



HIST 470: World Environmental History;

Or, the Age of Humans

Dr. Michael Childers

Eddy, Room 200

Dr. Michael Childers

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### **Course Overview**

At the start of the century, Nobel Prizing winning atmospheric chemist Paul Crutzen asserted that the planet had entered into a new geological epoch – the Anthropocene. In the years since, historians have grappled with the term, using it to describe human’s oversized influence on the planet’s environment. Delving into the past five hundred years of global history, this course will explore whether the Anthropocene is an appropriate concept in understanding and explaining world environmental history.

In this course, students will:

- Develop basic political, economic, social and cultural, diplomatic, and intellectual knowledge of World Environmental History
- Learn how to think historically by exploring change over time, building historical context, and analyzing causality, contingency, and complexity
- Define and then support a framework of historical thought

### **Required Readings**

- Thomas Andrews, *Coyote Valley: Deep History in the High Rockies*
- Kate Brown, *Plutopia: Nuclear Families, Atomic Cities, and the Great Soviet and American Plutonium Disasters*
- Diana K. Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa*
- David Igler, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush*
- J.R. McNeill, *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1945*

## Required Style Book:

- Purdue Owl Chicago Manual of Style:  
[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research\\_and\\_citation/chicago\\_manual\\_17th\\_edition/cmos\\_formatting\\_and\\_style\\_guide/chicago\\_manual\\_of\\_style\\_17th\\_edition.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/cmos_formatting_and_style_guide/chicago_manual_of_style_17th_edition.html)

## Assignments

Reading reflection worksheets (5 point each)

Students will fill out and submit a worksheet for each assigned reading on Canvas. Worksheets are available on canvas and are due **the night before class**. They are meant to foster discussion and understanding of topics covered in class lectures and discussions.

Anthropocene Paper (50 Points)

Students will write a 1,000 word essay discussion the use of the concept of the Anthropocene in viewing history. Essays will be based upon assigned course readings plus one outside source. Essays will define the Anthropocene, provide an argument on how to employ it in framing world history, and explain its limitations in framing world history.

Coyote Valley Review (50 Points)

Students will write a 1,000 word review of *Coyote Valley: Deep History in the High Rockies*. Reviews must identify the book's thesis, discuss how Andrews' supports his central argument, and provide an explanation on how his thesis helps frame world environmental history.

Comparative Book Review (100 Points)

Student's final assignment will be a comparative essay of 2,500 words. Students will define the Anthropocene, and then use evidence from the *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome*, *The Great Ocean*, and *Plutopia* in exploring global environmental history and the concept of the Anthropocene.

## Attendance

Students will attend all class sessions. **You will not succeed in this class unless your attendance is perfect or near-perfect.** The professor reserves the right to cancel a physical class meeting in case of emergency.

## Time Expectations

Students are expected to spend at least 2 hours working on the course for every contact hour within the classroom. This means you should be spending 6 hours per week on this course beyond class time.

## Academic Integrity

You are responsible for ensuring that your work is above any suspicion of plagiarism. If you plagiarize in your work you could lose credit for it, fail the assignment, and fail the course.

Plagiarism could also result in expulsion from the university. Each instance of plagiarism, classroom cheating, and other types of academic dishonesty will be addressed according to the principles published in the CSU General Catalog (<http://catalog.colostate.edu/general-catalog/policies/students-responsibilities/#academicintegritymisconduct> ) and the Student Conduct Code (<https://resolutioncenter.colostate.edu/conduct-code/>). The penalty for plagiarism or any other infraction of academic integrity is automatic failure of the class, and your case will be reported to Conflict Resolution and Student Conduct Services. In short, don't cheat. Leave that to Tom Brady and Bill Belichick.

## Spring 2019 Schedule

### Unit One

#### Week One

January 22 - Introduction to Global Environmental History

January 24 - What is Environmental History, and What Can it do for Us?

#### Week Two

January 29 – What is the Anthropocene?

Required Readings: Paul Crutzen, Eugene F. Stoermer, “We Have Entered the Anthropocene” – Find on Canvas in Week One Reading Module

January 31 – What is Environmental History?

Required Readings: William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative” – Find on Canvas in Week One Reading Module

#### Week Three

February 5 – Anthropocene Paper workshop – Bring clippings/ideas to class

Required Reading: *The Great Acceleration* Introduction and Chapter 1

February 7 – Global Environmental History: The First 150,000 Years

Required Reading: *The Great Acceleration* Chapter 2

#### Week Four

February 12 – The Ancient World

Required Reading: *The Great Acceleration* Chapter 3

February 14 – Medieval World, 500-1500 CE

Required Reading: *The Great Acceleration* Chapter 4

**Anthropocene Paper due on Canvas**

## Unit Two

### Week Five

February 19 – Thinking Deeply: Deep History

Required Reading: *Coyote Valley* Introduction and Chapter 1

February 21– The Modern World 1500 - 1900

Required Reading: *Coyote Valley* Chapters 2 & 3

### Week Six

February 26 – The Postmodern World (Anthropocene?)

Required Reading: *Coyote Valley* Chapters 4 & 5

February 28 No Class Meeting

### Week Seven

March 5– The Columbian Exchange: Colonialism and Postcolonialism

Required Reading: *Coyote Valley* Chapters 6 & 7

March 7– Technology and the Environment

Required Reading: *Coyote Valley* Chapters 8, 9 & conclusion

### Week Eight

March 12– The Tropics

Required Reading: *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome* Chapter 1, 2 & 3

March 14 – Deserts

Required Reading: *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome* Chapter 4, 5 & 6

***Coyote Valley* Book Review Due on Canvas**

### **Spring Break**

## Unit Three

### Week Nine

March 26 – Grasslands

Required Reading: *The Great Ocean* Chapter Introduction & 1

March 28 – Forests

Required Reading: *The Great Ocean* Chapter 2 & 3

### Week Ten

April 2 – Rivers and the World

Required Reading: *The Great Ocean* Chapter 4

April 4 – War and the Global Environment  
Required Reading: *The Great Ocean* Chapter 5

Week Eleven

April 9 – Global Cities  
Required Reading: *The Great Ocean* Chapter 6  
April 11 – No Class Meeting

Week Twelve

April 16 – Industrial Agriculture  
Required Reading: *Plutopia* Part One  
April 18 – Animals and Environmental History  
Required Reading: *Plutopia* Part Two

Week Thirteen

April 23 – The Nuclear Age and the Cold War  
Required Reading: *Plutopia* Part Three  
April 25 – Climate Change and History  
Required Reading: *Plutopia* Part Four

Week Fourteen

April 30 – Is Geologic Time Work in Doing History?  
May 7 – Closing Thoughts

Week Fifteen

May 14 – **Comparative essay due on Canvas**