

## KIN4550, fall 2019

### China's eco-environmental challenges and society's responses

China's impressive economic achievements have come at a high cost for its ecological environment: air pollution, water pollution, and soil contamination are present almost everywhere and affects everyone. Historical data and sources also inform us that environmental degradation has a long history in China due to high population density, early proto-industrialization, and general neglect for the intrinsic value of nature. In addition, China is now the world's biggest emitter of carbon dioxide and has recently acknowledged its contributions to global warming and the need for drastic mitigation of greenhouse gases. Facing these tremendous challenges, remarkable shifts in the way that Chinese society communicates and tackles these problems are occurring. At the same time, "environmental pollution" and "climate change" seem to represent distinct aspects in Chinese discourses about ecological 'sustainability', rather than two sides of one coin. In this seminar we will scrutinize this observation and look, in particular, at relevant historical and contemporary public debates, as well as at existing research on environmental conceptions, crucial policies and popular initiatives, to approach these issues – using both English and Chinese language sources. In addition, general notions such as "sustainability", "discourse", "conceptual history", the "anthropocene", "ecological communication" and "authoritarian environmentalism" will be discussed as concepts that can inform our analyses.

#### *Syllabus:*

McNeill, J.R. and Peter Engelke. (2014) *The Great Acceleration: An Environmental History of the Anthropocene since 1949*. Cambridge, Mass., The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

In addition, relevant articles will be uploaded to Canvas.

Detailed course plan and texts for the weekly reading assignments will be available in Canvas in August.