attend class, as you are unlikely to do well in this course by relying on the readings alone. If you miss class, it is your responsibility to collect the work that you missed.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

This course will adhere to the CSU Academic Integrity Policies and Guiding Principles as found in the General Catalog and the Student Conduct Code. <https://catalog.colostate.edu/general-catalog/academic-standards/academic-policies/>

Academic integrity is conceptualized as doing and taking credit for one's own work. Violations of the university's academic integrity standards include, but are not limited to:

- Cheating: includes using unauthorized sources of information, providing or receiving unauthorized assistance on any form of academic work, and engaging in any behavior specifically prohibited by the faculty member.
- Plagiarism: includes the copying of language, structure, ideas, or thoughts of another, and representing them as one's own without proper acknowledgment.
- Unauthorized Possession or Disposition of Academic Materials: includes the unauthorized selling or purchasing of examinations or other academic work, stealing another student's work, unauthorized entry to or use of material in a computer file, and using information from or possessing exams that an instructor did not authorize for release to students.

- Falsification: includes any untruth, either verbal or written, in one's academic work.
- Facilitation: includes knowingly assisting another to commit an act of academic misconduct.

At a minimum, violations will result in a grading penalty in this course and a report to the Office of Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services. <https://tilt.colostate.edu/integrity/pledge/>

CSU HONOR PLEDGE

Academic integrity lies at the core of our common goal: to create an intellectually honest and rigorous community. Because academic integrity, and the personal and social integrity of which academic integrity is an integral part, is so central to our mission as students, teachers, scholars, and citizens, I will ask that you affirm the CSU Honor Pledge as part of completing your work in this course:

"I have not given, received, or used any unauthorized assistance."

Further information about Academic Integrity is available here: <https://resolutioncenter.colostate.edu/academic-integrity/>

ON CHATGPT & AI-ASSISTED LEARNING

ChatGPT is a tool, and much like other tools, it can be used for good or bad. ChatGPT can serve as a virtual tutor, e.g., assisting those with learning disabilities or whose first language is not English. On the other hand, one can simply copy and paste text generated by ChatGPT, which amounts to plagiarism (see *Academic Integrity Policy* above). My philosophy is that you are all adults who are responsible for your own education. I will not police ChatGPT usage, so it is up to you whether you want to put in the work and maximize your learning experience or to undercut it with AI-assisted plagiarism.

UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

I am committed to the principle of universal learning. This means that our classroom, our virtual spaces, our practices, and our interactions should be as inclusive as possible. Mutual respect, civility, and the ability to listen and observe others carefully are crucial to universal learning.

It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength, and benefit. It is my intent to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture. Your suggestions are encouraged and appreciated. Please let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally or for other students or student groups. In addition, if any of our class meetings conflict with your religious events, please let me know so that I can make arrangements for you.

I welcome people with disabilities in my course. I want you to be successful, so please contact the Student Disability Center (<https://disabilitycenter.colostate.edu>). This must be done in a timely manner prior to implementation. A verifying memo from SDC is required before any accommodation is provided.

SUGGESTED STUDY METHODS

To be successful in this course you will need:

- Space: Establish a comfortable and well-organized physical workplace.

- Time management skills: Set personal study and "classroom" time.
- Organization skills: Print out all class material (modules, PowerPoints, assignments, additional resources, and any work you generate) and keep everything in a single location. Maintain electronic backups of all class materials.
- Communication skills: Demonstrate a willingness to interact with your instructor and classmates through email, discussion boards, and active participation in all class activities.
- Initiative: Seek help from your instructor and classmates; ask questions as they arise.
- Discipline: Pace yourself, complete all activities and assignments before the due date, and follow through on all class requirements to completion.

The more closely you adhere to the recommendations above, the greater your chances of having a successful semester and a rewarding experience.

COURSE SCHEDULE

As instructor of this course, I reserve the right to modify topics, readings, assignments, etc. but will notify you of changes at least one week in advance. Readings are found on Canvas, where they are organized by week.

UNIT 1 – EXTINCTIONS IN DEEP TIME		
Topics & assignment deadlines (all due at 11:59pm MT)		
Week 1	16-Jan	Class cancelled due to University closure
	18-Jan	Course Overview & Introduction to Extinction
Week 2	22-Jan	Packback Post 1
	23-Jan	The Rules of Life & Evolution
	25-Jan	The Rules of Extinction
Week 3	29-Jan	Packback Post 2 Short Essay 1: Exploring Gambler's Ruin
	30-Jan	Primer on the Fossil Record & Deep Time
	1-Feb	Background Extinction & The Big Five Mass Extinctions
Week 4	5-Feb	Packback Post 3
	6-Feb	Causes & Consequences of Extinctions
	8-Feb	IN-CLASS DOCUMENTARY: <i>Ancient Earth: Inferno</i>
Week 5	12-Feb	Packback Post 4 Short Essay 2: <i>Ancient Earth</i> documentary response
	13-Feb	The Hominin Family Tree & Extinctions of Hominin Species
	15-Feb	Hominin-Caused Extinctions & The End-Pleistocene Extinction
UNIT 2 – HUMAN-CAUSED EXTINCTIONS		
Week 6	19-Feb	Packback Post 5
	20-Feb	Extinctions in Human History
	22-Feb	Introduction to the Anthropocene & The Sixth Mass Extinction
Week 7	26-Feb	Packback Post 6
	27-Feb	Overpopulation & Resource Depletion
	29-Feb	Pollution, Climate Change, & Habitat Degradation
Week 8	4-Mar	Packback Post 7 Short Essay 3: Understanding Exponential Growth
	5-Mar	IN-CLASS DOCUMENTARY: <i>Extinction: The Facts</i>
	7-Mar	Invasive Species & Human-Wildlife Conflict
	9-Mar	SPRING BREAK!!!
Week 9	19-Mar	NO CLASS (professor at conference)
	21-Mar	NO CLASS (professor at conference)
Week 10	25-Mar	Packback Post 8

		Short Essay 4: Extinction documentary response Pick Groups & Paper Topic Description Due
	26-Mar	Conservation, Rewilding, & De-Extinction
	28-Mar	IN-CLASS DISCUSSION: Are extinctions good or bad?
UNIT 3 – EXTINCTION OF HUMANS		
Week 11	1-Apr	Packback Post 9
	2-Apr	Cultural Extinction
	4-Apr	Genocide
Week 12	8-Apr	Packback Post 10 Short Essay 5: Applying genocide criteria
	9-Apr	Diseases & Pandemics
	11-Apr	IN-CLASS DOCUMENTARY: Influenza 1918
Week 13	15-Apr	Packback Post 11 Short Essay 6: Influenza documentary response
	16-Apr	The Atomic Bomb & Nuclear Extinction
	18-Apr	Nanotechnology & Artificial Intelligence
Week 14	22-Apr	Packback Post 12
	23-Apr	The Preservation of Our Species & Ethical Considerations
	25-Apr	Our Imagined Extinction & Beyond
Week 15	29-Apr	Packback Post 13
	30-Apr	Course Wrap-up & Group Project Presentations
	2-May	Group Project Presentations Continued
Week 16 (Final Exams Week)	8-May	NO CLASS Final group paper due