

HIST 336. Environmental History of Latin America

Winter 2008

Mon, Wed, Fri B Hour (9:05 - 10:00), Newcomb 8

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Office Hours: Tues 3-4; Wed 2-4; and by appointment

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course examines how diverse peoples have historically thought about, lived with, utilized, and transformed the environment in what is today Latin America. It also explores ways in which the natural world helped shape human history—how climate, natural disasters, ecological life zones, natural resources, wildlife, topography, crop diseases and epidemics influenced people's lives. Not a course that examines the history of the physical environment in and of itself (like courses in Physical Geography or the Earth Sciences), this class focuses explicitly on *human-nature interactions* over time. The course grapples with a few broad questions:

1. How have different cultures thought about, controlled, and changed their surrounding environments or natural resources?
2. What were the social, cultural, economic, political, and ecological consequences of those attempts to manipulate and use the natural world?
3. How have colonialism and imperialism helped shape environments and people's relationships with those environments?

As we will see during the course, environmental history is a fascinating way to study the past and better understand the present. Our ideas about nature, landscape, science, technology, land use planning, and conservation emerge from historical relations with our physical environment. Yet these ideas about the environment are always embedded in power structures and social relations. Environmental management has thus favored those groups with the most power—power over others and over their surroundings. Nature, we will then see, is as much social, political, and economic as it is "natural" or ecological. The course moves quickly through ancient indigenous societies, arrival of Europeans in the Americas, Enlightenment thinking about nature, the evolving natural sciences, the post-1870 capitalist commodification of natural resources, conservation, and environmental justice.

Course learning objectives focus on three areas: (1) the development of historical literacy through historiographical analysis, which includes the ability to identify key points in a scholarly argument, to assess an argument's strengths and weakness, and to analyze key points of disagreement between two or more scholarly interpretations of a major historical development; (2) the development of critical writing skills to convey historical knowledge; and (3) the development of oral communication skills to convey historical knowledge.

COURSE READINGS

Books:

- Nabhan, Gary Paul. *Enduring Seeds: Native American Agriculture and Wild Plant Conservation*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2002.
- Melville, Elinor. *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Tucker, Richard. *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Degradation of the Tropical World*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

Articles:

- Most course readings (listed in the Course Schedule) are journal articles that you can download using the library website or going directly to JSTOR or Project Muse.

Book Chapters:

- A Course Pack with additional readings is also required (purchase from Karen Lyle, Newcomb Hall 6)

GRADING AND EVALUATION

Map Quiz	5%
Reading Quizzes (5)	15%
Short Paper #1	10%
Short Paper #2	20%
Peer Review (Paper #1)	5%
Final Paper	30%
Participation	15%

MAP QUIZ

On the first day of class you will be given a blank map of Latin America and 50 terms (cities, regions, countries, geographical features, and other important place names). On Monday, January 14, you will be asked to locate these places on a blank map. For the quiz, you will be given a map and 11 places; you will have to locate 10 of them.

SHORT PAPERS

This course requires you to write two short papers of 5-6 pages each. The assignment is to compare at least two different authors' interpretations of an historical problem in Latin America. These historiographical essays should focus on the assigned readings, though you may refer to outside readings if you approve them in advance. Specifically, your essay must: (1) analyze how and why distinct authors' interpretations are different; and (2) convey what you believe is the more compelling interpretation of that topic. The best papers will provide your own unique, original, and creative analysis of the course readings while simultaneously offering your own argument beyond the simple comparison of authors.

Some sample paper topics may include the following: conservation, deforestation, ranching, ecotourism, native land use, cash crops (pick one, such as bananas), natural resource extraction (mining, oil, etc.), agriculture, climate, natural disasters, water, natural history, etc.

Like for the short papers, your final paper must: (1) analyze how and why the authors' interpretations are different; and (2) convey what you believe is the more compelling interpretation of that topic. Your final essay must analyze at least 3 books and 7 articles on your topic. The best papers will not only analyze the additional readings you do on your topic outside of class, but will also provide your own unique, original, and creative analysis of the course readings and themes. All papers must make a single argument expressed in a thesis at the outset.

To ensure that you produce excellent final papers, there will be several mileposts through the course: (1) select your topic and provide a working bibliography in Week 4; (2) hand in an outline in Week 10; and (3) present the paper in Week 12. These check-ins will help us work together to ensure high-quality source evaluation, historiographical analysis, and writing. Final papers must use footnotes following the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Refer to the writing guidelines included in this syllabus for more details about papers and grading.

Final papers are due on Monday, April 7 at 5pm.

READING QUIZZES

During the semester, you will take 6 unannounced, 15 minute, in-class quizzes asking you to analyze the day's assigned readings. Quizzes may consist of short answers or brief essays. Quizzes cannot be rescheduled or retaken except under extraordinary circumstances. I do, however, drop the lowest grade to count only the best 5 of your 6 quizzes. Nonetheless, it is absolutely imperative that you attend class regularly in order to take these quizzes.

PARTICIPATION

This course requires active participation in every class. All readings will be discussed on the day they are due, so you should arrive in class with readings finished and some questions in mind. Additionally, please interrupt me at any time to pose questions or ask for clarification.

Note the following guidelines for participation grades:

A

- attends all classes
- contributes to most discussions
- demonstrates that you have read *and* thought about assigned readings
- pushes the discussion in provocative directions that transcends readings and illuminates broader course themes

B

- attends class regularly and participates often
- shows that you have read most assigned readings
- contributions prove competence but do not necessarily demonstrate innovation or creativity

C

- absent from class repeatedly OR
- attends regularly but rarely participates
- contributions do not reflect in-depth understanding of readings

D

- absent from class repeatedly
- rarely participates in class
- contributions generally on topics that require no knowledge of course readings/themes

F

- excessive absences
- impinges on class discussion
- disrespectful, malicious, or threatening in class

COURSE POLICIES

- Students must complete all course assignments by finals week in order to pass this course.
- Late papers will be penalized one-third of a letter grade (for example, B to B-) per day, including weekends.
- Papers are due in class, and those papers handed in after class on the due date will be considered one day late.
- Papers will not be accepted by email.
- Extensions on papers or rescheduling of missed quizzes will occur only under extraordinary circumstances that must be verified in writing and approved beforehand.

COURSE SCHEDULE

[* denotes book chapters included in the Course Pack; all other articles available by Internet]

Mon	1/7	Course Introduction
Wed	1/9	What is Nature and what is the Environment? Read: William Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," <i>Environmental History</i> 1, no. 1 (1996): 7-28.
Fri	1/11	Environmental History of Latin America Read: "Environmental History (Made) in Latin America," http://www.h-net.org/~environ/historiography/latinam.htm

Section 1: Pre-Columbian Landscapes and Environmental Change

Mon	1/14	The Nature and Culture of Agriculture Read: Nabhan, <i>Enduring Seeds</i> , Foreword, Prologue Read: Donald Worster, "Transformations of the Earth: Toward an Agroecological Perspective in History," <i>Journal of American History</i> 76, no. 4 (March 1990): 1087-1106. Due: Map Quiz
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- Wed 1/16 Native Seeds and Crops
Read: Nabhan, *Enduring Seeds*, chaps. 1-4
- Fri 1/18 Preserving Biodiversity
Read: Nabhan, *Enduring Seeds*, chaps. 5-6
- Mon 1/21 The Ecological Indian and the Pristine Myth
Read: Kent H. Redford, "The Ecologically Noble Savage," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 15, no. 1 (1991):
<http://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/csq/csq-article.cfm?id=891>
Read: William M. Denevan, "The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 82, no. 3 (1992):369-385.
Read: Vine Deloria, Jr., "The Speculations of Krech: A review of *The Ecological Indian*,"
http://www.sacredland.org/resources/bibliography/Deloria_on_Krech.html
- Wed 1/23 Deforestation, Climate Change, and the Maya Collapse
Read: Justine M. Shaw, "Climate Change and Deforestation: Implications for the Maya Collapse," *Ancient Mesoamerica* 14 (2003): 157-167.
- Fri 1/25 No Class: Mock Convention
- Mon 1/28 Andean Ecologies and Inca Water Management
Read: Peter Gose, "Segmentary State Formation and the Ritual Control of Water under the Incas," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35, no. 3 (Jul. 1993): 480-514.
Read: Mary Van Buren, "Rethinking the Vertical Archipelago: Ethnicity, Exchange, and History in the South Central Andes," *American Anthropologist* 98, no. 2 (June 1996): 338-351.

Section 2: Conquest Environments and Exchanges

- Wed 1/30 Environmental Conquest and the Conquerors
Read: Lynn White, Jr. "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203-1207.

Due: Final Paper Topic/Bibliography

- Fri 2/1 Columbian Exchange
Read: Melville, *A Plague of Sheep*, preface and introduction
Read: Judith Carney. "'With Grains in Her Hair': Rice History and memory in Colonial Brazil," *Slavery and Abolition* 25, no. 1 (2004): 1-27.
- Mon 2/4 The Columbian Exchange in Mexico
Read: Melville, *A Plague of Sheep*, chaps. 2 and 4 (not chap. 3)
- Wed 2/6 Exotic Animals and Their Legacies
Read: Melville, *A Plague of Sheep*, chaps. 5 and 6

Section 3: The Nature of Imperialism

- Fri 2/8 Botany, Natural History, and Empire
Read: Paula de Vos, "The Science of Spices: Empiricism and Economic Botany in the Early Spanish Empire," *Journal of World History* 17, no. 4 (2006): 399-427.
- Mon 2/11 Alexander von Humboldt and Nature of the American Tropics
* Read: Nancy Leys Stepan, *Picturing Tropical Nature* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), introduction (pp. 11-24) and chap. 1 (pp. 31-56).
- Wed 2/13 Mountain Exploration and the Imperial Gaze: The Origins of Ecotourism?
* Read: Deborah Poole, "Landscape and the Imperial Subject: U.S. Images of the Andes, 1859-1930," in *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin American Relations*, eds. Gilbert Joseph, Catherine LeGrand, and Ricardo Salvatore (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 107-138.
* Read: Reuben Ellis, *Vertical Margins: Mountaineering and the Landscapes of Neoliberalism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), chap. 3 (pp. 95-134).
- Fri 2/15 Landscape, Race, Neocolonial Nationalism in Peru
Read: Benjamin Orlove, "Putting Race in its Place: Order in Colonial and Postcolonial Peruvian Geography," *Social Research* 60 (1993): 301-336.
Due: Paper #1
- Mon 2/25 Maps, Plants, and the Nation
Read: Stuart McCook, "'Giving Plants a Civil Status': Scientific Representations of Nature and Nation in Costa Rica and Venezuela, 1885-1935," *The Americas* 58, no. 4 (April 2002): 513-536.

Section 4: Exporting Nature and Natural Resources

- Wed 2/27 Sugar and Caribbean Environmental Change
Read: Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite*, introduction and chap. 1
Due: Peer Review of Paper #1
- Fri 2/29 Banana Ecology
Read: Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite*, chap. 2
Read: John Soluri, "People, Plants, and Pathogens: The Eco-social Dynamics of Export Banana Production in Honduras, 1875-1950," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 80, no.3 (Aug 2000): 463-501.
- Mon 3/3 Timber, Ranching, and Deforestation
Read: Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite*, chaps. 5, 6 (not pp. 191-201), and conclusion
- Wed 3/5 Oil, Indians, and Environment
Read: Myrna Santiago, "Rejecting Progress in Paradise: Huastecs, the Environment, and the Oil Industry in Veracruz, Mexico, 1900-1935," *Environmental History* 3, no. 2 (April 1998): 169-188.

Read: Paul Sabin, "Searching for Middle Ground: Native Communities and Oil Extraction in the Northern and Central Ecuadorian Amazon, 1967-1993," *Environmental History* 3, no. 2 (April 1998): 144-168.

Section 5: Conservation, Rainforests, and the Amazon

- Fri 3/7 Why Save the Rain Forest?
Read: Arturo Gómez-Pompa, "Taming the Wilderness Myth," *BioScience* 42, no. 4 (April 1992): 271-279.
Read: Ramachandra Guha, "The Authoritarian Biologist and the Arrogance of Anti-Humanism: Wildlife Conservation in the Third World," *The Ecologist* 27, no. 1 (Jan-Feb 1997): 14-20.
Read: Analyze the conservation strategies for at least 2 of these organizations:
World Conservation Union: <http://www.iucn.org/en/about/>
World Heritage Sites: <http://whc.unesco.org/en/197/>
UN Biosphere Reserves: <http://www.unesco.org/mab/BRs.shtml>
- Mon 3/10 Views of the Amazon: Past and Present
* Read: Candace Slater, "Amazonia as Edenic Narrative," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed., William Cronon (New York: Norton, 1995), 114-131.
Read: Hugh Raffles and Antoinette WinklerPrins, "Further Reflections on Amazonian Environmental History," *Latin American Research Review* 38, no. 3 (Oct. 2003): 165-187.
- Wed 3/12 National Parks in Brazil (Adjusted Class Schedule)
Read: Seth Garfield, "A Nationalist Environment: Indians, Nature, and the Construction of the Xingu National Park in Brazil," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 41, no. 1 (2001): 139-167.
- Fri 3/14 Indians, Maps, and Nature Preservation
Read: Benjamin Orlove, "Mapping Reeds and Reading Maps: The Politics of Representation in Lake Titicaca," *American Ethnologist* 18, no. 1 (Feb. 1991): 3-38.
Read: Anthony Stocks, "Mapping Dreams in Nicaragua's Bosawas Reserve," *Human Organization* 62, no. 4 (Winter 2003): 344-356.
- Mon 3/17 Ecotourism and Development in Central America
* Read: Jill Belsky, "Unmasking the "Local": Gender, Community, and the Politics of Community-Based Rural Ecotourism in Belize," in *Contested Nature: Power, Protected Areas and the Dispossessed – Promoting International Conservation with Justice in the 21st Century*, eds., Steven R. Brechin, Pat C. West, Peter Wilshusen and Crystal Fortwangler (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 89-101.
Read: Mary Finley-Brook, "Green Neoliberal Space: The Mesoamerican Biological Corridor," *Journal of Latin American Geography* 6, no. 1 (2007): 101-124.
Due: Paper #2

Section 6: Environmental Justice in Labor, Disasters, and Climate

- Wed 3/19 Conservation and Environmental Justice
* Read: Richard White, " 'Are You and Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?' Work and Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed., William Cronon (New York: Norton, 1995), 171-185.
Read: Joan Martinez-Alier, "Ecology and the Poor: A Neglected Dimension of Latin American History," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 23, no. 3 (Oct. 1991): 621-639.
- Fri 3/21 Chico Mendes and the Rubber Tappers
Read: Margaret Keck, "Social Equity and Environmental Politics in Brazil: Lessons from the Rubber Tappers of Acre," *Comparative Politics* 27, no. 4 (July 1995): 409-424.
- Mon 3/24 Burning the Amazon
Read: Chico Mendes, "Excerpts from Chico Mendes's Fight for the Forest," *Latin American Perspectives* 19, no. 1 (Winter 1992): 144-147.
Due: Final Paper Outline
- Wed 3/26 Climate Change and Natural Disasters in the Andes
Read: Mark Carey, "Living and Dying With Glaciers: People's Historical Vulnerability to Avalanches and Outburst Floods in Peru," *Global and Planetary Change* 47, no. 2-4 (July 2005): 122-134.
Read: Ben Orlove, "Ethnoclimatology in the Andes," *American Scientist* 90 (Sep-Oct 2002): 428-435.

Section 7: Overviews, Conclusions, and Student Research

- Fri 3/28 Current Environmental Issues in Latin America
Read: To be announced
- Mon 3/31 Presentations of Research
- Wed 4/2 Presentations of Research
- Fri 4/4 Environmental History in Latin America: Legacies and the Future

Final Papers Due, Monday, April 7th, 5pm

Writing Guide

Writing is one of the most important skills you can learn in college. I expect you to work hard on your writing and to hand in carefully researched, well-organized, and polished papers. You should submit papers that you would feel comfortable sharing with classmates or publishing for the campus community. In other words, keep an audience in mind beyond the professor and strive for the highest quality you can produce. And I will give you the level of detailed, productive comments that you would expect after your hard work.

The most effective writing is clear, concise, and simple. Be certain every word in your paper matters. Edit as if you could receive \$10 for every word eliminated. Read the essay, "The Principles of Poor Writing," and do the opposite of its ironic, humorous guidelines.

Pay particular attention to passive voice; avoid it at all costs. You can spot passive voice by finding cases where you use the verb "to be" (is, are, was, were, have been, etc.) followed by an "ed" ending on a verb. For example: The revolution was started by bandits. Rewrite as: Bandits started the revolution. In many cases, the passive voice obscures meaning in history papers because it hides historical actors. Grammatically speaking, these sentences lack a subject. For example: Pancho Villa was seen as a hero. Seen by whom? Who saw Pancho Villa as a hero (and who didn't)? Rewrite as: Many landless peasants in Northern Mexico saw Pancho Villa as a hero. If you avoid all forms of the verb "to be," you will avoid passive voice and write more engagingly.

Your papers should also adhere to these guidelines:

- Follow the assignment, including required page lengths
- Take a stand, have an argument, say something you mean—and present this in a thesis statement that appears in the paper's introduction
- Organize your paper so that readers can follow it logically and easily; explain this organization in your introduction
- Introduce quotes in your own words; use quotations in moderation
- Make sure each paragraph has a topic sentence and transition
- Don't plagiarize (remember: you have to cite *ideas* as well as quotations)
- Cite properly with an acceptable citation system; historians use footnotes and follow the Chicago Manual of Style: www.chicagomanualofstyle.org
- *Proofread as if your life depends on it*

Grading Scale:

A+ = 98%
A+/A = 97
A/A+ = 96
A = 95
A/A- = 94
A-/A = 93
A- = 92

A-/B+ = 91
B+/A- = 89
B+ = 88
etc.

Paper Grading Guidelines

These are general criteria for paper grades. While exceptional performance in one area can sometimes compensate for mediocre performance in another area, you must normally meet all the criteria to receive the better grade.

A

- an original analysis (not regurgitation) that is exceptional, creative, and unique
- a sophisticated and clear argument expressed in a thesis statement and throughout the paper
- accurate citations that consistently adhere to an acceptable citation style
- solid evidence to support all assertions and prove your thesis
- recognition of and effective challenges to counter arguments
- polished writing with clean, neat transitions and almost no syntax errors
- explicit engagement with the required assignment and with broader course themes
- demonstrates a mastering of the assigned documents and course readings

B

- an unpolished version of the A paper
- has all the information but is not original or creative; lacks the author's own analysis
- portions of the paper are descriptive rather than analytical
- writing errors appear with some frequency; a few inaccurate citations
- argument of the paper or the paper's organizational logic are not explicitly clear
- evidence not always provided or not effectively employed
- leaves doubt about the depth of understanding of course readings or lectures

C

- summarizes readings rather than analyzing them (i.e., reads like a book report)
- failure to fulfill completely all aspects of the assignment, including assigned page length
- sloppy writing with little apparent proofreading; paper gives indication of hurried work
- little evidence supporting assertions in paper; no citations or inappropriate citations
- lack of an argument or analysis
- suggests limited understanding of course issues and themes
- contains claims or assertions that are wrong
- suggests incomplete or hasty reading of assigned materials

D

- lack of understanding of the course objectives
- neglect of an entire component of the assignment
- significantly short of required length of assignment
- incoherent writing, logic, or organization
- failure to fulfill assignment, which includes both the writing assignment and the reading

F

- blatant misunderstanding of the assignment and course
- never handed in or extremely late
- maliciously poor quality
- plagiarized in one or more sections