79-104, Global Histories  
Spring 2020  
Course Description

79-104  Global Histories  
Lecture 1  Global Histories: Environment and Empire: The Making of the Modern World  
Lecture 2  Global Histories: Environment and Empire: The Making of the Modern World

Human activity transcends political, geographical, and cultural boundaries. From wars to social movements, technological innovations to environmental changes, our world has long been an interconnected one. Acquiring the ability to understand such transnational and even worldwide processes is an indispensable part of any college education. This course provides students with an opportunity to develop the skills and perspectives needed to understand the contemporary world through investigating its global history. All sections are comparable in their composition of lectures and recitations, required amounts of reading, and emphasis on written assignments as the central medium of assessment. The sections all aim to help students: (1) master knowledge through interaction with the instructors, reading material, and other students, (2) think critically about the context and purpose of any given information, (3) craft effective verbal and written arguments by combining evidence, logic, and creativity, and (4) appreciate the relevance of the past in the present and future.

79-104  Global Histories: Environment and Empire: The Making of the Modern World  
9 units

Lecture 1, Mondays and Wednesdays, 12:30PM-1:20PM  A. Ramey  
Recitations -- Fridays, 9:30AM-10:20AM, 10:30AM-11:20AM, 11:30AM-12:20PM, 12:30PM-1:20PM, 1:30PM-2:20PM

Lecture 2, Mondays and Wednesdays, 1:30PM-2:20PM  A. Ramey  
Recitations -- Fridays, 10:30AM-11:20AM, 11:30AM-12:20PM, 12:30PM-1:20PM, 1:30PM-2:20PM, 2:30PM-3:20PM

This course begins with a simple question: how can we make sense of the world we live in? Our global society can be at times chaotic, confusing, and contradictory. By analyzing the past to explore where we came from and how we got here, we will construct a narrative framework that can at least explain some of what we see. This course combines insights from environmental history with economic and political history to give a fresh account of the making of the modern world. We’ll ask new questions, such as how humans have interacted and reacted to animals, natural resources, and the climate, to help explain major events from the past 500 years of human history. The two most important developments that we will analyze from an ecological standpoint are the rise of global capitalism and the emergence of a world system divided into nation-states where sovereignty rests, at least in theory, with the people. In addition to those new questions about the environment, we’ll revisit familiar topics such as politics, science, religion, technology, and warfare to explain how the early 21st century world is a unique product of the interactions between human institutions and the global environment.