

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% of total lesson time) and participation in class (20% of final mark). Examination will consist of two oral presentations (30% of final mark) and one take-home written exam (50% of final mark).

Bibliography

Berry, Wendell, *The World-Ending Fire: the Essential Wendell Berry* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2017).

Crosby, Alfred W. *Ecological Imperialism: the Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

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).

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). [selected essays; available in PDF on Moodle]

A selection of articles on Moodle (c. 150-200 pp.).

Reference

Burrus, Virginia, *Ancient Christian Ecopoetics: Cosmologies, Saints, Things* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019).

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).

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

Finalised 2022-06-16, rev. 2022-09-26, 2023-12-11

Valid as 2024-01-15