COURSE DESCRIPTION: Until the middle of the nineteenth century, there existed no single knowledge system that dominated the planet. Arguably, even today there is not one science, not one therapeutic framework, and not one form of technology, but myriad, overlapping, and even contradictory systems. Yet whether in Asia, Africa, Europe, or the Americas, certain baseline assumptions about the material universe do prevail and are combined with ways of knowing and intervening that began to predominate globally from the eighteen-fifties onwards. This course foregrounds the historical geographies of the sciences, explaining their diverse genealogies and unevenness around the world. We will explore both the large and small-scale struggles over knowledge and technology, including therapeutics, that took place over the last several centuries to create the epistemological and technoscientific terrain in which we live. If economic historians have been animated by questions of a "great divergence" between Asian and European standards of living in the modern era, historians of science have circled around questions of a great divide, since the so-called “revolutions” in science of the early modern period, between ethnoscience and technoscience. This seminar is designed for graduate students interested in area studies, global and transnational history, and science and technology studies and should offer a set of critical methods and concepts with which to pursue these interests. We will consider why dominant perspectives have taken shape, how they have circulated, what they explain or allow, and the ways in which they have been modified over time and place. Students will be encouraged to use their existing expertise as a point of departure, approaching course questions and texts from the region and/or time period that most interests them.

AREAS OF CONCENTRATION: Africa/Middle East, Europe, Americas, Asia/Middle East

TEACHING METHOD: Seminar format with one meeting per week. Discussions will stem directly from the assigned readings; some meetings will divide topics among smaller groups

EVALUATION METHOD: Students will be asked to complete several reading responses, a syllabus on a topic in global history related to the course themes, and a final historiographical essay

TENTATIVE READING LISTS: Authors whose work we will read include Alison Bashford, Francesca Bray, David Egerton, Ben Elman, Marwa el Shakry, Mark Harrison, Daniel Headrick, Gabrielle Hecht, John McNeill, Joel Mokyr, Sheldon Pollock, Simon Schafer, and Megan Vaughan

NOTES: No P/N option

INSTRUCTOR PROFILE: Helen Tilley explores the interplay among environmental, medical, and human sciences in nineteenth and twentieth century European empires, with a particular focus on Africa. Her current research examines the history of African decolonization, global governance, and the ethnoscientific projects that accompanied post-colonial state building in the Cold War era.