



STSC 168 • Summer Session II • July 7-August 6, 2021
M • W • F noon – 2.30 EST [a /synchronous]
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I. OVERVIEW

AS STORIES OF the climate crisis, resource extraction, environmental degradation, and species extinction increasingly dominate the news in the twenty-first century, what the environment is, and how humans effect it, seems vividly apparent. But what is an “environment,” exactly? How is “the environment” different from “nature”? Where does “society” end, and our “environment” begin? This course takes these questions as a starting point from which to explore how humans have defined, interacted with, and changed the environments within which we live; and how those environments have in turn shaped human society. Through thematic weeks that draw on academic and popular sources by scholars, activists, artists, and scientists, we will consider how social-environmental relationships have been defined over time: from nineteenth century museum collecting to twenty-first century climate modelling. At the same time, we will consider the political stakes of environmentalism, asking how race, class, and gender shape our experience of the environment, and if and how we can learn from the past to (re)shape the environments of the future.

II. COURSE STRUCTURE

THIS COURSE RUNS over five weeks, from Wednesday, July 7 to Friday, August 6. We are scheduled to meet on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from noon – 2.30 p.m. EST. **Most weeks will only meet for one synchronous session** (that is, all on the same Zoom call). But! Even though we are only meeting in person once per week, I encourage you to block off the same amount of class time to watch, listen, write, and reflect. Assigned readings (and variations of readings) should be completed outside of scheduled class time.

- **Mondays** will be dedicated to pre-recorded lectures and podcasts or films that you can watch **asynchronously**.
- **Wednesdays** will be **synchronous** class discussion of lectures and readings. If there are reasons the synchronous meeting time is unviable for you (i.e. time zone), please be in touch to discuss options.
- **Fridays** will be dedicated to your weekly “field notebook” projects (see below) and will be **asynchronous** (except for the first and last week of class, when **Fridays will be synchronous**).

III. ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING

THERE ARE TWO parts to your grade in STSC168: The first is participation/attendance (40%). The second is your ‘field notebook’ (60%).

Participation/Attendance

Participation/attendance will be measured by both your presence at the synchronous sessions and your engagement with assigned readings, and the progress you make each week on the asynchronous aspects of the class. With only five weeks of concentrated class time, it is very important you spend time doing the readings, making notes, and developing questions/comments to share with the group, and the percentage of your grade tied to this reflects as much.

Field Notebook

Modelled on the [field notebooks produced by scientists](#) who work in the field, each week you will complete a field project that adds to your notebook. These weekly projects will culminate in a notebook that traces your changing perspectives and thoughts on:

1. What constitutes *an* environment;
2. What constitutes *your* environment
3. How the relationship between society and the environment has changed over time.

We will discuss this assignment extensively on the first day of class, as there are several options of how to approach it. The aim is for you to produce a notebook that consists of a combination of reflective and scholarly writing, images and/or sketches, and perhaps even specimens from your local environment—be that your home, your neighborhood, or further afield. On the last day of class we will share some examples from our field notebooks and discuss how our thinking about the environment evolved over the semester.

IV. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

WE ARE HERE to learn together and each of us plays a part in making that learning process as respectful and productive as possible. Everyone involved with the course is expected to abide by Penn’s [Code of Student Conduct](#) and [Code of Academic Integrity](#). Please read them carefully.

Plagiarism and other violations of academic integrity undermine learning for the individual as well as for the academic community as a whole. If you are found plagiarizing or violating academic integrity

in any other way, you may receive a failing grade for the course and be subject to further disciplinary action.

No form of harassment or discrimination on the basis of religion, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation or identity, age, or disability will be tolerated.

If you believe any of the policies described above are being violated or insufficiently enforced, please inform the instructor, your academic advisor, the [College Office](#), or another relevant office of the University of Pennsylvania, some of which are listed [here](#).

V. DISABILITY, RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS, AND SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS

PLEASE CONTACT THE instructor within the first week of the semester (via email at ridera@sas.upenn.edu) if you will need any special accommodations to participate fully in classroom discussion and activities or to complete assignments, or if you anticipate missing class meetings or being unable to complete assignments in a timely manner due to religious, family, or other obligations. Disability accommodations such as extended exam times or note-taking service will require confirmation from [Student Disability Services](#).

VI. SCHEDULE, TOPICS, & READINGS

PLEASE NOTE READINGS ARE NOT FINALIZED

WHAT FOLLOWS IS our schedule of class time and readings for the semester. I have color-coded the days we are meeting for clarity. **Green means asynchronous** (you can complete the work without being on Zoom at a specific time). **Red means synchronous** (you should plan to be on Zoom at the scheduled time) *Please note the irregular schedule for the first and last week of class.*

Week 1, July 7-9: DEFINING ENVIRONMENT & SOCIETY



Wednesday, July 7: Nuts and bolts day. Review of syllabus, questions, problems, concerns. SHORT meeting.

Friday, July 9: Discussion and exercise to consider: what is the environment? Read:

1. To be added
2. To be added

Week 2, July 12-16: CAPTURING & CURATING



Monday, July 12: LECTURE: Museums, Zoos, and Building ‘Natural’ Environments. VISIT: Wagner Free Science Institute website

Wednesday, July 14: Discuss Readings:

1. Etienne Benson, ‘The World in the Museum’ (2019)
2. To be added
3. To be added

Friday, July 16: Fieldwork Project One: Herbarium Collecting.

Week 3, July 19-23: EXTRACTING & CAPITALIZING



Monday, July 19: Guest lecture: Dr. Jesse Smith, Research Curator at the Science History Institute. “Cheap Nature”

Wednesday, July 21: Discuss readings:

1. Excerpt from Bathsbeba Demuth, *Floating Coast: An Environmental History of the Bering Strait* (2019)
2. Excerpt from William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis* (1991)
3. Jason Moore, “The Rise of Cheap Nature” (2016)

Friday, July 23: Fieldwork Project Two: Energy Map.

Week 4, July 26-30: POLLUTION & PRESERVATION



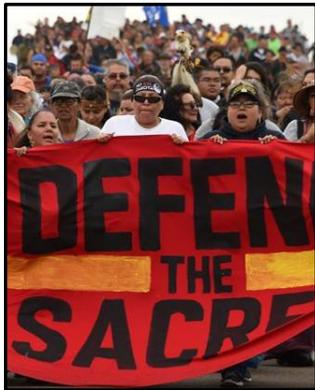
Monday, July 26: Guest lecture, Dr. Chantel White, Archaeobotanist at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology & Anthropology. “Deep Time”

Wednesday, July 28: Discuss Readings:

1. Pollution is Colonialism, Max Liboiron
2. ‘The Lost World,’ Elizabeth Kolbert, *The New Yorker* (2013)
3. To be added

Friday, July 30: Fieldwork Project 3: Deep Time Walk & Future Fossils

Week 5: August 2-6: REPARING & REIMAGINING



Monday, August 2: Discuss Readings:

1. To be added
2. To be added
3. To be added

Wednesday, August 4: Fieldwork Project Four: Final Reflection on your environment

Friday, August 6: Final ‘wrap up’: Fieldwork discussion/presentations.