

## **HIU34526: The Politics of Nature, Environmentalism in the Twentieth Century**

Module Coordinator: Dr. Katja Bruish

Weighting: 10 ECTS

Assessment: 40% Essay, 60% Exam

Duration: Michaelmas Term

Contact Hours: 2 hours per week

As citizens and consumers, we are confronted with environmental issues almost on a daily basis: In the news we learn about global warming as a contested field of international and national politics and a major threat for human well-being and the planet as a whole; environmental policies attempt to regulate how we handle our waste; labels on our food inform us about whether artificial fertilizers or pesticides have been applied in their production. Historically, such widespread concern about and awareness of the environment is a rather recent phenomenon. It emerged in response to the fundamental transformation of the non-human world through modern economic growth, the growth of cities, large-scale infrastructural projects, but also the emergence of the global South after the end of European empires and the nuclear arms race of the Cold War. In this module, we will explore the rise of the environment as an idea, as an area of national and international governance, and as a sphere of civic activism. Which values underpinned public concerns about the non-human world? What was the role of scientific evidence in shaping political and public anxieties of environmental decline? How could environmentalist ideas enter the sphere of policy-making? How effective have political attempts to regulate human-nature relations been? And why, after all, is it still so difficult to address global climate change? Through a range of primary sources, such as newspapers, scientific writings, pamphlets and policy documents, we will take a transnational perspective on the politics of nature in the 20th century. In so doing, we will explore how history can help us understand why moving towards more sustainable relationships with the environment remains so challenging.