The Rise of the Modern City:
An Environmental Perspective
T-Th 3-4:15 pm, Bloomberg 275
AS 100.318 – Spring 2020

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Office hours: Tuesdays, 4:30-6:30 pm, and by appointment, Gilman 346

Course Description

In the height of the Summer, Australia has been battling raging bushfires for weeks when
the controversy around Sydney’s fireworks hit the headlines of the world major newspapers
a few days before New Year’s Eve. Some authorities and communities begun to see the
fireworks as an unnecessary risk while others refused the mere idea of a cancellation. For
the latter, Sydney’s fireworks are to Sydney what the Eiffel Tower is for Paris. As the
confrontation peaked, the opponents, notably the deputy premier John Barilaro, said that
cancelling Sydney’s event would be a “very easy decision.” Unheard, Barilaro took on the
social media and wrote that “The risk is too high and we must respect our exhausted RFS
[Rural Fire Service] volunteers. If regional areas have had fireworks banned, then let’s not
have two classes of citizens.” (“Sydney New Year’s Eve Fireworks will Go ahead despite
Deputy Premier’s Call to Cancel the Event,” The Guardian, 12/30/2019). In a few words,
Deputy Barilaro summarized the risks urban environment prey on their
environments in
the times of global change, the role modern societies play in triggering “natural”
catastrophes, and how unequal our societies.

The Sydney’s controversy is far from being an isolated event. Such disruptions are
becoming part of the globe’s daily life because of climate change and global warming,
which international organizations, state leaders, and activists are trying to reverse or, at the
very minimum, to slow down.

Since the 1970s, historians have also formulated a response to environmental changes in
creating new field of research: environmental history. In a pioneer article, the American
historian Roderick Nash defined the agenda of environmental history, which “would refer
to the past contacts of man with his total habitat […] This point of view implied a criticism
of the practice of restricting ‘history’ to human events.”1 Although Nash’s definition first
excluded built environments, like cities, the field of environmental history has since been
transformed and historians have merged together urban and environmental history to study
the rise of the modern city in the West, mainly in the US and in Europe since 1750s.

1 Roderick Nash, “American Environmental History: A New Teaching Frontier.” Pacific Historical Review,
This discussion-based course adopts an environmental history perspective to understand the challenges of urbanization between 1750 to the 2000s. This approach allows us to analyze how urban dwellers not only construct a built environment and replaced so-called natural environments, but how these transformations create new spaces that generate novel forms of administration, conflicts, habits, representations of nature, and, finally, new environmental disruptions. The aim of this course is to explore the social, cultural, and political relations that urban dwellers maintained with their environment, and how processes such as modernity, the Industrial Revolution and birth of capitalism, post-WWII reconstruction, and globalization shaped these developments.

The course is divided into three sections. The first one will familiarize students with the field of environmental history. We will study its objectives, approaches, and methods. The second section of the class will be devoted to the creation of the modern city. We will study the processes through which early modern cities were modernized and industrialized, and the new environmental disruptions industrialization and modernization created. In the last section of the class, we will analyze the challenges post-industrial cities have faced since the 1960s. We will analyze the response of governments and activists to environmental injustice and privatization of natural resources, such as water.

Throughout the semester, we will read the work of preeminent historians, but also of geographers, historians of art, and political scientists. Class conversations will focus not only on how each reading contributes to our understanding, but also on how to evaluate an author’s argument. Students will learn a variety of methods for doing environmental history by examining what primary sources an author draws on and how the author uses these primary sources to construct an argument. We will also use primary sources – novels, paintings, pamphlets, movies – to help us understand how to write an environmental history of modern cities.

**Course Learning Objectives**

This discussion-based course has five major learning objectives:

- To familiarize students with the emerging field of environmental history and its methodological and historiographical debates
- To assess secondary literature
- To read, analyze, and interpret primary sources with an environmental history perspective
- Archival Research
- To learn that the environment is also a production of political, economic, social, and culture discourses
- To understand that contemporary environmental concerns are not only products of the post-WWII era and the 1970s, but that they are also issues arising from the first metropoles of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century
This syllabus serves as a contract between you and me that explains what I expect of you, and what you may expect of me. By enrolling in this class, you accept the terms laid out below. Please read them carefully. In the unlikely case that I need to make changes to the syllabus, I will provide as much advanced notice as possible. Please allow up to 24 hours for responses to email inquiries during the semester. Whenever you have any procedural concerns or questions about rules and formalities, please let me know. Please declare your preferred name and pronoun.

Required Texts and Estimated Cost
Assigned readings should be completed by the start of the week for which they were assigned. Ultimately, it is the student’s responsibility to obtain the texts for this class, either from the library (reserve or Borrow Direct), electronic reserves, or Barnes & Noble. Any trouble accessing one or more of the readings should be communicated to me the week prior.

Students are encouraged to purchase the following book and movies:

For historical and reference background, you can consult the following textbooks (available on class reserve or online):
- *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History*, Andrew C. Isenberg ed. 2014

Assignments
Participation: 25%

The class will meet twice a week for a discussion-based class focused on the week’s readings. You are expected to do the readings, come prepared and participate in discussion throughout the course. You shall engage with the assigned material as well as with your fellow students during discussion sessions and group work. Common rules of courtesy apply.

At the beginning of each class, we will recap the main points of our previous session in order to launch the session discussion. If you hesitate to speak out in larger groups feeling unprepared or inadequate this is an excellent opportunity to contribute to the general
discussion. Just revisit your notes from the last meeting before class. Whenever you have questions or need clarification, please speak out.

Attendance is the most basic requirement for a college education. If you miss more than three classes unexcused/ without legitimate reasons (such as conflicting athletic, ROTC, academic obligations) you will not receive a passing grade.

Reading Notes: 20%

For 6 sessions, you are expected to submit a short reading note (no more than a page double-spaced) on one of the secondary literature assigned to blackboard by 4 pm of the day the class meets. Please submit your note as a discussion thread for each week. The reading note is to state in your own words

- The topic
- Research question
- Main argument
- A general review comment
- The points you would like to discuss in class

The goal is to summarize and analyze the content of the article, identify the disagreements the author may have with another scholar, his/her method, but not memorize details. Reading notes will help you with the first assignment. You can only read other entries once you have submitted your own.

Your final grade will be calculated on your five best reading notes.

Essay I: 25% (6 pages max.) DUE ON MARCH 14, 2020 BEFORE 11:59 PM
Submit with Turnitin on Blackboard
For the first written assignment, you will be asked to write a Book Review


We will discuss in class how to review a book before the assignment is due.

Essay II: 30% (10 pages max.) DUE ON MAY 10, 2020 BEFORE 11:59 PM
Submit with Turnitin on Blackboard
Your second Essay due at the end of the term will be a Research Paper. Your final paper will be an original research paper. A peer-reviewed session will be organized on Week 12.
To help you, your second assignment will be broke down in several instances:

- **Research Paper Topic** and primary source for your Final Research Paper: **1 page.**
  - Due on April 1, 2020 before 11:59 pm
- **Bibliography draft**: **2 pages.** Due on April 9, 2020 before 11:59 pm

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**All Written Assignments - Formal Requirements**

- normal margins, 12 pt. font size, font: Times New Roman or similar.
- add a title to any written assignment (give it character)
- submit via turnitin on blackboard
- add page numbers
- list of references/bibliography on separate page (doesn’t count towards page max)
- add your name and basic course information
- file names: ALWAYS add your last name (no spaces in file names)
- check the rules for academic integrity

In addition to the formal requirements, written assignments are graded based on the primary and secondary sources consulted, clarity of argument, style of writing, and organization.

**Grading:**

- ✓ 25% Participation
- ✓ 20% Reading Notes
- ✓ 25% Essay I (Book Review)
- ✓ 30% Essay II (Research paper)

**Grade Scale (JHU standard):**

- 95-100: A
- 90-94: A-
- 87-89: B+
- 83-86: B
- 80-82: B-
- 77-79: C+
- 73-76: C
- 70-72: C-
- 67-69: D+
- 63-66: D
- 60-62: D-
Course Policies
The course meets twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Papers
Papers should be turned in Turnitin on Blackboard on the due date before 11:59. If you are more than one day late, I will subtract half of a letter grade (e.g.: A- to B+). Extensions may be granted at my discretion, but students must contact me before the assignment is due. Plagiarism is a violation of academic integrity and is not tolerated in this course. For best practices on avoiding plagiarism, see plagiarism.org.

Ethical Requirements
Here I endorse and apply the “Violations of Academic Integrity” section of the KSAS and Whiting Undergraduate Academic Ethics Board: “Undergraduate students enrolled in the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences or the Whiting School of Engineering at the Johns Hopkins University assume a duty to conduct themselves in a manner appropriate to the University’s mission as an institution of higher learning. Students are obliged to refrain from acts which they know, or under circumstances have reason to know, violate the academic integrity of the University. Violations of academic ethics include, but are not limited to: cheating; plagiarism; submitting the same or substantially similar work to satisfy the requirements of more than one course without permission; submitting as one’s own the same or substantially similar work of another; knowingly furnishing false information to any agent of the University for inclusion in academic records; falsification, forgery, alteration, destruction or misuse of official University documents or seal.”

Homewood Policy on Disabilities:
If you are a student with a disability or believe you might have a disability that requires accommodations, please contact Student Disability Services at 410-516-4720 or in-person at 385 Garland Hall. Office of Student Disability Services, 385 Garland, (410) 516-4720 studentdisabilityservices@jhu.edu.

Office Hours
Office Hours will be held on Tuesdays 4:30-6:30 pm in Gilman Hall 301.
Course Schedule

Week 1: What is Environmental History?
01/28: Welcome!
Students will be handed the syllabus, which we will read together and review.

01/30: Environmental History and Urban History


Week 2: The Challenges of the Early Modern City
02/04: The Premise of the Early Modern City

Primary Source Reading:

02/06: Reforming Early Modern Urban Environments

Week 3: Urbanization and Industrialization
02/11: Industrialization
The Rise of the Modern City: An Environmental Perspective, Syllabus, de Font-Réaulx


02/13: Intensification of the Urbanization


Primary Source:


Week 4: Water and Sewage for the Metropolis

02/18: Water and Sewage


Primary Source:


02/20: Visit to the Library Special Collection (3:00-4:30 pm)

Week 5: Building Infrastructure

02/25: Train and Transportation


Primary Source:

- *The Lumières Brothers, Arrival of a Train at La Ciotat, 1895*
The Rise of the Modern City: An Environmental Perspective, Syllabus, de Font-Réaulx


**Week 6: Pollution**

**03/03: From Miasma Era**


Primary Source:


**03/05: to Germ Theory**


Peter Thorsheim, *Inventing Pollution: Coal, Smoke, and Culture in Britain since 1800*. “Chapter 3: Pollution Redefined”

- [https://www.dhr.history.vt.edu/modules/eu/mod01_nature/images/Punch1Nov1890p206_large.jpg](https://www.dhr.history.vt.edu/modules/eu/mod01_nature/images/Punch1Nov1890p206_large.jpg)

**Week 7: Nature and the City**

**03/10: Nature in Early America**


**03/12: City and their environment in the turn of the 1850s**


Primary Source:

- [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amrhtml/conshome.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amrhtml/conshome.html) [browse]

Optional: Georges Perkins Marsh, *Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action* (1864)

***Book Review due on March 14, 2020***

***03/16-03/22: Spring Break***
Week 8: Inclusion and Exclusion
03/24: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Modern City

Primary Source:
- [https://cambridge.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/cambridge?a=d&d=Tribune19031010-01.2.53&e=-------en-20--1--txt-txIN-------](https://cambridge.dlconsulting.com/cgi-bin/cambridge?a=d&d=Tribune19031010-01.2.53&e=-------en-20--1--txt-txIN-------)

03/26: Deploying the Modern City in Colonial Spaces

Week 9: Suburbs
03/31: Urban Sprawl: the Creation of the Suburbs

Primary Sources:

**Research topic and primary source due on April 1, 2020**

04/02: New Dependences
The Rise of the Modern City: An Environmental Perspective, Syllabus, de Font-Réaulx


Primary Sources:
- [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCIZqfnWqmc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sCIZqfnWqmc)

**Week 10: Post-Industrial City**

04/07: Urban Crisis of the post 1970


Primary Source:

04/09: A Reaction: Environmental Activism


**Bibliography Due on April 9, 2020**

**Week 11: Environmental Justice**

04/14: Environmental Justice and Injustice


04/16: Race, Class, and Environmental Injustice


Primary Source:
- [https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice](https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice)
Week 12: Globalization and Privatization
04/21: Global Capitalism and the Environment (1): Privatization
   Arild Vatn, “The Environment as a Commodity,” Environmental Values, Vol.9, No. 4, pp. 493-509

   Primary Source Reading:

04/23: Global Capitalism and the Environment (2): Consequences
   Sam Bozzo, Blue Gold Water Wars, 2009 (on Kanopy: https://jhu.kanopy.com/video/blue-gold-world-water-wars-0)

Week 13: Cities and Climate Change
04/28: “Risk Societies”

   Primary Source:

04/30: New Dangers, Global Warming: Climate Change

   Primary Sources:
   ➢ https://apps.npr.org/ellicott-city/
   ➢ Fridays for Future

**FINAL ASSIGNMENT DUE ON MAY 10, 2020 BEFORE 11:59 PM**