

HIST205
Environmental History
Fall 2010
MW 1-1.50 p.m., SQH 1120

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Phone: 301.405.6471
Office hours: Monday 3-4 p.m. and by appointment
Class homepage: <https://learningonline.umd.edu> or elms.umd.edu
Check this homepage regularly for updates, additional readings, and course reserves. You are no longer able to access e-reserves through the library homepage.

Course Description and Goals

All human activities would be unthinkable without locating them in a specific natural environment. We eat, drink, breathe, pollute, restore, revere, and ignore nature in our daily lives to varying degrees. These human activities, their consequences, and their contemporary implications can only be understood if we take their histories into account. The way different societies and individuals have imagined, shaped, used, managed, and mismanaged nature is the subject of this seminar. Students will be able to gain a historically grounded perspective on questions of land use, pollution, conservation, and the ideology of nature, especially, but not exclusively in Europe and North America.

Grade breakdown: class participation 15%, short essay of 5 pages 15%, midterm OR research paper of 8 pages 35%, take-home final exam 35%.

Academic Integrity and Honor Council

The University of Maryland, College Park, has a nationally recognized Code of Academic Integrity, administered by the Student Honor Council. This Code sets standards for academic integrity at Maryland for all undergraduate and graduate students.

As a student you are responsible for upholding these standards for this course. It is very important for you to be aware of the consequences of cheating, fabrication, facilitation, and plagiarism. For more information on the Code of Academic Integrity or the Student Honor Council, please visit <http://www.shc.umd.edu>

To further exhibit your commitment to academic integrity, remember to sign the Honor Pledge on all examinations and assignments: "I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this examination (assignment)."

Disabilities, Absences, Religious Holidays, Late Policy

If you have a documented disability and require special accommodations, please see the instructor immediately. If I do not hear from you within the first week of class, I will assume that you do not have a documented disability and do not require special accommodations. University of Maryland athletes who will be absent are required to

inform the instructor within the first two weeks of class. If I do not hear from you within the first two weeks, I will assume that you are not a U-Md athlete requiring accommodation.

If for any family or medical reason you find it absolutely necessary to miss an in-class examination, you must contact me before the examination and have me consent to your absence if you wish to take a make-up exam.

Late papers will receive a one letter grade deduction (e.g. a B becomes a C) for each day they are late. After 72 hours, the paper will receive an F. You must complete ALL assignments to be considered for a passing grade.

You are required to check the class homepage periodically for any updates.

The University System of Maryland policy provides that students not be penalized because of observances of religious beliefs, but rather shall be given an opportunity, whenever feasible, to make up within a reasonable time any academic assignment missed due to individual participation in religious observances. It is your responsibility to inform the instructor at the beginning of the semester if you are going to miss any assignments due to religious observances. If I do not hear from you during the first two weeks, I will assume that you will not be absent from class due to individual participation in religious observances.

Email Policy

Please do not send me email-messages regarding general issues such as assignments or deadlines. The classroom is the proper place to raise these issues and to discuss them together with your fellow students. I will only answer emails which are signed and clearly addressed to me and will answer them during usual business hours only.

Course Evaluation

As a professor, I need your feedback in order to improve this class. Therefore, I very strongly encourage you to evaluate my teaching by using the University of Maryland's online evaluation tool. CourseEvalUM will be open for students to complete their evaluations for Fall 2010 courses between November 30 and December 12. Students can go directly to the website (www.courseevalum.umd.edu) to complete their evaluations. You will be alerted about these dates and provided more information closer to that time via your official University e-mail account.

Required Readings

(available at University Book Center and Maryland Book Exchange)

Required:

Anthony Penna, *The Human Footprint: A Global Environmental History*, John Wiley, 9781405187718.

John McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun* W.W. Norton 0393321835

Richard P. Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Degradation of the Tropical World*, concise rev.ed., Rowman and Littlefield, 9780742553651

All books are on reserve at McKeldin Library. Additional readings are available through the class homepage.

Weekly Schedule

Week 1

What is Environmental History?

Reading for this week:

Problems, ch. 1

Penna, Introduction and ch. 1

Week 2

Agriculture and Environment

Reading for this week:

McNeill, ch. 1

Penna, ch. 1 and 2

Week 3

Population and Nutrition

Reading for this week:

Penna, ch. 3 and 4

Lamb, Hubert H. (1995). "The little ice age". *Climate, history and the modern world*. London: Routledge. pp. 211–241.

Discussion question: The historian Mark Elvin claims that Chinese history represents 3,000 years of unsustainable growth. Discuss this claim, based on the evidence provided in the lectures and readings.

Week 4

The Environment and the Growth of Cities

Reading for this week:

Penna, ch. 5 and 6

Short Essay due in class

Discussion question: Discuss the history of urbanization from an environmental point of view—was it benign or harmful? Are cities sustainable?

Week 5

The Columbian Exchange

Penna, ch. 8

Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, ch. 7-9 (on e-reserves)

Week 6

Environment in the Southern U.S.

Reading for this week:

Stewart, Mart A. "‘Let Us Begin with the Weather’: Climate, Race, and Cultural Distinctiveness in the American South." In *Nature & Society in Historical Context*, edited by Mikulas Teich, Roy Porter, and Bo Gustafsson. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 240–256.

Week 7

The Landscape Ideal

Readings:

tba

Mid-term exam

Week 8

Forestry, Resources, and Sustainability

Henry E. Lowood, "The Calculating Forester: Quantification, Cameral Science, and the Emergence of Scientific Forestry Management in Germany," *The Quantifying Spirit in the 18th Century*, edited by Tore Frängsmyr, J.L. Heilbron and Robin E. Rider (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 315-342.

Discussion question: The idea of sustainability is closely linked to the rise of the nation-state. Why? What does this mean for sustainability today?

Week 9

"Wilderness" and National Parks

Readings: tba

William Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in: William Cronon (ed.) *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature* (New York: Norton, 1995), 69-91.

Week 10

Environmental Justice I

McNeill, ch. 2-3

Week 11

Environmental Justice II

McNeill, ch. 4-5

Discussion question: Discussion today's ideas regarding sustainable mobility, given the environmental repercussions of transportation discussed in the lectures and readings.

Week 12

Water, Rivers, and Biospheres

McNeill, ch. 6-8

Discussion question: Can the Chesapeake Bay be saved, given its history and current usage?

Week 13

Water and High Modernism

McNeill, ch. 9

Week 14

Dams and Nazis

McNeill, ch. 10

Discussion question: Given the role of environmentalism in totalitarian regimes, can the idea of sustainability be abused?

Week 15

Environmentalism and the Future

McNeill, ch. 11-12

For the date and location of the final exam, see www.testudo.umd.edu. Make-up exams will only be granted for illnesses; a doctor's note is required.