

HHU22001: Humans and Nature in History (5 ECTS)

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Weighting: 5 ECTS

Assessment: TBC

Duration: Michaelmas Term

Contact Hours: TBC

Dichotomies, such as humans/nature and nature/culture, have been central to modern worldviews. Nevertheless, humans have always lived in complex relationships with the non-human world: While human societies have harnessed animals, plants, minerals or the soil for their own needs, the living and non-living environment always put constraints on or even interfered with human agency. In contrast to the modern myth of mankind's liberation from nature, human interactions with the non-human world got more – and not less – intense in the past 200 years, creating some of the most severe environmental problems that we are facing today. In this module, we will take an environmental perspective on European imperialism, the Industrial Revolution, modern farming practices and international conflict to explore the relationship between social and ecological change in the modern world. At the same time, we will trace the rise of nature protection and environmental policies as responses to modernity's unintended by-products, such as pollution, the loss of wildlife, nuclear accidents and climate change. This module will introduce key approaches to the exciting study of historical human-nature relations, and combine local and transnational case studies that exemplify how the environment has mattered in modern history.