

Global Environmental History-distance

Discussion questions for online seminar, Wednesday October 17th 18:00-20:00

The seminar should last for 2 hours. Please enter the online chat room at least fifteen minutes before the seminar starts.

Please discuss the following questions during the seminar. **From the following five subjects, you should discuss at least three.** The groups have the choice whether to engage in deeper discussions about fewer questions or cover more questions more broadly. You may discuss the following subjects in the order of your own choice. Remember to keep to the subjects so that you can make the most of the seminar!

1. Discuss the idea of societal collapse. What is your opinion on the collapse of the Easter islands civilization based on the course material? What processes have led to the collapse of historical societies? Discuss the different perspectives presented in the course literature and online course material concerning collapse. (Online course material from week 39, 40 and 41).
2. Discuss the *more than human perspective* presented in the online course material from week 41. According to David Abram and Michael Pollan most humans have a tendency to view nature as a backdrop to human activities and human history, instead of nature having agency in itself. What do you think about this perspective? If you agree, why do you think we have this tendency to view nature mainly in relation to the human species? Have we always viewed nature this way?
3. Discuss the different theories presented in the course material concerning the so called potato famine on Ireland 1846-1851. Clive Ponting writes about his view of the famine in chapter 6 of his book *A new green history of the world* and in the movie *The botany of desire* more theories about the Irish famine is presented (week 41). In the BBC article on the effects of colonialism related to the famine on Ireland different theories are criticized and new perspectives are shown (week 42). What do you think about this discourse? What do you think are the main reasons to the mass starvation on Ireland? You may also find Anneli Eblom's article "Society, agency and environment: what we can learn from history" useful in discussion (week 42).

4. Discuss the relationship between the way humans have used natural resources through history and how humans have viewed nature. How have humans lived and how have they made a living in relation to nature? How has human health and well being been dependent on nature through history? (Clive Ponting's book and the course material from week 38 and 42).

5. In the lecture by Will Steffen about the Anthropocene he presents the view of our current geological era as one where the human species is responsible for changes to the planet. As all eras eventually come to an end (as you have seen in the course material), how do you think the current one will end? What do you think will come after this era?

Good luck!

Sara and Karin
Course coordinators