Committee on Environment, Geography and Urbanization

Department Website: https://cegu.uchicago.edu/
Based in the Division of Social Sciences at the University of Chicago, the Committee on Environment, Geography and Urbanization (CEGU) is an interdisciplinary platform for critical thinking, advanced research, and innovative pedagogy on the societal and spatial dimensions of climate change, biodiversity loss, and other kinds of environmental transformation.

Key fields of research and pedagogy include urban environmental studies and sustainable urbanism; energy histories and geographies; environmental humanities; spatial and environmental media; environmental policy, design and practice; and community engagement.

Committee on Environment, Geography and Urbanization Courses

CEGU 31406. Britain 1760-1880: The Origins of Fossil Capitalism. 100 Units.

Britain rose to global dominance after 1760 by pioneering the first fossil-fuel economy. This course explores the profound impact of coal and steam on every aspect of British society, from politics and religion to industrial capitalism and the pursuit of empire. Such historical investigation also serves a second purpose by helping us see our own fossil-fuel economy with fresh eyes through direct comparison with Victorian energy use. How much does the modern world owe to the fossil capitalism of the Victorians? Assignments include short essays that introduce students to primary sources (texts, artifacts, and images) and a longer paper that examines in greater depth a specific aspect of the age of steam.
Instructor(s): F. Albritton Jonsson Terms Offered: Winter
Equivalent Course(s): HIST 31406, HIST 21406, CEGU 21406, CHSS 31406, HIPS 21406

CEGU 31501. Genealogies of Environmental Organizing and Activism. 100 Units.

This course explores how organizations-civic, private, governmental-working in the field of environmental advocacy construct, deploy and are shaped by distinct discourses governing relationships between nature and society. The environment is a field of social action in which organizations attempt to effect change in large domains like resource conservation, access, stewardship, and a basic right to environmental quality in everyday life. The work of effecting change in these complex domains can assume a variety of forms including public policy (through the agencies of the state), private enterprise (through the agency of the market), 'third sector' advocacy (through the agency of nonprofit organizations) and social activism (through the agency of social movements and community organizations). State, market, civil society and social movement organizations are where ideas are transmitted from theory to practice and back again in a recursive, dialectical process. These contrasting forms of organization have different histories, wellsprings and degrees of social power. Moreover, they bring different epistemologies to their claims about being legitimate custodians of nature-that is to say they can be understood genealogically. As such, organizations working to effect environment change are at once animated by and constitutive of distinct discourses governing the relationships between nature and society. The course explores how those distinct discourses are associated with a suite of different organizational realms of social action; the goal is trying to connect the dots between discursive formations and organizational forms.
Instructor(s): Mary Beth Pudup Terms Offered: Autumn
Note(s): This course counts towards the ENST 4th year Capstone requirement.
Equivalent Course(s): MAPS 31101, SSAD 41501, CEGU 21501, HMRT 21501, SSAD 21501, GLST 21501, ENST 21501

CEGU 32301. Digital Geographies of Climate Justice. 100 Units.

Struggles for climate and environmental justice are increasingly mediated by digital technologies and geospatial data, especially in the Global South. In Amazonia, for example, the plight of indigenous groups bearing the brunt of ecological dispossession and political violence by deforestation is frequently represented through remotely-sensed data showing time-series of canopy loss; in turn, these data are often prompted, groundtruthed, and mobilized by indigenous communities and affiliated activists in legal and political campaigns. In parallel, across the world ocean, countries across the Global South- from Papua New Guinea and Ecuador to Ghana- are partnering with watch-dog organizations using satellite imagery and GPS data to track illegal fishing and human rights abuses at sea, acting as an auxiliary ecological police force to identify and provide data to prosecute offending vessels. The proliferation of these digital geographic technologies and techniques pose a number of complex questions. Drawing on contemporary cases, experimental projects in “forensic” approaches to activism, and recent work in critical geography, aesthetics, STS, and political theory, this seminar will attempt to map out these digital geographies of climate justice as they emerge. The course will also involve introduction to entry-level remote sensing + GIS workflows (no prior experience required) in a pair of intensive workshops led by guest lecturers/practitioners.
Instructor(s): Alexander Arroyo Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): Undergraduate/Graduate Course - only open to 3rd and 4th year undergraduate students. This course counts toward the 4th year ENST capstone requirement.
Equivalent Course(s): CEGU 22301, GLST 29301, MAPH 32301, ENST 22301
CEGU 34660. Urban Geography. 100 Units.
This course examines the spatial organization and current restructuring of modern cities in light of the economic, social, cultural, and political forces that shape them. It explores the systematic interactions between social processes and physical system. We cover basic concepts of urbanism and urbanization, systems of cities urban growth, migration, centralization and decentralization, land-use dynamics, physical geography, urban morphology, and planning. Field trip in Chicago region required. This course is part of the College Course Cluster, Urban Design.

Instructor(s): M. Conzen Terms Offered: Winter
Note(s): This course counts towards the ENST 4th year Capstone requirement. This course offered in even years.
Equivalent Course(s): ARCH 24660, ENST 24660, CEGU 24660

CEGU 36100. Roots of the Modern American City. 100 Units.
This course traces the economic, social, and physical development of the city in North America from pre-European times to the mid-twentieth century. We emphasize evolving regional urban systems, the changing spatial organization of people and land use in urban areas, and the developing distinctiveness of American urban landscapes. All-day Illinois field trip required. This course is part of the College Course Cluster, Urban Design.

Instructor(s): M. Conzen Terms Offered: Autumn. Offered 2021-22
Note(s): This course counts towards the ENST 4th year Capstone requirement. This course offered in odd years.
Equivalent Course(s): CHST 26100, CEGU 26100, ARCH 26100, HIST 28900, ENST 26100

CEGU 44000. Inhabiting in the Renaissance. 100 Units.
In a seventeenth-century manuscript map of Brazilian coast, the cartographer wrote, in the middle of an empty space, "pays inhabitué que par des sauvages," emphasizing among other things the phonetic and semiotic confusion between inhabiting, habituating or settling, and the uninhabitable as a concept. This seminar will look at the French Renaissance through the lens of inhabiting, in a wide sense of the term, whether it is a house, a plot of land, your local zone or the earth. As a time that is confronted with narratives of other, distant ways of making a home, the French Renaissance deserves to be re-framed as a critical moment in defining how the humans of Humanism approached and apprehended their environment and their way of life, as well as their dependence on resources and on other beings. Students will read canonical texts such as Montaigne's "Essais," Rabelais's "Gargantua" and "Pantagruel," Jean de Léry's "Histoire d'un voyage fait en la terre du Brésil," Marguerite de Navarre's "Heptaméron," as well as the rustic manuals of Charles Estienne and Jean Liebault and of Olivier de Serres. Aside from recent scholarship on early modern French literature and ecocriticism, we will turn to an interdisciplinary corpus of thinkers of ecology (from theory to psychology and nonfiction) to give new depth to the primary sources, as well as dive into the vibrant and recent French ecological thought of Bruno Latour, Emanuele Coccia, Isabelle Stengers, and Emilie Hache.

Instructor(s): Pauline Goul Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): Taught in English. Materials available in English and French.
Equivalent Course(s): FREN 44000

CEGU 51601. Material Histories of the Modern World, c. 1700 to the present. 100 Units.
This seminar explores the changing relationship between people and things in modern and contemporary history and introduces students to major historical interpretations, methods and sources. In the seminar, we will read classic as well as recent texts. Case studies will include the debate about the "industrious" and "consumer revolutions"; commodity biographies (sugar, tea, cotton); histories of comfort; town planning and mobility in 20th century Britain and Japan; food and diet in the British empire; waste in Republican Beijing; the material culture of the home in the Eastern Bloc; energy transitions and everyday life.

Instructor(s): F. Albritton Jonsson, F. Trentmann Terms Offered: Spring
Equivalent Course(s): CHSS 51601, HIST 51601

CEGU 51802. Climate Ethics. 100 Units.
Anthropogenic climate change is the largest challenge facing human civilization. Its physical and temporal scale and unprecedented complexity at minimum require extensions of existing ethical systems, if not new ethical tools. This course will begin by examining natural and social-scientific studies of climate change and its current and predicted effects (e.g. the reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the Stern Review). Most of the course will examine how religious and philosophical ethical systems respond to the vast temporal and spatial scales of climate change and its inherent uncertainties. For instance, common principles of environmental ethics such as justice and responsibility are often reimagined in climate ethics. We will also explore the degree to which the assumptions of many modern Western ethical systems including linear causality, an emphasis on individuals, and purely rational decision-making foster or inhibit climate ethics. In the course, we will take a comparative approach to environmental ethics and may examine perspectives from secular Western philosophy, Christianity (Catholic and Protestant), Buddhist, and Islamic thought.

Instructor(s): Sarah Fredericks Terms Offered: Spring
Note(s): This course meets the CS Committee distribution requirement for Divinity students. Undergraduates must petition to enroll.
Equivalent Course(s): CHSS 51802, RETH 51802, KNOW 51802

CEGU 69400. Climate Change and Human Mobility. 100 Units.
A 2021 UN report estimated that 21.5 million people have been forced to move, each year, for over a decade, due to climate change. The report states: “weather-related crises have triggered more than twice as much displacement as conflict and violence in the last decade” (UNHCR, 2021). In spite of mounting evidence that
climate change is to blame for these catastrophic weather-related events and associated increases in migration, the UNHCR eligibility criteria for refugee status doesn't include climate change. Due to political challenges involved in considering such a definition change, the UN convened member states to establish a global compact for migration that takes the effects of climate change into consideration. The Global Compact suggests rights and obligations of climate change migrants, and standards to guide sovereign states in protecting these rights. Given the growth in climate change related migration over the last decade, and the complicated nature of implementation with such a broad international instrument such as the Global Compact, there is much room for development within the climate change and human mobility sector. This course will: examine the issue of climate change and its relationship to human mobility using human rights, political ecology, and social policy perspectives; consider how these different perspectives for understanding the problem suggest different types of policy solutions; and consider the impact of these solutions for those affected.

Terms Offered: TBD
Equivalent Course(s): ENST 29400, SSAD 69400, HMRT 39401, SSAD 29400, CEGU 29400, CHST 29400