

Climate Change and Life Choices: A Christian History of the Environment (7,5 ECTS credits)

Level: 1st cycle

Discipline: THEOLOGY

Course ID: 0363

Admission requirements

General admission requirements for university studies. Students taking part in the course as a part of their Bachelor's degree program must have completed Course A, Introduction in Philosophy and Theology (30 ECTS credits). Students taking part in the course as a freestanding course are expected to have corresponding prior knowledge.

Educational goals

After completing the course, the student is expected to:

- Be aware of a new discipline associating climate and natural phenomena with large-scale historical transformations;
- Be able to discuss, assess and problematize the causes of historical change with respect to both human and natural agency;
- Be able to discuss the relation between climate change and societal transformations with reference to main theories within the subject;
- Display an in-depth understanding of the relation between religion and ecology from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages.

Course content

Exciting new research has shifted focus from human agency to the natural environment when it comes to major events in human history. The result is history written in a less anthropocentric way that revisits major historical narratives such as the Fall of Rome or the Rise of Islam by bringing in different actors, such as variations to the ecosystems. Human choices become a product of the interaction with larger natural forces, accompanying religious attitudes that include an awareness of and a response to this larger universe. In this course, we will look at some key historical phenomena and events as case-studies for understanding the new ecological perspective on history. We will reflect on the conscious shaping of an environmentally-friendly way of life in Christian life, with special reference to the monastic ideal developed in the Middle Ages.

Teaching and examination

Obligatory attendance (80%) and participation in class (10% of final mark). Examination will consist of two oral presentations (20% of final mark) and one take-home written exam (70% of final mark).

Bibliography

- Arnold, Ellen F., 'An Introduction to Medieval Environmental History', *History Compass* 6/3 (2008), 898-916 [PDF on Moodle].
- Berry, Wendell, 'Think Little' (1970) and 'Nature as Measure' (1989) in *The World-Ending Fire: the Essential Wendell Berry* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2017), pp. 48-65 [PDF on Moodle].
- Burrus, Virginia, 'Worm Stories', in *eadem, Ancient Christian Eco-poetics: Cosmologies, Saints, Things* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), pp. 219-231 [PDF on Moodle].
- Dean-Drummond, Celia, "Ecology, Evolutionary Anthropology, and Discernment in Deep Time", *The Way* 58/4, October 2019, pp. 17-31 [PDF on Moodle].
- Fraser, Evan D.G., 'Economic Crises, Land Use Vulnerabilities, Climate Variability, Food Security and Population Declines: Will History Repeat Itself or Will Our Society Adapt to Climate Change?', *Leeds Centre for Climate Change Economics and Policy* (2009), pp. 3-36 [PDF on Moodle]
- Haldon, John, *et al.*, 'The Climate and Environment of Byzantine Anatolia: Integrating Science, History and Archeology', *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 45.2 (2014), 113-161 [PDF on Moodle].
- Harper, Kyle, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017) – available in Swedish translation as *Roms öde: klimatet, sjukdomarna och imperiets undergång* (Göteborg: Daidalos, 2019).
- Jenkins, Willis, *et al.*, 'Religion and Climate Change', *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 43 (2018), 85-108 [PDF on Moodle].
- Sachdeva, Sonya, "Religious Identity, Beliefs, and Views about Climate Change", in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Climate Change Communication* (OUP, 2018), 36 pp. [PDF on Moodle].
- Sallares, Robert, "Ecology", in Walter Scheidel *et al.* (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World* (CUP, 2008), pp. 13-37 [PDF on Moodle].

Reference:

- Chew, S.C., *The Recurring Dark Ages: Ecological Stress, Climate Changes, and System Transformation* (Lanham MD: Altamira, 2007).
- Ellenblum, Ronnie, *The Collapse of the Eastern Mediterranean: Climate Change and the Decline of the East, 950-1072* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- Issar, Arie S. & Mattanyah Zohar, *Climate Change — Environment and History of the Near East*, 2nd Edition (Berlin, Heidelberg: Springer-Verlag Berlin Heidelberg, 2007).

Monastic Europe : Medieval Communities, Landscapes, and Settlements, ed. by M. Krasnodebska-D'Aughton, E. Bhreathnach, and K. Smith, *Medieval Monastic Studies 4* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019).

See also "Kursplaner: allmänna bestämmelser" (Course plans: General rules)

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