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**Colonial Environments**

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本科生    硕士生    本科生    硕士生    本科生

Undergraduate    Master    Undergraduate    Master    Undergraduate

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English

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Basic knowledge of the history of either Chinaor the West

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Lectures and discussions

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Attendance and participation 20%  
 Assignment and Mini-papers 80%

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2 credits

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Agnes Kneitz is an assistant professor at the department for world history at Renmin University in China, where she teaches courses on western civilization,  environmental and cultural history. She graduated from LMU Munich in 2013, as a member of the interdisciplinary doctoral program “Environment and Society” of the Rachel Carson Center, where she worked as a research and communications associate since 2009. Her doctoral thesis explores the intersection of environmental and social history of the out-going long 19th century, analyzing the role of literature as a cultural agent in creating environmental awareness in the face of increasing industrial pollution. Her main fields of interest lie in the environmental humanities, mainly environmental justice, public health, food security, and systems theory.

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The idea of unknown and undiscovered worlds have always fascinated humankind. Finally, about 600 years ago, the discovery of the Americas opened previously unknown perspectives for the Europeans in this sense. It then initiated a race for and around the globe, in order to establish dominance, trade connections and to satisfy curiosity. This seminar tries to understand, which paths and means “Europe” used to make the new world(s) accessible. It wants to investigate the consequences of beginning global exchange and how it influenced the cultural understanding of humans then and now.  Emphasis will be placed on particular regions of the world, which we will try to approach as entities on their own right and in their connection to the expanding “Western” forces.”    
Chronologically the seminar is divided in two parts: Early Modern history, investigating the “revolutionary” changes during this time; and Modern history, connecting these development with their “practical” application and consequences during the 19th and early 20th century. That fore we will read easily comprehendible introductory texts that will make the topic accessible for us, as well as the discipline of environmental history. But we will also concern ourselves with other source material that will support us in our understanding, like travel logs, movies, novels, and current public debates. 

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CHAPTER ONE: Overture  
This session will provide an overview of the seminar, the topics, readings, requirements. It will provide an introduction to global and colonial (environmental history). We will discuss, what meanings the title “Colonial Environments” has in order to understand the connection between history and ecology.  
  
CHAPTER TWO: The World as It Was Before  
This session will look at the historical context for our exploration. What did the world look like in the 1480ies? What was the world view of the people back then? So, what did the religious, political, scientific, and technological landscape look like?  
  
CHAPTER THREE: Seeking New Trade Routes to China  
This session will look at the geo-political context of Eurasia at the end of the Middle Ages. What new dangers and instabilities were affecting the silk road connection between Asia and Europe? What other motivations did Europeans have to start exploring? What role did Portugal have in establishing new naval regimes?  
  
CHAPTER FOUR: 1492 and the Start of Conquista  
This session will look more closely at the expectations and visions the Europeans had when they set sail to the new worlds. It wants to explore the role religion played in addition to new “scientific” thought. This will lead to the question of how South America was finally conquered and how this marked the beginning of something we call now “The Columbian Exchange.”  
  
CHAPTER FIVE: Exploring and Settling the Land of Abundance  
This session will be looking specifically at the early settlement of North America. Visitors described it as a place of abundance. We will try to evoke the images of this unsettled continent, with is fascinating wildlife. We will think about the cultural heritage that will have influenced the perception and engagement with this new place, and ask what consequences this had for (early) modern perception of the world and its environment.  
  
CHAPTER SIX: Exploration and Scientific Investigation  
Exploration and scientific investigation were important means of political consolidation at the time, it seems. We have a look at the journeys of James Cook and others. What impact did they have on the development of global connection and colonial exploration and on scientific development? How was wild and exotic nature finally turned into a commodity? And what consequences would this have for imperialistic times?  
  
CHAPTER SEVEN:Establishing new trade routes and developing economy of triangle  
This session wants to investigate how the new emerging empires were using trade as one means to secure their supremacy. How did politics establish themselves through economic ties? What role did networks like the British East India Company play? How did humans become a commodity as well? And how did this new economy affect domestic and foreign ecologies also?  
  
CHAPTER EIGHT: Fast Forward to Africa  
This session will have a closer look at the African continent. Was it affected by European exploration since the Early Modern? And if so, what effects may this have had on the social and natural environment? But more importantly we will focus on the imperialist race, how was this large landmass divided up? What effects did this new phase have on both Africa and Europe (including America)? What unintended consequences did arise from this act? And what effects are still visible today?  
  
CHAPTER NINE:  Latin and South America  
This session will have a closer look at Latin and South America, following up on the effects of early modern exploration and conquest. But more importantly we will focus on the imperialist race, how was this large landmass divided up? What effects did this new phase have on both America and Europe, as this continent was economically so very important? What unintended consequences did arise from this act? And what effects are still visible today?

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selected readings from   
William Beinart and Lotte Hughes. Environment and Empire. Oxford UP, 2009.  
Alfred Crosby. Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900. Cambridge UP, 2004.  
Richard H. Grove. Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism 1600–1860. Cambridge UP, 1995.  
John McNeill and William H. McNeill.  The Human Web. A Bird’s-Eye View of World History. Norton, 2003.  
Wolfgang Reinhard (ed). Empires and Encounters: 1350-1750. Harvard UP, 2015.

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William Beinart and Lotte Hughes. Environment and Empire. Oxford UP, 2009.  
William Cunningham. “An Essay on Western Civilizations in its Economic Aspects”. Cambridge [Orig. 1898].  
Silvia Federici. Enduring Western Civilization: The Construction of the Concept of Western Civilizations and its “Others.” Praeger 1995.   
John. M. Hobson. The Eastern Origins of Western Civilization. Cambridge UP 2004.  
Rachel Laudan. Cuisine and Empire: Cooking in World History. Cambridge UP 2008.  
William H. McNeill. The Rise of the West: A History of the Human Community. UP of Chicago 1963.  
Dan Philippon. Eds. Coming into Contact: Explorations in Ecocritical Theory and Practice. U of Georgia Press, 2007.  
Kenneth Pomeranz. The Great Divergence: China, Europe, and the Making of the Modern World Economy. Princeton UP, 2000.   
JoachimRadkau.Nature and Power: A Global History of the Environment. Cambridge UP, 2008.

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