

**UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH**  
**HIST\*6500 Selected Topics in Global History:**  
**A World on Fire: Historians and the Climate Crisis**

**Fall 2025**

Department of History

Credit Weight: 0.5

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## **1. Course Description**

### **1.1 Calendar Description**

This is a topical course, that explores the history of processes that take place on a worldwide scale. These may include social, cultural, economic, or environmental processes.

Restrictions: Instructor consent required

### **1.2 Course Description**

In this graduate history seminar, we will explore climate history and investigate how natural and anthropogenic processes have shaped the vulnerabilities, responses, and resiliency of past societies. In doing so, we will apply historical thinking and interdisciplinary perspectives while reading widely in environmental history, environmental studies, climate science, and allied fields. We will reflect on the role of historians in contemporary society and consider how they can mobilize their expertise to address the climate crisis and its multifaceted challenges and opportunities. Our explorations will also extend into the future, as we attempt to understand how the climate crisis is reshaping the historical profession (its approaches, perspectives, methods, pedagogies, and career trajectories) and what implications this has for history, students, and educators.

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## 2. Learning Resources

### 3.1 Required Textbook

Readings and videos as assigned in the Course Schedule. They are available on reserve at the library or in CourseLink. **Please read them in the order listed in the Course Outline.** There are no textbooks that students must purchase for this course.

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## 3. Learning Outcomes

### 4.1 Course Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students will be able to:

1. Identify how human and non-human factors have altered local, transnational, and global environments over time.
  2. Explain how the environment shapes politics, economies, societies, conflicts, and cultures over time.
  3. Understand the relationship between history, ecology, and climatology in relation to natural and anthropogenic processes.
  4. Analyze the ways in which the climate crisis is reshaping the work of professional historians, historical research, scholarship, and teaching.
  5. Synthesize specialized knowledge, arguments, and evidence related to the discipline of environmental history.
  6. Analyze primary and secondary historical sources and communicate results in oral and written formats.
  7. Draw connections between environmental issues in the past and present.
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## 4. Method of Evaluation:

### 5.1 Assignment due dates and values

Assessment	Value	Date Due
Participation	20%	Ongoing assessment

<b>Reading Presentations</b>	20%	Due on date of reading in course schedule
<b>Carbon Budget Historian</b>	20%	October 20, 2025, by 11:59pm
<b>Research Essay Proposal and Annotated Bibliography</b>	10%	October 10, 2025, by 5:00pm
<b>Research Essay</b>	30%	December 5, 2025, by 11:59pm

## 5.2 Assignment Descriptions

### **Participation (20%):**

Students are expected to attend and participate in every class. This makes participation an ongoing assessment that is evaluated over the whole semester. Good participation involves coming to class having already done the readings, contributing to discussions, sharing ideas, and actively listening to others.

### **Reading Presentations (20%):**

Students will sign up to present 2 course readings. The sign-up sheet is available on CourseLink. Readings cannot be changed once you have signed up and only one student can present a reading. Each presentation is worth 10% and should be no more than 20 minutes. Presentations should critically evaluate the reading's argument, structure, evidence, and conclusions, and include 3 discussion questions. Presentations are delivered on the date the reading is assigned in the Course Schedule. Please note that not all readings in the Course Outline are available for presentation.

### **Carbon Budget Historian (20%):**

To aid in the professional development of future historians on a warming planet, this assignment will prompt students to consider their positionality as historians and relationality with the environment, before planning an archival research trip to examine fonds related to their MA research. The travel planning includes preparing a financial budget and a carbon budget. Students will also have an opportunity to discuss and reflect on this assignment in class in Week 7. The Carbon Budget Historian assignment must be completed in the template provided and it is due October 20, 2025, by 11:59pm.

### **Research Essay Proposal and Annotated Bibliography (10%):**

#### **How Does Climate History Relate to your MA Research?**

The Essay Proposal and Annotated Bibliography is due October 10, 2025, by 5:00pm. The Proposal should outline the essay topic, discuss a preliminary thesis, and explain the connection to your MA research. The Annotated Bibliography should include 6 scholarly sources and 2 primary sources, with a

short description of their importance to your argument. Students will also be prompted to explain their use of AI and reflect on its benefits and limitations. The Essay Proposal and Annotated Bibliography must be submitted in a Microsoft Word document, use Chicago style, and should be 1200-1500 words in length (not including the bibliography). Final Essays will not be accepted without the prior submission of the Proposal and Annotated Bibliography.

### **Research Essay (30%):**

#### **How Does Climate History Relate to your MA Research?**

The Final Essay is due December 5, 2025, by 11:59pm. It should be 3000-3500 words in length. Students are encouraged to be creative in selecting a topic and identifying a connection between their MA research and climate history. The Essay should argue a clear thesis with supporting evidence and include at least 10-12 secondary sources and 2-4 primary sources. The Essay must be submitted in a Microsoft Word document and use Chicago style.

### **5.3 Late Assignments**

Assignments must be submitted by their due dates. Students in need of an accommodation must contact the professor before the deadline. **Any late assignments that have not received prior accommodation will lose 2% per day (including weekends).** Assignments over 1 week (7 days) late will not be accepted.

### **5.4 Turnitin**

**Turnitin will be used and integrated with the CourseLink Dropbox tool. It will detect possible plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration or copying as part of the ongoing efforts to maintain academic integrity at the University of Guelph.** All submitted assignments will be included as source documents in the Turnitin.com reference database solely for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of such papers. Use of the Turnitin.com service is subject to the Usage Policy posted on the Turnitin.com site.

## **5. Teaching and Learning Activities**

### **6.1 Course Schedule**

<b>Week 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
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<b>Sept. 9</b>	Read the Course Outline.
<b>Week 2</b>	<b>The Climate System</b>
<b>Sept. 16</b>	<p>William Leiss, <i>Canada and Climate Change</i> (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2020), 13-30. ("What is Climate?" and "The Pleistocene and Holocene Epochs")</p> <p>Eduardo Zorita, Sebastian Wagner, and Fredrik Schenk, "The Global Climate System," in <i>The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History</i>, 21-26.</p> <p>Brian Fagan, <i>The Little Ice Age: How Climate Made History, 1300-1850</i> (Basic Books, 2000), 3-22. ("The Medieval Warm Period")</p> <p>Dagomar Degroot, <i>The Frigid Golden Age</i> (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 22-49. ("The Little Ice Age")</p> <p>Wolfgang Behringer, <i>A Cultural History of Climate</i> (Polity, 2010), 121-167. ("Cultural Consequences of the Little Ice Age")</p> <p>Videos/Resources on CourseLink</p>
<b>Week 3</b>	<b>The Discovery of Global Warming</b>
<b>Sept. 23</b>	<p>Spencer R. Weart, <i>The Discovery of Global Warming</i> (Harvard University Press, 2003), 1-19, 20-38, and 160-192. ("How Could Climate Change?" "Discovering a Possibility" and "The Discovery Confirmed")</p> <p>Jacob Darwin Hamblin, <i>Arming Mother Nature</i> (Oxford University Press, 2013), 85-107. ("Earth Under Surveillance")</p> <p>Naomi Oreskes, "Changing the Mission: From the Cold War to Climate Change," in <i>Science and Technology in the Global Cold War</i> (MIT Press, 2014), 141-187.</p>

	<p>Katja Doose, "Modelling the Future: Climate Change Research in Russia During the Late Cold War and Beyond, 1970s-2000," <i>Climatic Change</i> 171, 6 (2022): 1-19.</p> <p>Videos/Resources on CourseLink</p>
<b>Week 4</b>	<b>The Anthropocene</b>
<b>Sept. 30</b>	<p>Will Steffen, Jacques Grinevald, Paul Crutzen, and J.R. McNeill, "The Anthropocene: Conceptual and Historical Perspectives," <i>Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society A</i>, 369, 1938 (March 2011): 842-867.</p> <p>J.R. McNeill, <i>Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century</i> (Penguin, 2000), xix-xxiv, 3-17. ("Preface" and "Prologue: Peculiarities of a Prodigal Century")</p> <p>Sara B. Pritchard and Thomas Zeller, "The Nature of Industrialization" in <i>The Illusory Boundary: Environment and Technology in History</i> (University of Virginia Press, 2010), 69-100.</p> <p>Francois Jarrige and Thomas Le Roux, <i>The Contamination of the Earth: A History of Pollutions in the Industrial Age</i> (MIT Press, 2020), 231-259. ("Mass Consumption, Mass Pollution")</p> <p>Videos/Resources on CourseLink</p>
<b>Week 5</b>	<b>Critiquing the Anthropocene</b>
<b>Oct. 7</b>	<p>Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses," <i>Critical Inquiry</i> 35 (Winter, 2009): 197-222.</p> <p>Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg, "The Geology of Mankind? A Critique of the Anthropocene Narrative," <i>The Anthropocene Review</i> 1:1 (2014): 62-9.</p> <p>Heather Davis and Zoe Todd, "On the Importance of a Date, or, Decolonizing the Anthropocene," <i>International Journal for Critical Geographies</i> 16, 4 (2017): 1-20.</p>

	<p>Kyle Whyte, "Indigenous Climate Change Studies: Indigenizing Futures, Decolonizing the Anthropocene," <i>English Language Notes</i> 55, 1-2 (2017): 153-162.</p> <p>Videos/Resources on CourseLink</p>
<b>Oct. 10</b>	<b>Due: Research Essay Proposal and Annotated Bibliography, 10 October 2025, by 5:00pm</b>
<b>Week 6</b>	<b>Fall Break</b>
<b>Oct. 14</b>	No Class
<b>Week 7</b>	<b>Carbon Budget Historians</b>
<b>Oct. 21</b>	<p>Bryan Alexander, <i>Universities on Fire</i> (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2023), 59-86. ("Doing Research in the Anthropocene")</p> <p>Julien Arsenault, et al. "The Environmental Footprint of Academic and Student Mobility in a Large Research-Oriented University," <i>Environmental Research Letters</i>, 14 (2019): Article 095001.</p> <p>Carla Pascoe Leahy, et al. "Sustainable Academia: The Responsibilities of Academic Historians in a Climate-Impacted World," <i>Environment and History</i> 28, 4 (2022): 545-570.</p> <p>Videos/Resources on CourseLink</p>
<b>Oct. 20</b>	<b>Due: Carbon Budget Historian Assignment, October 20, 2025, by 11:59pm</b>
<b>Week 8</b>	<b>Sources and Models</b>
<b>Oct. 28</b>	<p>Stefan Brönnimann, Christian Pfister, and Sam White, "Archives of Nature and Archives of Society." In <i>The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History</i>, 27-36.</p>

	<p>Dagomar Degroot, <i>The Frigid Golden Age</i> (Cambridge University Press, 2018), 253-276. ("Tracing and Painting the Little Ice Age")</p> <p>Alexander Koch, et al., "Earth System Impacts of the European Arrival and Great Dying in the Americas after 1492," <i>Quaternary Science Reviews</i> 207, 1 (March 2019): 13-36.</p> <p>Clive Wilkinson, et al. "Archives and Climate Science: Transforming Paper Documents into Global Climate Datasets," <i>Norsk Arkivforum</i> 31, 1 (2025): 9-17.</p> <p>Ricardo Garcia Herrera, et al., "The Use of Spanish Historical Archives to Reconstruct Climate Variability," <i>Bulletin of the American Meteorological Society</i> 84, 8 (2003): 1025-1035.</p> <p>Videos/Resources on CourseLink</p>
<b>Week 9</b>	<b>Debate and Dissension</b>
<b>Nov. 4</b>	<p>Morgan Kelly and Cormac Ó Gráda, "The Waning of the Little Ice Age: Climate Change in Early Modern Europe," <i>Journal of Interdisciplinary History</i> 44, 3 (2014): 301-325.</p> <p>Sam White, "The Real Little Ice Age," <i>Journal of Interdisciplinary History</i> 44, 3 (2014): 327-352.</p> <p><i>Merchants of Doubt</i> (documentary film, 2014). Robert Kenner (director), Mongrel Media Inc.</p> <p>Stephan Lewandowsky, et al., "Misinformation and its Correction: Continued Influence and Successful Debiasing," <i>Psychological Science in the Public Interest</i> 13, 3 (2012): 104-131.</p> <p>Videos/Resources on CourseLink</p>
<b>Week 10</b>	<b>Lessons from the Past</b>
<b>Nov. 11</b>	<p>Dagomar Degroot, et al. "Towards a Rigorous Understanding of Societal Responses to Climate Change," <i>Nature</i> 591 (2021): 539-550</p> <p>Tana Li, "The Mongol Yuan Dynasty and the Climate, 1260-1360," in <i>The Crisis of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century: Teleconnections between</i></p>



	<p><i>Environmental and Societal Change?</i> (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2020), 153-168.</p> <p>Philip Slavin, "1310s Event," in <i>The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History</i>, 495-516.</p> <p>Christian Pfister, "Climatic Extremes, Recurrent Crises and Witch Hunts: Strategies of European Societies in Coping with Exogenous Shocks in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," <i>The Medieval History Journal</i> 10, 1&amp;2 (2007), 33-73.</p> <p>Videos/Resources on CourseLink</p>
<b>Week 11</b>	<b>Emotional Burdens</b>
<b>Nov. 18</b>	<p>Pihkala Panu, "Anxiety and the Ecological Crisis: An Analysis of Eco-Anxiety and Climate Anxiety," <i>Sustainability</i> 12, 19 (2020): 1-20.</p> <p>Pihkala Panu, "The Cost of Bearing Witness to the Environmental Crisis: Vicarious Traumatization and Dealing with Secondary Traumatic Stress among Environmental Researchers," in <i>The Costs of Bearing Witness</i> (Routledge, 2024).</p> <p>Lindsay P. Galway and Ellen Field, "Climate Emotions and Anxiety Among Young People in Canada: A National Survey and Call to Action," <i>The Journal of Climate Change and Health</i>, 9 (2023), Article 100204.</p> <p>Mark D. Hathaway, "Activating Hope in the Midst of Crisis: Emotions, Transformative Learning, and the 'Work that Reconnects,'" <i>Journal of Transformative Education</i> 15, 4 (2017): 296-314.</p> <p>Videos/Resources on CourseLink</p>
<b>Week 12</b>	<b>A Way Forward?</b>
<b>Nov. 25</b>	<p>Seth Klein, <i>A Good War: Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency</i> (ECW Press, 2020), 1-24. ("Introduction: Confronting Existential Threats, Then and Now")</p>

	<p>James Feldman and Lynne Heasley, "Recentring North American Environmental History: Pedagogy and Scholarship in the Great Lakes Region," <i>Environmental History</i> 12 (2007): 951-958.</p> <p>Heather E. McGregor, Jackson Pind, and Sara Karn, "A 'wicked problem': Rethinking History Education in the Anthropocene" <i>Rethinking History</i> 25, 4 (2021): 483-507.</p> <p>Robin Kimmerer, "Returning the Gift," <i>Minding Nature</i> 7, 2 (2014): 18-24.</p> <p>Paul Sabin, "'The Ultimate Environmental Dilemma': Making a Place for Historians in the Climate Change and Energy Debates," <i>Environmental History</i> 15, 1 (2010): 76-93.</p> <p>Videos/Resources on CourseLink</p>
<b>Dec. 5</b>	<b>Due: Research Essay, December 5, 2025, by 11:59pm</b>

## 6. Course and University Statements

### Academic Integrity

The University of Guelph is committed to upholding the highest standards of academic integrity and it is the responsibility of all members of the University community – faculty, staff, and students – to be aware of what constitutes academic misconduct and to do as much as possible to prevent academic offences from occurring. University of Guelph students have the responsibility of abiding by the University's policy on academic misconduct regardless of their location of study; faculty, staff and students have the responsibility of supporting an environment that discourages misconduct. Students need to remain aware that instructors have access to and the right to use electronic and other means of detection.

Please note: Whether or not a student intended to commit academic misconduct is not relevant for a finding of guilt. Hurried or careless submission of assignments does not excuse students from responsibility for verifying the academic integrity of their work before submitting it. Students who are in any doubt as to whether an action on their part could be construed as an academic offence should consult with a faculty member or faculty advisor.

The [Academic Misconduct Policy](#) is outlined in the Undergraduate Calendar.

## **Artificial Intelligence Systems and ChatGPT**

Artificial intelligence (AI) systems are powerful tools that promise to revolutionize research, teaching and learning. In all three areas and in the future of work, there exist creative and forward-thinking opportunities for the use of AI. Many University of Guelph faculty, instructors, staff and students are currently looking at ethical uses of AI, including research through U of G's [Centre for Advancing Responsible and Ethical Artificial Intelligence \(CARE-AI\)](#).

At the same time, the development of increasingly sophisticated AI systems such as ChatGPT poses potential threats to academic integrity. Unauthorized student use of AI systems undermines student learning, the achievement of learning outcomes and violates the University's academic misconduct policies. The University is committed to ensuring that the use of AI in teaching and learning complies with existing policies and regulations that govern academic and scholarly integrity. We continue to engage the University community, including students, as we work to refine academic integrity policies and their intersection with AI tools. We affirm the following:

1. Students' work must reflect their unique intellectual capacity and demonstrate the application of critical thinking and problem solving. Unauthorized use of AI to complete assessments violates the fundamental intellectual purposes of the University and does not demonstrate student achievement of course learning outcomes.
2. Submission of materials completed by AI, without permission of the instructor, constitutes an offence under the University's academic misconduct policies, either as a form of plagiarism or the use of unauthorized aids.
3. Acceptable use of AI should be determined by the course instructor and may vary across disciplines, programs and types of assessments. In setting out course requirements and assessment criteria, the instructor should specify allowable uses of AI, if any, through the course outline and/or the learning management system (e.g., CourseLink). Clarity about the acceptable use of AI is critical for students and instructors. Students are responsible for appropriately referencing how and to what extent they have used AI in assessments in keeping with University and course requirements.

## **Accessibility**

The University promotes the full participation of students who experience disabilities in their academic programs. To that end, the provision of academic

accommodation is a shared responsibility between the University and the student.

When accommodations are needed, the student is required to first register with Student Accessibility Services (SAS). Documentation to substantiate the existence of a disability is required; however, interim accommodations may be possible while that process is underway.

Accommodations are available for both permanent and temporary disabilities. It should be noted that common illnesses such as a cold or the flu do not constitute a disability. Use of the SAS Exam Centre requires students to make a booking at least 10 days in advance, and no later than the first business day in November, March or July as appropriate for the semester. Similarly, new or changed accommodations for online quizzes, tests and exams must be approved at least a week ahead of time. For students at the Guelph campus, information can be found on the [SAS website](#).

### **Accommodation of Religious Obligations**

If you are unable to meet an in-course requirement due to religious obligations, please email the course instructor within two weeks of the start of the semester to make alternate arrangements.

See the Academic calendar for information on regulations and procedures for [Academic Accommodations of Religious Obligations](#).

### **Copies of Out-of-class Assignments**

Keep paper and/or other reliable back-up copies of all out-of-class assignments: you may be asked to resubmit work at any time.

### **Drop Date**

Students will have until the last day of classes to drop courses without academic penalty. The deadline to drop two-semester courses will be the last day of classes in the second semester. This applies to all undergraduate students except for Doctor of Veterinary Medicine and Associate Diploma in Veterinary Technology (conventional and alternative delivery) students. The regulations and procedures for course registration are available in the [Undergraduate Calendar - Dropping Courses](#).

### **Email Communication**

As per university regulations, all students are required to check their <uoguelph.ca> e-mail account regularly: e-mail is the official route of communication between the University and its students.

## **Health and Wellbeing**

The University of Guelph provides a wide range of health and wellbeing services at the [Vaccarino Centre for Student Wellness](#). If you are concerned about your mental health and not sure where to start, connect with a [Student Wellness Navigator](#) who can help develop a plan to manage and support your mental health or check out our [mental wellbeing resources](#). The Student Wellness team are here to help and welcome the opportunity to connect with you.

## **Illness**

Medical notes will not normally be required for singular instances of academic consideration, although students may be required to provide supporting documentation for multiple missed assessments or when involving a large part of a course (e.g., final exam or major assignment).

## **Recording of Materials**

Presentations that are made in relation to course work—including lectures—cannot be recorded or copied without the permission of the presenter, whether the instructor, a student, or guest lecturer. Material recorded with permission is restricted to use for that course unless further permission is granted.

## **Resources**

The [Academic Calendars](#) are the source of information about the University of Guelph's procedures, policies and regulations which apply to undergraduate, graduate and diploma programs.

## **When You Cannot Meet a Course Requirement**

When you find yourself unable to meet an in-course requirement because of illness or compassionate reasons please advise the course instructor (or designated person, such as a teaching assistant) in writing, with your name, id#, and e-mail contact. See the Undergraduate Calendar for information on regulations and procedures for [Academic Consideration](#).