

The United States in the Anthropocene

University of Bologna, Forlì Campus, 8-9 June 2023

USAbroad invites submissions for a two-day workshop and its 2024 issue. Authors of the selected abstracts will participate in the workshop and have their articles automatically considered for the 2024 issue of the journal. To favor the event's attendance, all the selected participants will receive a travel and accommodation grant. More details on the logistics of the event, submission deadlines and grants can be found at <https://usabroad.unibo.it/>.

No country has left a bigger mark in the advent of the Anthropocene than the United States. If we accept the argument of many scientists and scholars that the Earth has entered a new phase in its history, a period in which human activity can be seen as directly and significantly modifying the planet's climate and ecosystems, then the US is undoubtedly at the very heart of this transformation. Americans account for less than five percent of the world's population today, but as a nation, they consume almost 20 percent of the world's total energy and make up more than 20 percent of the global GDP. The US has the largest economy and the largest military on Earth. It is the world's first oil producer and consumer and the largest generator of hazardous waste and plastic. These are the results of longstanding trends that propelled the US to world power – the signs of a longstanding material and symbolic hegemony that exemplify the country's imprint on the planet. Literally and figuratively, the US has been the country pressing the gas pedal of the “Great Acceleration,” the unprecedented and rapid increase in the growth rate of a wide range of human activities registered since the mid-20th century – a phenomenon that has profoundly transformed Earth's ecosystems and biophysical processes, furthering existential threats such as ocean acidification, deforestation, desertification, and biodiversity deterioration. The massively disproportionate impact that American policies and actions have had on the development of the current global economy and the international regime is only paralleled by the equally disproportionate, although much less debated, role that Washington has had in the anthropization of the world's environment, the commodification of natural resources, and degradation of land, water, and air.

The 2024 issue of *USAbroad* will be dedicated to the study of the complex relationship between the United States and the global environment. The aim will be to look at American history and politics through an environmental lens and reframe Washington's upward trajectory as a world power in the context of the Anthropocene. This means examining how US actions have induced environmental change and, equally important, how the landscape's natural features and raw materials, in general, have influenced, if not determined, Americans' choices at the local, national, and international levels. As environmental history is also the history of humankind and their political relationships, the issue will aim at understanding how the United States and its inhabitants have impacted and been impacted by the global environment.

How did the availability (or lack thereof) of specific raw materials have, for example, driven the establishment and expansion of cities and communities, forms of governance, paths of economic development, and trade routes? In the 18th and 19th centuries, settler colonialism started profoundly impacting the region's ecosystems and inhabitants through practices such as plantation agriculture, cattle ranching, and mining. By the turn of the 20th century, extractive policies and exploitative cultures began to fuel industries and business models that transformed national and foreign landscapes through corporations (like, for example, United Fruit Company, Monsanto, Exxon, and DuPont) operating globally. Furthermore, from the 1940s on, the effects of the US overwhelming economic power have been compounded by those of its military-industrial predominance, whose practical manifestations during the Cold War and beyond left a trail of toxic contamination and material destruction.

In the last few decades, scholars have worked tirelessly towards the “greening” of humanities and social sciences. The result is a growing body of scholarship unpacking the complex relationship between culture, politics, and the environment, also for what concerns the United States – a “superpower by nature.” The next issue of *USAbroad* aims to join the conversation and add to the quickly expanding field of environmental (American) studies, welcoming interdisciplinary, transnational, economic and labor, urban and rural perspectives. It also intends to add a specific environmental element, or angle, to the consolidating historical approach that looks at the place of the US in the world – or, better, at the US as a country fully embedded in the global tapestry of people, states, and, more recently, natural actors (like germs, plants, animals, rivers, and oceans, among others). Indeed, to truly disentangle the multifaceted relationship between Washington and the rest of the Earth – to truly study the “US in the world” – one cannot but include the non-human portion of the globe, de facto moving towards an exploration of the “US in the planet.”

What causes environmental degradation at local, national, and global scales? And how do these scales relate to one another? What has the creation of the US as a modern nation – and empire – and its irresistible projection of power meant for the global environment? How have Americans perceived the use and exploitation or, conversely, the conservation and restoration of natural resources at home and abroad? How has the use of specific environmental resources contributed to restructuring human and social geographies and landscapes? What narratives have been adopted to explain environmental outcomes? More broadly, how does the environment figure in the study of American history and politics – and what can the study of American history and politics tell us about Anthropocene?

We welcome papers that offer multidisciplinary and cross-cutting research examining the relationship between the US and the global environment. Possible topics include, but are not limited to:

- Settler colonialism, land management, industrial growth, domestic and working conditions;
- Early and modern environmentalism, conservationism and preservationism;
- The environment and US militarism, war, and empire;
- Extractive and exploitative practices, petromodernity/petroleum culture;
- Nuclear America and the environment;
- Environmental science and technology and US power;
- US political economy, capitalism and commodification of the environment and its resources;
- Environmental law and the institutionalization of environmental regulations and policies, both at home and abroad (domestic and international regimes of environmental protection);
- Water management, sanitation, and waste/discard studies;
- Pollution and environmental health;
- US political ecology, the Anthropocene, and the Plantationocene;
- Climate change and migrations from, to and within the United States;
- Social and labor movements and environmental issues, environmental justice, indigenous environmental movements, ecofeminism and queer sustainability;
- The environment and US regional identities (US West, South, Appalachia, Great Plains, etc.);
- The evolution of American idea(s) of the environment;
- History of environmental movements and their relationship with the government;
- The securitization of climate change and environmental issues, also in reference to NATO's role in this process.

Proposals must be sent by December 11, 2022, at usabroad@unibo.it. Please include a 300-word presentation of the paper (specifying the title, subject, originality, method, and sources) and a short CV (one page maximum).