**INSTHUM 311: Topics in Interdisciplinary Studies—The Year without a Summer**

**Prof. White (Norman Freehling Visiting Professor)**

wsamuel@umich.edu

Time: Wed 2-4PM

Location: Institute for Humanities, Osterman Common Room (first floor)

**Course Description**

In 1815, Indonesia’s Tambora volcano blew apart in one of the largest eruptions of the past 3,000 years. Dust and aerosols shot high into the atmosphere, dimming sunlight and bringing on the infamous 1816 “Year without a Summer.” Crop failures and famines, migration and epidemics were only the some of the consequences. Artists painted the eerie red skies, scientists explored advancing glaciers and retreating sea ice, and Mary Shelly composed the story of *Frankenstein* in the gloomy weather. This course will explore the Year without a Summer in all its climatic and human dimensions and ask what it might tell us about the experience of climate change today. In each lesson, we’ll discuss one of the environmental or societal themes in this episode and then I will present key information you need to know for the following week. We’ll end the course with presentations relating the Year without a Summer to contemporary climate anxieties.

**Course Policies**

* Show up every week prepared to answer questions and discuss the material.
* Discussions should be informed, polite, and professional, especially in cases where you disagree with your classmates—which I encourage you to do, since it makes the class more interesting.
* No electronics in class, except as an approved accommodation for disability.

**University Policies and Statements**

Student Sexual Misconduct Policy

Title IX prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex, which includes sexual misconduct — including harassment, domestic and dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. We understand that sexual violence can undermine students’ academic success and we encourage anyone dealing with sexual misconduct to talk to someone about their experience, so they can get the support they need. Confidential support and academic advocacy can be found with the Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center (SAPAC) on their 24-hour crisis line, 734.936.3333 and at sapac.umich.edu. Alleged violations can be non-confidentially reported to the Office for Institutional Equity (OIE) at institutional.equity@umich.edu

Students with Disabilities

If you think you may need an accommodation for a disability, please let me know at the beginning of the term. Next, you should contact the Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) office. Once your eligibility for an accommodation has been determined, you will be issued a Verified Individual Services Accommodation (VISA) form and we can arrange for your accommodation. Any information you provide is private and confidential and will be treated as such. If you already have a VISA form from SSD, please present this form to me at the beginning of the term, but no later than at least two weeks prior to the need for the accommodation so that there is enough time for the appropriate arrangements to be made.

Academic Misconduct

The University of Michigan community functions best when its members treat one another with honesty, fairness, respect, and trust. The college promotes the assumption of personal responsibility and integrity, and prohibits all forms of academic dishonesty and misconduct. All cases of academic misconduct will be referred to the Office of the Assistant Dean for Undergraduate Education. Being found responsible for academic

misconduct will usually result in a grade sanction, in addition to any sanction from the college. For more information, including examples of behaviors that are considered academic misconduct and potential sanctions, please see lsa.umich.edu/lsa/academics/academic-integrity.html

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

University of Michigan is committed to advancing the mental health and wellbeing of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, contact Counseling and Psychological Services

(CAPS) at 734.764.8312 and caps.umich.edu during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselors physically located in schools on both North and Central Campus. You may also consult University Health Service (UHS) at 734.764.8320 and

uhs.umich.edu/mentalhealthsvcs, or for alcohol or drug concerns, see uhs.umich.edu/aodresources. For a listing of other mental health resources available on and off campus, visit umich.edu/~mhealth/

Policy on Class Attendance

It is critical that students attend classes from the beginning of the term. Even though students may be registered officially for a course, departments may give away a student’s place in a course if the student does not attend the first two meetings of the course. At the same time, departments are not obligated to withdraw students officially from the course, even if the student has been informed that their place in a course has been taken away. Students always are responsible for the accuracy of their own schedules. Students registered for a course that they do not intend to keep should drop it so that the space is available for other students, and so faculty will have an accurate class roster. In most instances, students are not automatically dropped from a class roster for nonattendance.

Classes dropped after the drop deadline will result in a “W” on a student’s transcript whether or not the student has attended.

Absences from Class Due to Illness or Unanticipated Circumstances

Students are expected to attend class regularly and meet all requirements set by the instructor. When a student misses class because of an illness or unanticipated event, it is the student’s responsibility to notify the instructor and provide an explanation. If the student’s absence due to illness causes the student to miss an assignment, an exam, or any other required work for the class affecting the course grade, the instructor has the right to require additional documentation verifying the cause of absence.

Report My Illness Website: https://webapps.lsa.umich.edu/SAA/UGStuAdv/App/Illness/RptIll.aspx

**Course Books**

During this course, we will read one book:

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

For each lesson, I will give you a guide to the chapter(s) you will read, with questions to guide your note-taking and shape discussion.

For reference to the climate system and historical climate reconstruction, the following textbook is available electronically through the U Mich library system:

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

In addition, we will read some selections from primary historical sources in class.

**Assignments and Grading**

Reaction papers

Each week, for lessons 2 through 5, you will write a short (~1-page) reaction paper, due by noon the day of class. This paper will consist of one paragraph in which you summarize the reading, what you found most interesting or controversial about it, and any points you’d like to discuss; and one paragraph in which you answer a question indicated on the study guide for that lesson. 8 points each.

Quizzes

There will be a short quiz on the reading and presentations each week during lessons 2 through 5. 8 points each.

Attendance and Discussion

You are expected to come to each class ready to discuss the reading. You will be graded not only on whether you participate, but on whether your participation is informed, constructive, and demonstrates that you have actually completed and understood the reading. 80 points.

Presentations

On the last day of class, each student will make a presentation or participate in a group presentation, which should last about 4 minutes for each student involved. This presentation should discuss a cultural artefact that reflects the impact of the Tambora eruption or another Little Ice Age “year without a summer” and/or the memory of these past events in modern times and/or compares these past events to present climate change anxieties. I’d encourage you to be flexible and creative in picking a topic and to come up with group projects. You must get your topic approved by me a week ahead of time and deliver any presentations, images, video clips, etc. at least an hour before the final lesson. 20 points.

*Grade scale (by percentage of all possible points):* A (93-100), A-(90-92), B+ (87-89), B (82-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C-(70-72), D+ (67-69), D (63-66), D- (60-62) F (below 60).

\*No late work will be accepted. I will give you half the possible points for quizzes, reaction papers, and participation for the first lesson you miss, and no points for each subsequent lesson.

**Course Schedule**

**10/24** Lesson 1: Introduction

no reading

**10/31** Lesson 2: Volcanic Eruptions, Global Climate, and the Little Ice Age

Wood, *Tambora*, 12-60.

**11/7** Lesson 3: Famine

Wood, *Tambora*, 60-71, 97-120.

**11/14** Lesson 4:Disease

Wood, *Tambora*, 72-96, 171-198.

\*No classes on 11/21 – Thanksgiving holiday

**11/28** Lesson 5: Science, Technology, Adaptation

Wood, *Tambora*, 121-170.

**12/5** Lesson 6: Climate and Culture—Then and Now

Wood, *Tambora*, 199-234.

\*Presentations in class