History 419: The Cold War and Climate Change  
Fall 2013

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Humanities 309  
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Office hours: by appointment

Grading: participation, weekly assignment, and term paper are each worth one third of the total course grade.

Participation: If you attend class, contribute to discussion, and demonstrate a working knowledge of the readings you will get full participation credit.

Weekly assignment: Each week I would like you to locate a contemporary primary source relevant to the week’s assigned readings. Use your imagination, but good sources would be editorials or articles in Science, Nature, Physics Today, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, New York Times, Time, etc. You should post a pdf or scan of your source on the course Owl-Space site by Sunday evening each week. You may not submit the same source as another student – so submit early rather than often!

Final paper: In lieu of a final exam; due by midnight the last day of exam period. Papers may cover any aspect of the connection between the Cold War and climate change – they need not be historical, nor need they focus on science and technology.

Note: any student with a documented disability needing academic adjustment or accommodations is requested to speak with me during the first two weeks of class. All discussions will remain confidential. Students with disabilities should also contact Disabled Student Services in the Ley Student Center.

Learning outcomes: By the end of this course, you should be able to articulate the longer-term trends that have contributed to humans’ ability to perceive and measure anthropogenic climate change, as well as to our inability to do much about it. I fully expect that substantive content to disappear quickly from your consciousness after you graduate, but the more important outcome of this course is that you will be a more informed citizen when thinking about climate change’s human dimensions: its causes, our knowledge of it, causes of climate denialism, etc.

Plagiarism and the Honor Code: Every assignment in this course is covered by Rice’s Honor Code. That means that you must adhere to standard US academic practice when it comes to originality of work and citation of sources. Any time you quote from a source, you must cite that source and you must indicate that you are quoting rather than paraphrasing. Any time you paraphrase a source, you must acknowledge it. If you rely on an idea borrowed from someone else, you should indicate that. Whatever citation style you choose should be (A) consistent and (B) clear enough that your reader can track down your source and verify it.
Week of 8/28: Course Introduction (reading optional)


Week of 9/4: Understandings of Climate Change at/before the Cold War’s Outset


Week of 9/11: The Emergence of Earth and Climate as Military/Scientific Objects


Week of 9/18: Nuclear Weapons and the Science of Earth and Climate


**Week of 9/25: Nuclear Weapons and Modification of the Globe**


**Week of 10/2: Environmental Warfare: Modifying Climate and Biome on Purpose**


**Week of 10/9: Measuring and Debating the Global/Local Risks of Nuclear Testing**


Week of 10/16: The Erosion of the Establishment’s Scientific Authority


Week of 10/23: Communes and Space Colonies as Cold War Escapism


Week of 10/30: Proxy Wars, the “Third” World, and the Scarcity Debate


Week of 11/6: Steering Cold War Infrastructures toward Environmental Issues


Week of 11/13: The Space Race and the (In)Visibility of Climate Change


Week of 11/20: The Coldest War – Winters Asteroidal, Volcanic, Nuclear


Week of 11/27: Climate Denialism in a Cold War Context


**Week of 12/4: Legacies: Geoengineering and Solar Power [among others]**


