



The Historian's Task in the Anthropocene

OXFORD ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY NETWORK LECTURE
Co-hosted by
Oxford Transnational & Global History Seminar

JULIA ADENEY THOMAS

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16.00-17.30, Thursday 11 October, 2018.

Lecture room, Faculty of History, University of Oxford.

41-47 George St, Oxford OX1 2BE

Followed by drinks. All welcome.

If "the Anthropocene" suggests a rupture of the Earth System where our future looks nothing like our past, what role is there for historians? Are we simply antiquarians with no insight into this predicament, or can we still offer political critique? Julia Thomas addresses this question in three ways, explaining why many scientists find "the Anthropocene" a compelling concept; showing how this concept challenges the history's disciplinary assumptions; and finally demonstrating how historians, through self-reflection on our practices, might contribute. Using the example of early modern Japan, she proposes a new form of critical history as we move from modernity's promise of freedom and abundance to the more modest goal of sustainability with decency.

About the speaker

THOMAS is an intellectual and political historian of modern Japan, trained at Princeton, Oxford, and the University of Chicago. Thomas is the author of more than 30 articles and book chapters, including *Reconfiguring Modernity: Concepts of Nature in Japanese Political Ideology* which received the 2002 John K. Fairbank prize from the American Historical Association. She has three projects currently under contract, *The Anthropocene* co-authored with geologists Jan Zalasiewicz and Mark Williams for Polity Press; *The Historian's Task in the Anthropocene: Theory, Practice, and the Case of Japan* for Princeton; and, a co-edited collection titled *Visualizing Fascism* (forthcoming from Duke) on the rise of the twentieth-century global right.

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