

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
SPRING 2015

Course Instructor: Prof. Stephen Halsey
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Course Description

Human beings have played an increasingly significant role in our planet's natural history since the end of the last ice age in 12,000 BCE. This course not only examines the ways that we have reshaped the environment during the current Anthropocene era but also assesses its impact on our political, economic, cultural, and physical development over the long term. We will adopt a comparative and global approach to the study of environmental history but will focus primarily on the radical changes of the past five centuries. Students will have the opportunity to reevaluate familiar historical motifs such as industrialization, colonialism, science, urbanization, and capitalism from a different vantage point, learning more about them in the process. Lectures and readings will discuss air, water, minerals, soil, and biota, including the changes wrought by invisible forms of life such as bacteria and viruses. This course does not require prior knowledge of environmental history, but students may find an understanding of the historical themes mentioned above helpful.

Course Requirements

Students will take an **hour examination** (20%) in class on **February 26th** and a comprehensive **final examination** (35%) at the time specified by the university registrar. They will complete all general readings and also write two four to five page book reviews on works listed under specialized readings (35%). **Class participation** will constitute 10 % of the final grade.

Course Texts

John Richards, *The Unending Frontier*
JR McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*
Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*
Jared Diamond, *Collapse*

Additional required readings are available for download in pdf format under the course documents link on the Blackboard course website.

Late Policy

Course papers are due at the beginning of class in hard copy form on the date specified in the syllabus or agreed to in writing with the instructor. Late work will be penalized **one full letter grade** (A becomes a B, etc.) each day, and extensions will be granted only under exceptional circumstances. **Please note that students must complete ALL assignments in order to pass this course; failure to do so will result in failure of the course.**

Attendance Policy

You are required to attend each class and participate in every discussion. Missing more than four class sessions without a viable medical excuse will result in a failing grade for class participation. More generally, chronic absenteeism or tardiness will result in a failing grade for class participation.

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty will result in automatic failure of the course and referral to the University Honor Council. The Council will then conduct an investigation of the incident, hold a hearing in the form of a trial, and may impose penalties that include expulsion from the university. Please do not commit academic suicide by breaking the university's rules.

Course Schedule

Part I. First Things

Jan 13 Studying Environmental History
Jan 15 Neolithic Revolutions

General Readings:

Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, pp. 8-40

William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in William Cronon (ed), *Uncommon Ground* (New York: 1995)

J.R. McNeill, "The State of the Field of Environmental History" *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 35 (November 2010): 345-74.

Part II. The Ecology of Ancient and Medieval Civilizations

Jan 20 Classical Worlds: The Roman Empire and Han China
Jan 22 Pimples, Plagues, and Poxes: Disease in Pre-modern History

General Readings:

Mark Elvin, "The Environmental Legacy of Imperial China," *China Quarterly* 156 (1999): 733-756.

William McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*, pp. 77-148

Specialized Readings:

Mark Elvin, *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China* (New Haven, 2004).

J. Donald Hughes, *Ecology in Ancient Civilizations* (Albuquerque, 1975).

Stephen Pyne, *World Fire: The Culture of Fire on Earth* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

Ronald Hoffman, "Economic Development and Aquatic Ecosystems in Medieval Europe," *American Historical Review*, vol. 101 no. 3 (1996): 631-669.

Mark Elvin and Liu Ts'ui-jung (eds), *Sediments of Time: Environment and Society in Chinese History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

Lynn White, "The Historic Roots of Our Ecological Crisis" *Science* 155 (1967): 1202-07.

Part III. Dark Ages: The Environment and Societal Collapse

Jan 27 Island Paradise? Easter as Metaphor
Jan 29 The Tragedy of the Mayans

General Readings:

Diamond, *Collapse*, pp. 77-177

Specialized Readings:

- Brian Fagan, *Floods, Famines, and Emperors* (New York, 1999).
 J. Donald Hughes, *An Environmental History of the World: Humankind's Changing Role in the Community of Life* (London, 2002).
 Clive Ponting, *A Green History of the World* (New York, 1991).
 Michael Williams, *Deforesting the Earth: From Prehistory to Global Crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
 Peter Christensen, *The Decline of Iranshahr: Irrigation and Environments in the History of the Middle East 500 BC to AD 1500* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusulanum Press, 1993).

Part IV. The Early Modern Era: Ecological Change in the First Era of Globalization

New Worlds and Old: The Columbian Exchange

Feb 3 The Triumph of the Dandelion: Plants and Animals

Feb 5 Invisible Killers: Germs and Disease

General Readings:

Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, pp. 145-216

Specialized Readings:

Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange* (Westport, 1972).

Tim Flannery, *The Future Eaters: An Ecological History of the Australian Lands and Peoples* (Sydney, 1994).

Charles Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus* (New York, 2006).

James McCann, *Maize and Grace* (New York, 2005).

Kim Todd, *Tinkering with Eden* (New York, 2001).

Expansion and Crisis in the Early Modern Period

Feb 10 The Little Ice Age

Feb 12 England and Japan: Diverging Paths of Development in the Early Modern World:

General Readings:

John Richards, *The Unending Frontier* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 58-88, 148-241.

Specialized Readings:

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York, 1983).

Brian Fagan, *The Little Ice Age* (New York, 2000).

Robert Marks, *Rice Tigers Silt and Silk* (Cambridge, 1998.)

Conrad Totman, *The Green Archipelago: Forestry in Pre-Industrial Japan* (Athens, Ohio, 1998).

Karl Appuhn, *A Forest on the Sea: Environmental Expertise in Renaissance Venice* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

Peter Perdue, *Exhausting the Earth: State and Peasant in Hunan, 1550-1850* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

Sumit Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India, 1200-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Great Divergence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip*

II, vol. 1. Part I, "The Role of the Environment."

Brett Walker, *The Conquest of the Ainu Lands: Ecology and Culture in Japanese Expansion, 1590-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

Feb 17 Field Trip: The Abbess Center for Ecosystems Science and Policy

General Readings: Abbess Center website: <http://abess.miami.edu/>

Part V. Men and Their Machines: 1750-1900

State, Science, and the Environment

Feb 19 Promethian Drives: Controlling Nature

Feb 24 Inventing "the Environment"

General Readings:

Richard Grove, "Conserving Eden: The (European) East India Companies and Their Environmental Policies on St. Helena, Mauritius and in Western India, 1660 to 1854," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 2 (1993): 318-351.

James Scott, *Seeing Like a State* (New Haven: Yale Press, 1998), pp. 11-52, 262-306.

Specialized Readings:

David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape and the Making of Modern Germany* (New York, 2006).

Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism: A Global History* (New York, 2000).

Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (San Francisco, 1980).

Gregory Barton, *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

Feb 26 **Midterm Examination**

Industrial Capitalism and the Environment

March 3 Engines of Change: The Ecological Impact of the Industrial Revolution

March 5 Nature as Raw Material

General Reading:

William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, pp. 97-147, 263-309

Specialized Readings:

Barbara Freese, *Coal: A Human History* (Cambridge, 2003).

Richard Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite* (Cambridge, 2007).

Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (Oxford, 1979).

Brett Walker, *Toxic Archipelago: A History of Industrial Disease in Japan* (University of Washington Press, 2009).

March 10 (Spring Break)

March 12 (Spring Break)

The Ecology of Overseas Empires

March 17 Africa

March 19 Indies: East and West
 March 24 Southeast Asia

General Readings:

Michael Adas, "Continuity and Transformation: Colonial Rice Frontiers and Their Environmental Impact on the Great River Deltas of Mainland Southeast Asia," in Edmund Burke and Kenneth Pomeranz (eds), *The Environment and World History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), pp. 191-207

William Beinart, "African History and Environmental History," *African Affairs* (2000): 269-302.

John Richards, *The Unending Frontier* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 412-62.

Specialized Readings:

W Beinart and L. Hughes, *Environment and Empire* (Oxford, 2007).

T Griffiths. and L. Robin, eds, *Ecology and Empire* (Edinburgh, 1997).

James McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa* (Oxford, 1999).

Diana Davis, *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa* (Ohio University Press, 2007).

John R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (Cambridge University Press, 2010).

James Webb, *Tropical Pioneers: Human Agency and Ecological Change in the Highlands of Sri Lanka, 1800-1900* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002).

Ramachandra Guha and David Arnold, *Nature, Culture, and Imperialism: Essays on the Environmental History of South Asia* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Geoffrey Bolton, *Spoils and Spoilers: Australians Make Their Environment, 1788-1980* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981).

Shawn Miller, *Fruit-Less Trees, Portuguese Conservation and Brazil's Colonial Timber* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

Michael Adas, "Improving on the Civilizing Mission?: Assumptions of United States Exceptionalism in the Colonization of the Philippines," *Itinerario* 22 (1998): 44-66.

Part VI. Brave New World? 1900-Present

Air

March 26 Urban Spaces

March 31 Air Pollution, Acid Rain, and the Ozone Layer

General Readings: McNeill, *Something New*, pp. 50-117

Water

April 2 Dry Laws: Regional and Global Water Supplies

April 7 Dams, Dikes, and Diversions

General Readings: McNeill, *Something New*, pp. 118-191

Biota

April 9 Contagion: Germs and Antibiotics

April 14 Zebra Mussels and Burmese Pythons: Fish, Forests, and Invasive Species

General Readings: McNeill, *Something New*, pp. 192-266

April 16 Running on Empty? Global Energy

April 21 Hug a Tree! The Environmental Movement

General Readings: McNeill, *Something New*, pp. 296-356

Specialized Readings for Part VI.

Judith Shapiro, *Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

Michael Bess, *The Light-Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960-2000* (Chicago University Press, 2003)

William Cronon (ed), *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York, 1995).

Edmund Russell, *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from WWI to Silent Spring*. (Cambridge, 2001).

Elizabeth Economy, *The River Runs Black: The Environmental Challenge to China's Future* (Ithaca, 2004).

Ramachandra Guha, *How Much Should a Person Consume? Environmentalism in India and the United States*. (Berkeley, 2006).

Massimo Livi-Bacci, *A Concise History of World Population* (New York, 2006).

Gabrielle Hecht, *The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity After World War II* (MIT Press, 2009).

Douglas Weiner, *Models of Nature: Ecology, Conservation, and Cultural Revolution in Soviet Russia* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000).

Douglas Weiner, *A Little Corner of Freedom: Russian Nature Protection from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

J. R. McNeill, *The Mountains of the Mediterranean World: An Environmental History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Sandy Suffian, *Healing the Land, Healing the Nation: Malaria and the Zionist Project in Palestine, 1920-1947* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Part VII. A Green World?

Apr 23 W(h)ither the Future?

General Readings: McNeill, *Something New*, pp. 357-362