UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

HPS4106: TECHNOLOGY, ENVIRONMENT, AND HISTORY

Spring 2020
TUE 2-4pm
Location: EM 105

Prof. Rebecca Woods
Room 313, Victoria College
rebecca.woods@utoronto.ca

Office Hours: T 10am-noon or by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Environmental history takes as its foundational premise that human beings shape and alter their environment, and that the rest of non-human nature, in turn, influences societies and cultures the world over. A recent generation of scholars working at the intersection of the histories of environment and of technology have further demonstrated the degree to which technologies mediate this reciprocal relationship. This course will introduce students to both the histories of human-environmental-technological interaction, on the one hand, and the historiography of this nexus on the other. The focus will be on transnational flows and interconnections between and beyond “Western” societies since circa 1800, from toxic places and toxic bodies, to nuclear energy, climate change, environmental justice, and the concept of the Anthropocene. Students will have the opportunity to build significant independent research projects over the course of the semester, with guidance on methods, archival research, and best practices for academic writing built into the structure of the course.

READINGS:

We read a book a week in this seminar. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with all the contents of the whole of the assigned text. Students are encouraged to consult Paul N. Edwards’s guide, “How to Read a Book” (posted to Quercus) for suggested strategies for doing so. Books are available for purchase at the U of T bookstore and on reserve at Pratt Library. Required articles are available on the course website.

Further readings for each theme we address in this course are listed at the end of the syllabus. These titles are intended to provide a sense of the scope of the field, and to offer a starting point for students who may wish to pursue a particular theme or approach in greater depth.

COURSE WEBSITE:

This course uses Quercus (q.utoronto.ca). You are expected to log in regularly to access course materials and receive announcements.
ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING:

Participation (40%)
Discussion (20%): As a graduate-level seminar, all students are expected to prepare for and participate actively in class discussions. Grading will be based primarily on quality of contribution to discussion and only secondarily on quantity. Thoughtful, productive, and respectful engagement is expected from all members of the seminar.
Socratic guidance (10%):
Each week, students will take turns introducing the readings and guiding class discussion. Students will be expected to offer brief preliminary remarks before guiding their peers through a given reading or readings by the Socratic method. Sign up for presentations will take place at the first class meeting. Students are encouraged to meet with me in advance of their presentations to discuss teaching strategies/approaches.
Collaborative Reading Journal (10%)
For five of our eleven reading-based seminar meetings, students will contribute to a collaborative online reading journal in the form of Quercus discussions. Students may choose which weeks to post, and will be expected to post a paragraph or two of reflections on the reading(s). The aim here is to raise questions or points of analysis for discussion, not to comprehensively summarize the readings. Students are encouraged to respond to each others’ posts and to generate discussion threads in advance of our in-class meetings.

Primary Source Analysis (10%)
Based on the class visit to Fisher Rare Books/UTARMS, students will chose a primary source to analyze using concepts from the course and secondary readings from the syllabus. Detailed instructions will be posted to Quercus. Due January 21 (Session 3).

Research Essay (50%)
Students will undertake original research in this course based on a topic, theme, question, event, or controversy of their choice.
Proposal (15%): Students will offer a brief introduction to their topic; lay out their main line(s) of inquiry; outline their expected argument; and describe the sources to be used, both those on that are on the course syllabus and those that are not. Due in class on February 25 (Session 7). Half of Session 7 will be devoted to a peer workshop.
Essay (35%): Based on the proposal submitted in session 7, students will write an essay of approximately 8,000 words. Due April 9 via Quercus. This is a firm deadline: in keeping with IHPST’s graduate guidelines, no extensions or incompletes will be granted except in case of family or medical emergency, or other valid excuse.

PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:
Academic integrity will be taken very seriously in this course. All students are expected to abide by U of T's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters. Please familiarize yourself with it.

ACCESSIBILITY SERVICES:
This course welcomes students with diverse learning styles and needs. Please contact Accessibility Services (https://www.studentlife.utoronto.ca/as) to coordinate any academic accommodation arrangements.
**COURSE OUTLINE AND READINGS**

**JAN 7—1. INTRODUCTION: AT THE INTERSECTION OF ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY**

**REQUIRED:**

**JAN 14—2. THE RECORD**

NB: CLASS MEETS IN FISHER RARE BOOKS LIBRARY

**REQUIRED:**

**JAN 21—3. (THE) ANTHROPOCENE**

**PRIMARY SOURCE ANALYSIS DUE**

**REQUIRED:**

**JAN 28—4. ANTHROPOCENE(S)**

**REQUIRED:**
- Kathryn Yussof, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2019).

**FEB 4—5. MODERNISM HERE...**

**REQUIRED:**
**FEB 11—6. MODERNISM THERE**

**REQUIRED:**

**FEB 18—READING WEEK: NO CLASS**

**FEB 25—7. MODERNISM EVERYWHERE**

**PROPOSAL WORKSHOP**

**REQUIRED:**

**MAR 3—8. TOXICITY**

**REQUIRED:**

**MAR 10—9. BEING NUCLEAR**

**PROPOSAL DUE**

**REQUIRED:**

**MAR 17—10. DISASTER**

**REQUIRED:**

**MAR 24—11. BUGS, THEN AND NOW**

**REQUIRED:**

**MARCH 31—12. RESEARCH SYMPOSIUM**

**NO READING**

**APRIL 9—FINAL PAPER DUE**
**FURTHER READINGS:**

**ANTHROPOCENES**

**ENVIROTECH**

**MODERNISMS**

**TOXICITY**

**NATURE, LAND & PLACE**

**ORGANISMS**