**The Little Ice Age**

HIST 4705: Research Seminar in History of Environment Technology Science

MEDREN 5695: Advanced Seminar in Medieval and Renaissance Studies

Wednesdays 2:15-5pm

University Hall 024

Professor Sam White

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614-292-5596 (office phone, for voice calls)

Office Hours: 239 Dulles Hall, after class or by appointment.

**Course Description**

The late medieval and early modern periods of European historian were also the era that climate scientists call the “Little Ice Age”: the last major period of natural climate variability. Although the global cooling of those centuries was very small compared to current global warming, pre-industrial societies were highly vulnerable to extremes of climate and weather. Exploring the Little Ice Age helps us understand both their history and our present predicament.

This course explores the human experience of climatic changes and extremes from the Great Famine of the 1310s to the famous “Year without a Summer” in 1816, with a focus on Europe.   We’ll examine the Little Ice Age through case studies of historical events and primary historical sources, including works of art and literature. We’ll consider how climatic change challenged past societies and how they responded, adapted, and suffered.

***GE History Learning Goals:***

* Students acquire a perspective on history and an understanding of the factors that shape human activity.
* Students display knowledge about the origins and nature of contemporary issues and develop a foundation for future comparative understanding.
* Students think, speak, and write critically about primary and secondary historical sources by evaluating diverse interpretations of past events and ideas in their historical contexts.

***Additional Goals:***

* Students learn about the sources and techniques of past climate reconstruction from historical records.
* Students understand the roles of climatic change and extreme weather in history and the challenges of attributing societal impacts to climatic changes.
* Students develop research and writing skills in multidisciplinary history.
* Students examine the role of environmental instability and change in shaping past and present human culture and understandings of nature.

***Course Organization***

This is a seminar course that meets once a week. The course is focused on (1) discussion of weekly readings; (2) hands-on examination of sources for climate history; (3) researching and writing an original history paper.

***Reading:***

This course has four required books. Purchase of these books is optional. All will be made available electronically and/or placed on reserved at the main library:

Dagomar Degroot, *The Frigid Golden Age: Climate Change, the Little Ice Age, and the Dutch Republic, 1560–1720* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*, abridged ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017).

Sam White, *A Cold Welcome: The Little Ice Age and Europe’s Encounter with North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

Gillen D’Arcy Wood, *Tambora: The Eruption That Changed the World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014).

In addition, you have one textbook available for free online and in the main library reserve:

Sam White, Christian Pfister, and Franz Mauelshagen, eds., *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History* (London: Palgrave, 2018).

All other readings will be posted to Canvas or handed out during class.

***Course Credits:***

This course counts a research seminar for either the MEDREN or history majors. Please check with your department advisor for specific information.

***Course Policies:***

*Grading Scale:* A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-78), C- (70-72), D (60-69), F (below 60).  Scores will not necessarily be rounded up.

*Submitting Work:* Please submit all work to the appropriate Canvas assignment in a MS Word compatible format (.doc, .docx, .txt., or .rtf). Note that computer issues are not a valid excuse for late or incomplete work.

*Late Work:*  Late assignments will lose 10% of their points every day, weekends and holidays included, except in cases of documented family or medical emergencies. If you contact me at least three days before an assignment is due, I *might* in exceptional cases grant an extension. Assignments for other classes or other extracurricular activities are not a valid excuse for late work. Please note that the final essay deadline is final: no late papers will be accepted except in the case of serious, documented emergencies. In these cases, the student might receive an “incomplete” until the assignment is completed and graded.

*Statement on Plagiarism and Misconduct*: It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct (<http://sja.osu.edu/page.asp?id=1>).

Here is a direct link for discussion of plagiarism: <http://cstw.osu.edu/writingCenter/handouts/research_plagiarism.cfm>

Here is the direct link to the OSU Writing Center: [http://cstw.osu.edu](http://cstw.osu.edu/)

Any copying of any kind from any other student on any class assignment, essay, quiz, or exam will be considered cheating and will be reported to the Committee on Academic Misconduct.

*Statement on Disability Services*: Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu>

*Statement on Registration*: All students must be officially enrolled in the course by the end of the second full week of the semester. No requests to add the course will be approved by the Chair after that time. Enrolling officially and on time is solely the responsibility of the student.

***Assignments:***

*Attendance and Participation (20%):*

Students are expected to complete all assigned readings and come to class prepared to talk about the material and participate in group discussions and assignments.

*Quizzes (10%)*:

Short, factual in-class quizzes to make sure everyone is doing the reading.

*Weekly Reading Responses (10%):*

For at least 10 weeks over the course of the semester, you should post a brief (one-two paragraph) discussion of the readings and/or questions for discussion. The responses should indicate that you have truly read and understood the material. Students who consistently submit good responses will receive an A for this assignment, which counts for 10% of your final average.

*Research Presentation (10%):*

You will each give a short presentation of your research in class in week 15 (April 17). Please prepare slides and/or handouts and a thorough outline for your talk.

*Final Paper (50%):*

Please see the separate detailed essay instructions. Remember that the essay will have multiple steps, so please take note of all deadlines.

**Week 1 (1/9): Introduction**

*No reading*

**Week 2 (1/16): Climate, History, and the Little Ice Age**

Reading

Christian Pfister, Sam White, and Franz Mauelshagen, “General Introduction: Weather, Climate, and Human History,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History*, ed. Sam White, Christian Pfister, and Franz Mauelshagen (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018), 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-43020-5_1>.

Eduardo Zorita, Sebastian Wagner, and Fredrik Schenk, “The Global Climate System,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History*, ed. Sam White, Christian Pfister, and Franz Mauelshagen (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018), 21–26, <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-43020-5_2>.

 Stefan Brönnimann, Christian Pfister, and Sam White, “Archives of Nature and Archives of Societies,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History*, ed. Sam White, Christian Pfister, and Franz Mauelshagen (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018), 27–36, <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-43020-5_3>.

 Benjamin Lieberman and Elizabeth Gordon, *Climate Change in Human History: Prehistory to the Present* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2018), 101-132.

**Week 3 (1/23): Climate, Famine, and Death in the Late Middle Ages**

Christian Pfister, “Evidence from the Archives of Societies: Documentary Evidence—Overview,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History*, ed. Sam White, Christian Pfister, and Franz Mauelshagen (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018), 37–47, <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-43020-5_4>.

Christian Rohr, Chantal Camenisch, and Kathleen Pribyl, “European Middle Ages,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History*, ed. Sam White, Christian Pfister, and Franz Mauelshagen (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018), 247–63, <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-43020-5_22>.

Philip Slavin, “The 1310s Event,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Climate History*, ed. Sam White, Christian Pfister, and Franz Mauelshagen (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2018), 495–515, <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-43020-5_33>.

\*\*Week 4 was canceled due to cold\*\*

**Week 5 (2/6): Perceiving the Little Ice Age**

Sam White, *A Cold Welcome: The Little Ice Age and Europe’s Encounter with North America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017), 1-33, 50-108.

Thomas Dekker, *The Great Frost* (London: Henry Gosson, 1608).

**Week 6 (2/13): The LIA and Religion**

White, *Cold Welcome*,108-35, 154-256.

Selections from early colonial narratives.

**Week 7 (2/20): Crisis and Conflict (1)**

Geoffrey Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate Change and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*, abridged ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), selections.

**Week 8 (2/27): Crisis and Conflict (2)**

Parker, *Global Crisis*, selections.

**Week 9 (3/6): Climate and Adaptation**

Dagomar Degroot, *The Frigid Golden Age: Climate Change, the Little Ice Age, and the Dutch Republic, 1560–1720* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 1-49, 250-312.

Dutch winter landscape paintings.

**Week 10 Spring Break - No Class**

**Week 11 (3/20): Disaster and Memory**

Christian Pfister, *“The Monster Swallows You”: Disaster Memory and Risk Culture in Western Europe, 1500-2000*, Rachel Carson Center Perspectives 2011/1 (Munich: Rachel Carson Center, 2011).

Frank Oberholzner, “From an Act of God to an Insurable Risk: The Change in the Perception of Hailstorms and Thunderstorms since the Early Modern Period,” *Environment and History* 17 (2011): 133–52.

Adam Sundberg, “Claiming the Past: History, Memory, and Innovation Following the Christmas Flood of 1717,” *Environmental History* 20 (2015): 238–61.

Daniel Defoe, *The Storm: Or, a Collection of the Most Remarkable Casualties and Disasters Which Happen’d in the Late Dreadful Tempest, Both by Sea and Land* (London: G. Sawbridge, 1704), selections.

**Week 12 (3/27): Crisis, Art, and Literature**

Gillen D’Arcy Wood, *Tambora: The Eruption That Changed the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 1-71, 171-198.

Selections from Shelley and Byron.

**Week 13 (4/3): Science, Exploration, and New Theories of Climate**

Gillen D’Arcy Wood, *Tambora: The Eruption That Changed the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 121-170, 199-234.

Selections from Shelley and Byron.

**Week 14 (4/10): From the Little Ice Age to Global Warming**

Mike Hulme, “Reducing the Future to Climate: A Story of Climate Determinism and Reductionism,” *Osiris* 26 (2011): 245–66.

David Glassberg, “Place, Memory, and Climate Change,” *The Public Historian* 36 (2014): 17–30.

*­­*Selections from contemporary art, film, and literature related to climate change.

**Week 15 (4/17): Student Presentations**

*No reading*