

Environmental History and the Dangers of Climate Change

An Argument for Why You Need to
Take this Class Very Seriously

Modernity

- Definitions/components

The Nature-Culture Binary

- Modernity as outside nature

The binary as myth and conceit of moderns

- Co-dependency and interaction of culture and nature

- Humans in and of nature

- Uncontrollability of non-human nature

- Unintended consequences

The question of technology and our transformation of environments

- Power and inequality in the making of modern environments (race+class)

- The role of capitalism in unequal environments

- The role of everyday people in challenging unequal environments

- Non-human nature is not inert—examples?

- Non-human nature as positive and negative force

Climate change

- What is it

- What is happening and what will happen

- What does it mean for our current way of life if we do little to nothing?

First part of class on the environment in the making of the modern world?

Modernity? What is it? What does it mean to live in the modern world?

Nature-Culture binary

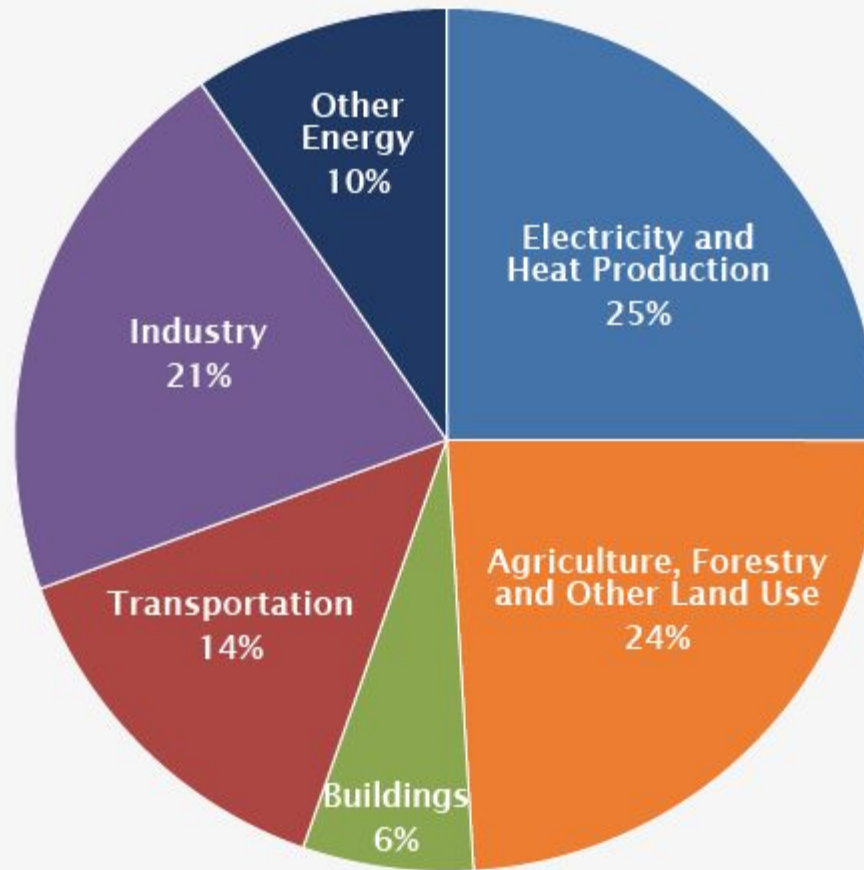
- Modernity strictly realm of the human
- We are separate from nature, it's out there, something we can dominate and must dominate
- More control and conquering of environments of nature, the more modern, the more progress

Thoughts on why this binary is a dangerous myth

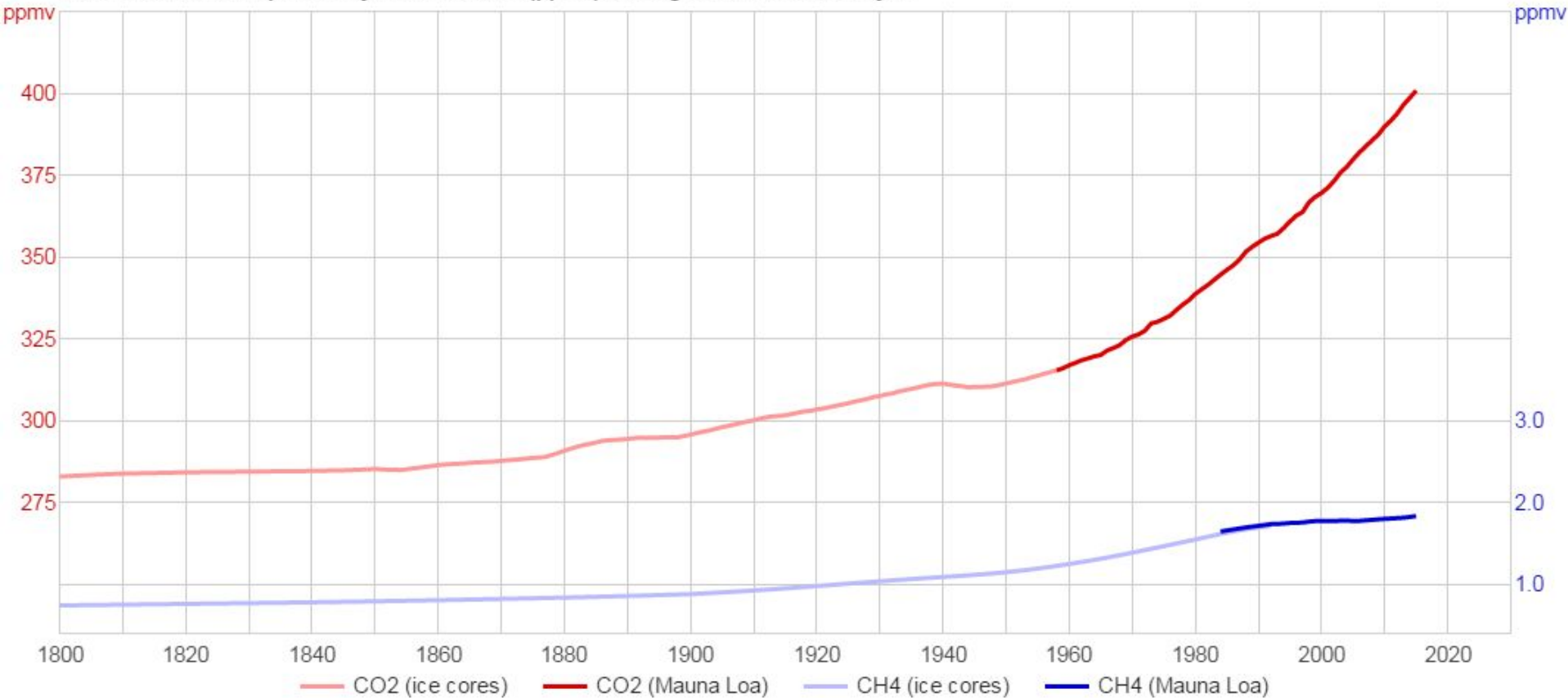
- Everything that we think of as modern has been made possible by our dependence on the bio-physical environment
- Notion of one-way street, we do onto nature. It's not a street at all, we are part of nature
- Our culture hinges on, depends of non-human nature, ability to drink water, make food, etc.
- We don't replace nature with artifice, we create new natures that we depend on for our survival
- We cannot ultimately control non-human nature—always consequences, often very undesirable
- Cannot control something we remain dependent on

What does this mean? Should we avoid new technologies altogether, avoid altering nature? Or, should we just accept that we will always harm our environments?

Global Greenhouse Gas Emissions by Economic Sector

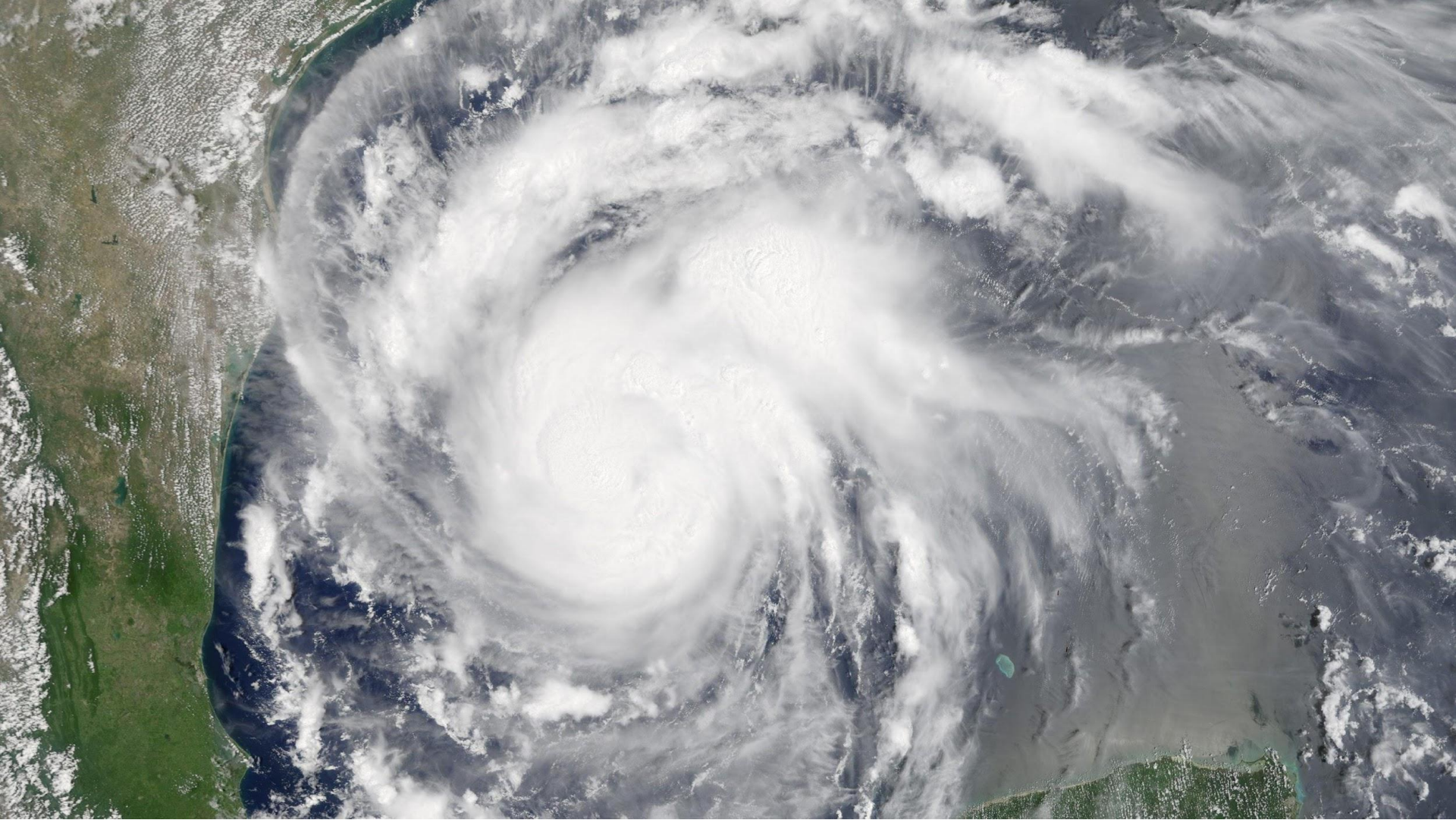


CO2 and CH4 atmospheric dry molar fraction (ppmv), averaged over a calendar year



CO2 parts per million over the years. Documenting Greenhouse Gases in Atmosphere

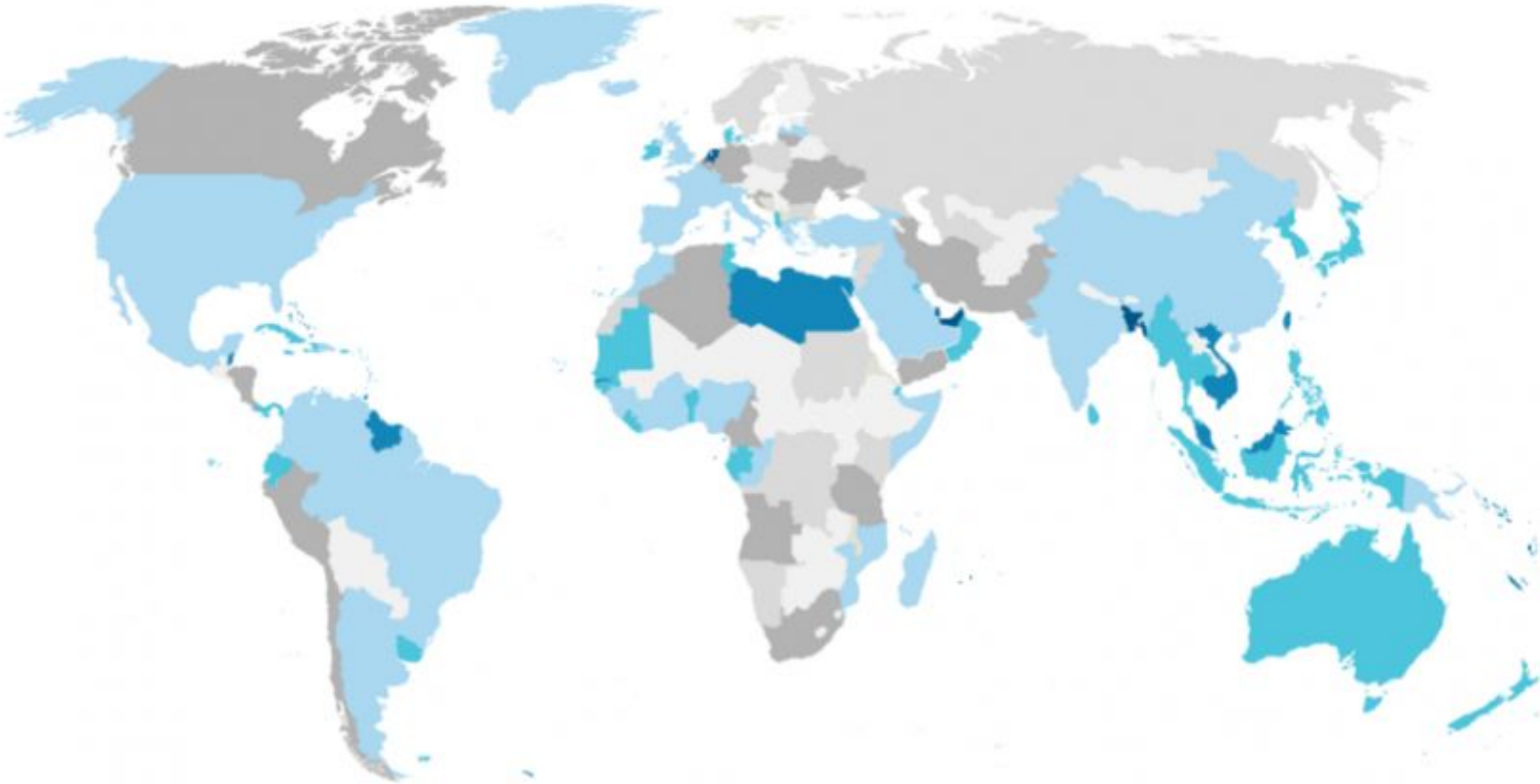




Populations at risk

Percentage of national populations who live in places that will be drowned by a rise in long-term sea levels - even if global warming is held at 2C

0% 0.1-5 5-10 10-25 25-50 50-75 75-100

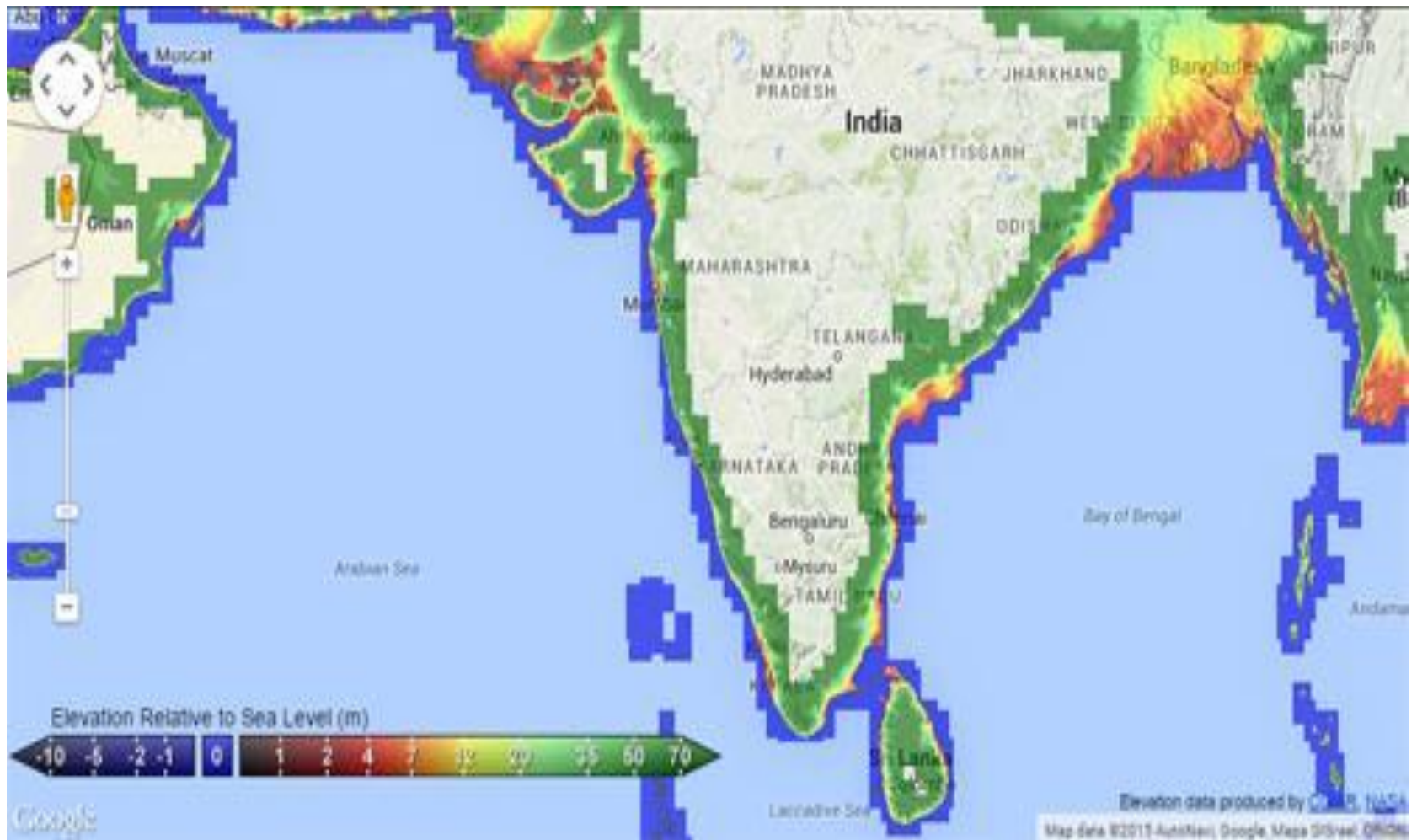


6 METER SEA LEVEL RISE

Countries at Risk with 2°C of Warming

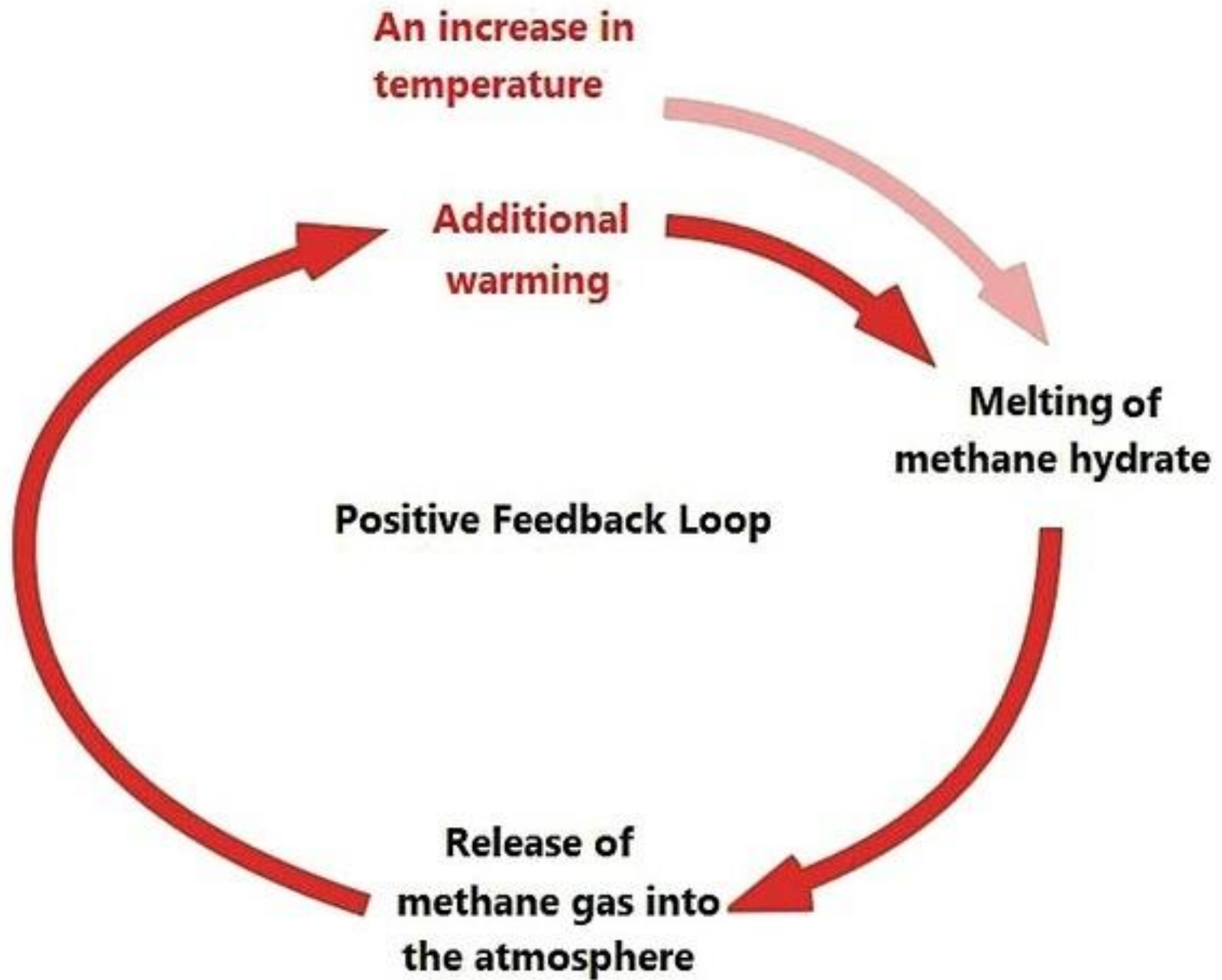


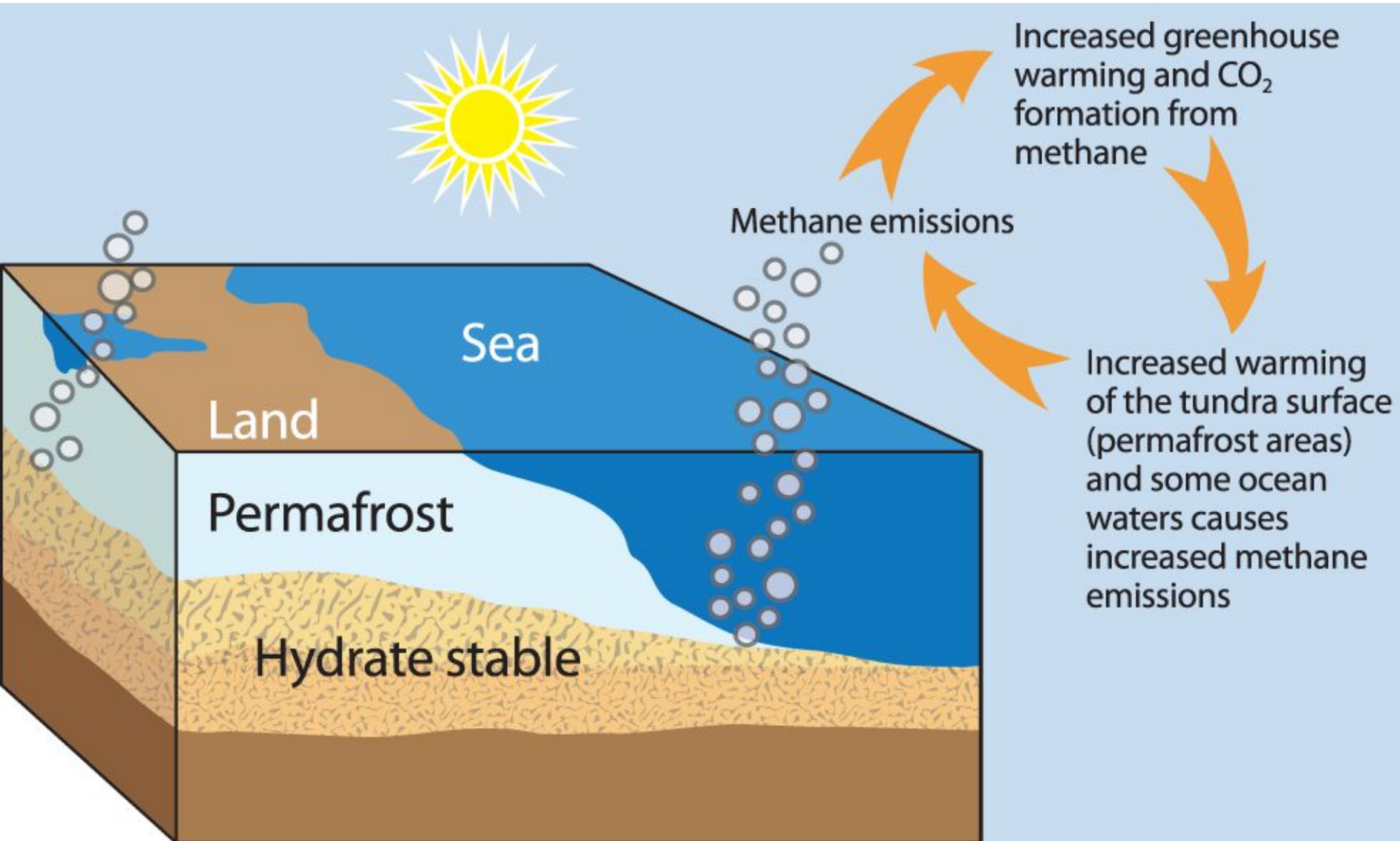












What does all this mean for our current ways of living?

But hasn't the climate always changed?

<https://www.vox.com/2016/9/12/12891814/climate-change-xkcd-graphic>

Modernity

The Nature-Culture Binary

invention of modernity

unintended consequences

Capitalism

power and inequality

Nation-states

What is Environmental History

Ecology

Political ecology

History as mix of structure and agency

Nature as historical force

Climate Change (definition and causes)

Climate change consequences

sea levels

disease, agriculture, extreme weather

Anthropocene

Paul Crutzen

Problem with concept Anthropocene