GGR 1705S: Historical Geographies of Modernity
University of Toronto, Winter 2014
Tuesdays, 1-3pm
Sidney Smith 5017B

Instructor: Dr. Matthew Farish, Department of Geography
Office: Sidney Smith 5040
Office Hours: Tuesdays, 11am-noon; Wednesdays, 10am-noon
Office Phone: 416-978-6671
Email: farish@geog.utoronto.ca

Course website: Accessible through https://portal.utoronto.ca

Course Description:

Over the last quarter-century, historical geography has become an eclectic and interdisciplinary pursuit. Some of the most prominent scholarship has been influenced by broader critical assessments of the idea of modernity, a powerful condition roughly locatable to sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe and globally dominant, if under severe stress, by the middle of the twentieth century. The broad purpose of this course is to trace some of modernity’s complicated geographies, an exercise that places modernity alongside capitalism, colonialism, culture/nature relationships, militarism, and technoscience.

This year’s version of the course will examine the idea of intemperate nature: the modern gesture deeming certain environments ‘other’ and often antagonistic. Irrevocably entangled with equivalent representations of culture, particularly those of race, this gesture spans visual culture, travel writing and literature, scientific fieldwork, governance, and soldiering. It has also been remarkably tenacious; one sturdy thread runs from the hubristic and violent colonial presumptions of the 18th and 19th centuries to contemporary warfare.

This thread is the one we will follow in the course. Specifically, the course will begin with an intriguing recent article by Daniel Clayton on “militant tropicality”. Our task will be to follow, develop, and query a number of the cases and themes that he introduces. We will thus consider intemperate nature – its origins, imaginative boundaries, persistence, significance, and contestation – using a combination of period and more recent sources. As with Clayton’s article, part of the aim of this course is to develop richer historical geographies of twentieth-century imperialism and war, and this ambition has influenced the choice of sources and subjects.

The Course Environment:

Your primary obligations are to do the reading each week and to foster conversations about this reading. This is a collective exercise, and as such I welcome your feedback as we proceed. For my
part, I will occasionally (and briefly) ‘table-set’ before our conversations, and work to facilitate an enjoyable and respectful environment for discussion.

**Evaluation:**

Class participation (including discussion leadership): 20%
Critical commentaries (4): 20%
Essay proposal (due February 11): 10%
Final essay (due April 11): 50%

1. With the exception of Week 2 (when I will lead discussion), each week one student will be responsible for introducing and leading discussion on the readings. If this is you, please prepare a set of questions (five is a good target) that are both specific to readings and broader attempts at synthesis. Should you wish, you may also choose to briefly contextualize the readings by discussing the author and the context of his/her work. This responsibility will comprise half of your participation mark, and the other half will reflect your role in discussions throughout the term. **Discussion questions should be circulated to the class via Blackboard by no later than 5pm on Mondays.**

2. You must also complete a number of writing assignments in a timely fashion. First, you will be required to submit four short response pieces throughout the term. These should be no more than two double-spaced pages, and should reflect a **constructively critical** engagement with some or all of a particular week’s readings. One useful way of approaching these responses on a day when we are reading the work of more than one author is to follow a thread that winds through multiple readings. Your responses will be useful pivots during discussion; for that reason, **please submit them on Blackboard by 5pm on the day before the class in question.** At least two of these responses should be submitted by March 4. I will comment on, but not formally grade these responses. Still, failure to complete four will affect your final course mark.

In advance of your final paper, please prepare a proposal of **2-3 pages in length.** The first half should take the rough form of a journal or conference abstract. It should set out a research question or thesis; provide some sense of the broad research issues that you will explore; and state how your paper relates to the themes and content of the course. In the second half of the proposal, provide a preliminary bibliography of primary and/or secondary materials. **These proposals are due (electronically) on February 11.** I will return them to you, with detailed comments, during Reading Week. Barring circumstances that require medical documentation (please submit this to me as soon as possible), I will not accept late proposals.

3. **Your final essay should be between 20-25 pages in length.** It should build on your paper proposal, and it should demonstrate familiarity with the course readings and the general sweep of ideas that cut across the course, but it should also move beyond readings and discussions. I would like you to pitch a topic to me, but your paper should address some aspect of ‘intemperate nature’. It might also expand on and critique a key source in the field – as we are doing in the seminar.
As this is a course in historical geography, I strongly suggest that you incorporate at least a few period sources (fiction, journalism, other non-fiction, photography, art) into your essay. Your paper will be assessed with respect to clarity of thesis statement, content, analysis, research skills and style. **Essays are due on April 11**, and can be e-mailed to me. Barring circumstances that require medical documentation, I will not accept late essays.

**Readings:**

The reading list is drawn from four sources:

1. Journal articles accessed through the U of T Library E-Journals portal (E)
2. Book chapters and other material posted to the course Blackboard site (B)
3. Web-based media (W)
4. A book, which you can purchase at the retailer of your choice (a copy has also been placed on course reserve) (C)

I encourage you to work with PDFs online or print creatively (two pages per page, double-sided, on recycled paper, and so on).

**Class Schedule:**

**Week 1 (January 7): Introduction**

(No reading)

**Week 2 (January 14): Provocations**


**Week 3 (January 21): Spacings**

- David Arnold, “Inventing Tropicality,” in his *The Problem of Nature: Environment, Culture, and European Expansion* (1996), 141-68 (B)
- Derek Gregory, “Postcolonialism and the Production of Nature,” in Noel Castree and Bruce Braun, eds., *Social Nature: Theory, Practice and Politics* (2001), 84-111 (B)
- Edward Said, “Empire, Geography and Culture,” in his *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), 3-14 (B)

**Week 4 (January 28): Exemplars**


Alexander von Humboldt, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of America, during the Years 1799-1804* [Read sections of your choice. The publication is available online at various sites, including www.biodiversitylibrary.org/bibliography/23548#/summaryr] (W)

**Week 5 (February 4): Interventions and Insurgencies, I**


**Week 8 (February 11): Regional Geographies**

**ESSAY PROPOSALS DUE**


**Week 7 (February 18): NO CLASS (READING WEEK)**

**Week 8 (February 25): Interventions and Insurgencies, II**


**Week 9 (March 4): Anti-Colonialism and Revolution, I**

- Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* [1955] [2001 edition, including the Introduction by Robin D. G. Kelley] (C)
Week 10 (March 11): Anti-Colonialism and Revolution, II

- Võ Nguyên Giáp, “The Vietnamese People’s War of Liberation against the French Imperialists and the American Interventionists (1945-1954),” in his People’s War, People’s Army: The Viet Cong Insurrection Manual for Underdeveloped Countries (1962), 9-38 (B)
- Ernesto “Che” Guevara, Guerilla Warfare (1961) [Various versions and portions are available online, including at https://archive.org/details/GuerrillaWarfare_856] (W)

Week 11 (March 18): ‘Quagmire’ and Ecocide

- David Zierler, “Gadgets and Guerillas,” in his The Invention of Ecocide: Agent Orange, Vietnam, and the Scientists who Changed the Way We Think About the Environment (2011), 48-66 (B)

Week 12 (March 25): Global War

- Watch the film on Camp Century at http://youtu.be/1Ujx_pND9wg (W)

Week 13 (April 1): Geographical War

- Michel Foucault, “Questions on Geography” (1976), in Colin Gordon (ed.), Power/Knowledge (1980), 63-77 (B)

ESSAYS DUE FRIDAY, APRIL 11

Course Administration:

Extensions will be granted only in the case of illness, and only on the prompt receipt of a completed University of Toronto medical certificate (copies are at http://illnessverification.utoronto.ca). Please
consult the graduate administrator if you are having difficulties during term that prevent you from completing course work due to extenuating circumstances.

Plagiarism and submitting an assignment under your name that you have not completed are offences under university policy. Plagiarism is quoting (or paraphrasing!) the work of an author, including fellow students, without a proper citation. Quotation marks are required for any word-for-word copy of a source text. Please consult section B.i. of the University’s “Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters” (www.governingcouncil.utoronto.ca/policies/behaveac.htm) for further information, along with the useful resource at www.writing.utoronto.ca/advice/using-sources/how-not-to-plagiarize.

If you require accommodations or have any accessibility concerns about the course, the classroom or course materials, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible: accessibility.services@utoronto.ca or www.accessibility.utoronto.ca.