

# Nature and Environment in Early Modern Worlds

Organisers: Tom Cutterham, Katie Bank, Simon Smith

**24-25 June 2024**

The early modern period was pivotal in the emergence of hyper-extractive and carbon-intensive environmental regimes, driven by the growth of global commerce, slavery, and empire. In the same period—between Columbus' voyages and the age of coal and steam—peoples both within and outside of imperial power-structures were developing new ways of understanding nature, and humanity's relation to it. Since the global climate crisis began to be seriously acknowledged over the last few decades, scholars have increasingly turned their attention to these intertwined problems, and to their early modern roots. At this two-day interdisciplinary conference, we aim to showcase work that engages with questions of nature and environment, and to encourage conversations about how our work on early modern worlds might intersect with those the contemporary and the future.

We invite proposals for individual scholarly papers and for roundtables—or other, creative approaches to academic presentations—for a conference that will take place at the University of Birmingham, Edgbaston on Monday–Tuesday, 24–25 June 2024. Scholars of all career-stages and affiliations, including independent scholars, are welcome to submit proposals, but we especially welcome papers from postgraduate students. A keynote address will be delivered by Professor Peter Mancall (University of Southern California), author of *Nature and Culture in the Early Modern Atlantic* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017) among many other works. Thanks to the support of the Centre for Reformation and Early Modern Studies, the Birmingham Eighteenth Century Centre, and the Birmingham Research Institute for History and Cultures, refreshments will be provided and there will be no fee for attendance.

Topics could include, but are not limited to:

- Creative arts (poetry, music, art and more) and 'natural' soundscapes
- Reflections on city and country
- Agricultural improvement, enclosure, scientific farming
- Conceptualisations of the natural and the artificial
- Environmental impacts of early modern enslavement
- Imagining and recreating nature in formal environments
- Social and anthropological effects of climate difference

Please send proposals of no more than 300 words, adding a one-sentence biography of each contributor, in the body of an email to [t.cutterham@bham.ac.uk](mailto:t.cutterham@bham.ac.uk), [k.n.bank@bham.ac.uk](mailto:k.n.bank@bham.ac.uk) and [s.c.smith@bham.ac.uk](mailto:s.c.smith@bham.ac.uk) by **5pm on Friday 12th April** 2024. While this is primarily an in-person event, virtual paper presentation may be possible. Please indicate if this is your preferred method of delivery when submitting your abstract.



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