Instructor: Prof. Peder Anker  
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Office hours: Wednesdays 9:30-11:30.  
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Course Description

This seminar will provide an overview of the history of the environmental sciences from ancient times to Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*. We will explore ways in which naturalists and lay people came to know the environment and in what ways nature could mobilize social and moral authority. With a focus on the history of the European environmental problems from the ancient Greeks, Middle Ages, to colonial and Modern experiences, we will survey different ways of knowing nature. Where did the idea of nature as “designed” come from? How did natural historians and philosophers unveil nature’s secrets? What role did scientists play in the colonial experiences? How could Modern scholars imagine “improving” the face of the Earth? These broad questions will guide us in our readings of a series of primary sources, including great and not-so-great books by Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Pliny, St. Francis, Evelyn, Grew, Bacon, Linnaeus, Buffon, Jefferson, Rousseau, Malthus and Darwin, as well as largely forgotten texts by anonymous authors and colonial explorers.

Course Objectives

The objective of this course is to learn something about the entangled history of our relationships to the natural world from ancient times to the work of Charles Darwin.

Required Texts/Online Resources


Plato, *Critias*, Benjamin Jowett (trs.).

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, John Bostock and H.T. Riley (trs.) 1855.

Katherine Wentworth Rinne (et.al.), *Aquae Urbis Romae: The Waters of the City of Rome*.


**Required Assignments**

There will be three 10 page papers due October 1, October 29, and December 12. The papers have to engage primary sources discussed in class. Late papers are not accepted.

**Other Course Requirements**

This is a zero-footprint “green” course. All papers must be submitted electronically.

**Grading**

Mandatory attendance
25 % Course participation
25 % 1st paper “The Ancient Paper”
25 % 3rd paper “The Modern Paper”
Statement on Academic Integrity
"As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website."¹

Session by Session Details:

Sept. 3  Tuesday: Introductory meeting
         No readings

Sept. 5  Thursday: Ancient Environments: Greece

Sept. 10 Tuesday: Ancient environments: Hippocrates

Sept. 12 Thursday: Ancient environments: Plato
         Plato, *Critias*, entire.

Sept. 17 Tuesday: Ancient environments: Aristotle

Sept. 19 Thursday: Ancient Environments: Rome

Sept. 24 Tuesday: Ancient Environments: Waters of Rome
         Rinne (et.al.), *Aquae Urbis Romae: The Waters of the City of Rome* (website)

Sept. 26 Thursday: Ancient Environment: Pliny

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, selections (geography)

**Oct. 1**  
**Tuesday: Ancient environmental problems: Pliny**  

*1st paper due! “The Ancient Paper”*  

Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, selections (animals and plants)

**Oct. 3**  
**Thursday: Medieval Environments: St. Francis of Assisi**


St. Francis of Assisi, “Sermon to the Birds” and “Canticle of the Sun”


**Oct. 8**  
**Tuesday: Medieval Environments: Natural History**


**Oct. 10**  
**Thursday: New Environments: West India**

Anonymous, *Histoire Naturelle Des Indes*, 16th century (late), entire

**Oct. 15**  
**Fall recess! No class.**

**Oct. 17**  
**Thursday: Early Modern Environments: Forestry**


**Oct. 22**  
**Tuesday: Early Modern Environments: Bacon**


**Oct. 24**  
**Thursday: Early Modern Environments: Grew**

Oct. 29  Tuesday: Rare Library Visit

_2nd paper due! “The Medieval/Early Modern Paper”_

The Fales Library and Special Collections, Bobst
70 Washington Square South, 3rd Fl.

We will look at:
- Pliny, _Naturalis historia_, (Rotterdam, 1668-69).
- John Ogilby, _America: being the latest and most accurate description of the new world_, (London, by the author, 1671).


Cronon, _Changes in the Land_, entire.

Nov. 5  Tuesday: Modern Environments: Buffon

Buffon, _Natural History_, 1781, selections

Dugatkin, _Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose_, 1-46.

Nov. 7  Thursday: New Environments: Jefferson

Jefferson, _Notes on the State of Virginia_, 1787, selections.

Dugatkin, _Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose_, 47-129.

Nov. 12  Tuesday: Modern Environments: Linnaeus


Nov. 14  Thursday: Modern Environments: Lamarck

Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, _Zoological Philosophy or Exposition: Of the considerations relevant to the natural history of animals: to the diversity of their organic structure and of the faculties which they derive from it; to the physical causes sustaining life in them and producing the movements which they carry out; finally, to those causes which produce feeling in some and intelligence in others endowed with it_, 1809, part I: chapter 5 and 7.
Nov. 19  Tuesday: Romantic Environments: Rousseau


Nov. 21  Thursday: Modern Environments: Animal Rights

Anonymous [Taylor], *A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes*, 1792.


Nov. 26  Tuesday: Modern Environments: Paley


Nov. 28  Thanksgiving recess! No class.

Dec. 3  Tuesday: Modernity: Malthus


Dec. 5  Thursday: Evolutionary Biology: Charles Darwin


Dec. 10  Tuesday: Evolutionary Biology: Charles Darwin

Browne, *Darwin's Origin of Species*, 57-117.


Dec. 12  Thursday: Summary/Last day of Class

*3rd paper due! “The Modern Paper”*