

Environmental History (A004069)

Course size *(nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)*

Credits 5.0

Study time 150 h

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2026-2027

A (semester 2)

Dutch

Gent

lecture

Lecturers in academic year 2026-2027

Verbruggen, Christophe

LW03

lecturer-in-charge

Govaerts, Sander

LW03

co-lecturer

Lambrecht, Thijs

LW03

co-lecturer

Pouillard, Violette

LW03

co-lecturer

Thoen, Erik

LW03

co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2026-2027

Bachelor of Arts in History

5

A

Bachelor of Science in Communication Science

5

A

Bachelor of Science in Political Science

5

A

Micro-credential Environmental Humanities

5

A

Micro-credential Environmental Humanities

5

A

Linking Course Master of Arts in History

5

A

Preparatory Course Master of Arts in History

5

A

Elective Set History

5

A

Elective Set Sustainability and Society

5

A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Environment, Ecology, history, environmental history, the role of mankind in the environment

Position of the course

This course wants to give a survey of problems concerning the relation men-nature in history. How did man influence nature and vice versa, how did nature, throughout history, influence human society? Which sources are there and how should they be studied critically. The approach is a holistic interdisciplinary approach focusing on long term evolutions during the last 10000 years.

Contents

After a short overview of the history of the discipline "environmental history", there will be dealt with some important topics of environmental history. For every topic, actual environmental problems are taken as a starting point to place them in their historical context and to confront them with the current debates. The themes that can be dealt with are:

- Taking the problems of 'global warming' as a starting point, the possible warming of our climate will be placed in the context of the history of the climate in the last 10000 years.
- Taking the declining importance of the Western rural sector as a starting point, the 'old agriculture' will be compared with the 'modern agriculture', and linked also to the changed consuming patterns.
- The actual decline of biodiversity will be placed in its historical context.

- Taking the energy supply problems as a starting point, the class will deal with energy supply problems in the industrial and pre-industrial society
- Taking the current destruction of our historical landscape as a starting point, the course will deal with some aspects of the changing landscape, especially focussing on forestation and deforestation.
- Taking the current debate of globalisation as a starting point, the course will deal with the relation between, globalisation, economy and environmental history
- Taking the actual problems of pollution as a starting point, these problems will be placed in their historical context and within the context of the different ideas and debates concerning the roots of destruction of nature.
- Taking the actual perception of nature as a starting point, an overview of the changing perception of the relation men- nature will be presented.

Initial competences

To have an elementary general knowledge of history from prehistory to the contemporary times.

Final competences

- 1 Have proficient knowledge of the historical terminological framework, the most important historical facts, and historical explanations.
- 2 Have the ability to critically apply quantitative and qualitative methods and techniques.
- 3 Have the ability to critically reflect upon the role of the global perspective, the dynamics of processes, and recurrences in historical situations.
- 4 Have the ability to orally communicate the results of historical research with both experts and laypersons, and in another language.
- 5 Have the ability to interpret contemporary developments from a historical-comparative perspective.
- 6 Be able to research sustainable development from a long-term perspective.
- 7 Being able to examine sustainable development from a long-term perspective.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

Access to this course unit via an exam contract is unrestricted

Teaching methods

Excursion, Lecture, Independent work

Extra information on the teaching methods

Lecture sessions based on PowerPoint presentations and a textbook. Additionally, at least one excursion takes place to further explore the theme of landscape history.

Study material

Type: Handbook

Name: De Keyzer, Maïka, Tim Soens, and Christophe Verbruggen, eds. 2024. "Mens En Natuur: Een Geschiedenis." Gent: Academia Press.
 Indicative price: € 39
 Optional: no
 Language : Dutch
 ISBN : 978-9-40149-791-6
 Number of Pages : 320
 Online Available : No
 Available in the Library : Yes
 Available through Student Association : Yes
 Usability and Lifetime within the Course Unit : intensive
 Usability and Lifetime within the Study Programme : one-time
 Usability and Lifetime after the Study Programme : occasionally
 Additional information: Excursion is free of charge.

References

De Keyzer, Maïka, Tim Soens, and Christophe Verbruggen, eds. 2024. "Mens En Natuur: Een Geschiedenis." Gent: Academia Press.

Course content-related study coaching

Contact hours with the professor; possible assistance of collaborators; feed back after the exams

Assessment moments

end-of-term and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the first examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic assessment during the second examination period

Written assessment

Examination methods in case of permanent assessment

Participation

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent assessment

examination during the second examination period is not possible

Extra information on the examination methods

Written exam and participation.

Calculation of the examination mark

Periodical (100%).

Facilities for Working Students

Facilities:

- 1 Student attendance during educational activities is required
- 2 Foreign students only can get permission not to attend the classes (personal contact with professor is required)
- 3 Possible rescheduling of the examination to a different time in the same academic year if there is a valuable reason.
- 4 Feedback can be given by email or during an appointment during and after office hours

Extra information:

Always contact the lecturer

For more information concerning flexible learning: contact the monitoring service of the faculty of Arts and philosophy