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Environmental History
Utah State University, Fall 2003

Environmental history is a new field within the broader context of historical studies. Because it engages a number of disciplines and topics, however, environmental history does not contain a recognizable narrative, and in this way differs significantly from other approaches to historical study. Our survey of the field's intellectual diversity, its varied approaches, and its treatment of regions across the globe, will provide us with material for practically endless discussion. As you will see, we will cover in our readings and discussions quite a bit of political, economic, cultural and ecological territory. I have tried to create some order from the madness by organizing the course under several interrelated thematic rubrics, including, historiography, fire, water, environmental science and history, and technology and degradation.

In addition to the readings and class discussions, I would like you to take on a project of your own, one that interests you. In due course, you will receive a separate handout explaining the research assignment. I expect you to attend class and I will give occasional quizzes so that you can demonstrate that you are keeping up with the readings. I will also note your participation in class discussions. Finally, I will give four short take-home exams that will allow you a more leisurely exploration of the course themes.

Books:

White, Richard. *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1995.

Pyne, Stephen. *Fire: A Brief History*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001.

McNeill, John. *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century World*. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2000.

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

Evaluation:

Quizzes (5) – 100 pts.

Short writing assignments (4) – 600 pts.

Research Project – 300 pts.

Preliminary bibliography and topic – 50 pts

Annotated bibliography and prospectus – 50 pts.

Final Submission – 200 pts.

Calendar/Reading Schedule (subject to change):

Topic #1 – What is environmental history?

Weeks One and Two, Aug. 25 – Sept. 5 (Monday September 1 is Labor Day)

Introductions

What is Environmental History?

Readings:

Cronon, “The Uses of Environmental History.” ER

Flores, “Nature’s Children: Environmental History as Natural History.” ER

Russell, “Evolutionary History: Prospectus for a New Field.” ER

Quiz following this section.

Topic #2 Fire

Week Three, Sept. 8-12, Early fire regimes

Readings:

Pyne, *Fire, a Brief History*. Chs. 1-5

Barker, “Indians and Fire.” ER

(students to attend Pyne lecture, Wednesday, Sept. 10)

Week Four, Sept. 15-19, Recent fire regimes

Readings:

Pyne, *Fire*. Chs. 5-7.

Schmidt, *Historical Ecology and Landscape Transformation*. ER

Week Five, Sept. 22-26, Fire and industry

Readings:

Pyne, *Fire*. Chs. 8-10

Davis, *Donora Smog*, ER

First research project assignment due.

Topic#3 Water

Week Six, Sept. 29-Oct. 3, Water in non-industrial societies

Readings:

Krech, “Hohokam,” from *The Ecological Indian*.

J.E.G. Sutton on Engaruka and Irrigation.

Third reading TBA.

Week Seven, Oct. 6-10, Water, power and industry

Readings:

White, *The Organic Machine*.

First short writing assignment due.

Topic #4 Ideology and Environment.

Week Eight, Oct. 13-17, Environmentalism

Readings:

Guha, Part I

Scientific Forestry, ER

Wildlife in Africa, ER

Wilderness in America, Muir and Leopold, ER

Week Nine, Oct. 20-24, Environmentalism

Readings:

Guha, Part II

Selections from Nash, *American Environmentalism*, ER

Selections on conservation and development in Latin America and Africa, ER

Second short writing assignment due.

Topic #5 Environmental Science and Environmental History

Week Ten, Oct. 27-31, Darwin, Clements, et al., and Ecological science

Readings:

Worster, "The Dismal Sciences." From *Nature's Economy*, ER

Leopold, Selections from *Sand County Almanac*, ER

Week Eleven, Nov. 3-7, Science and history.

Readings:

Case Studies from the Scientific Literature. ER

Second research assignment due.

Third short writing assignment due.

Topic #6 The Twentieth Century, a Special Case?

Week Twelve, Nov. 10-14

Readings:

McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*.

Week Thirteen, Nov. 17-21

Readings:

McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun*.

Fourth short writing assignment due.

Week Fourteen, Nov. 24 (No classes rest of the week, Thanksgiving)

Research Project Presentations

Week Fifteen, Dec.1-5 (No test week)

Research Project Presentations

Final Exam – Wednesday, December 10, 7:30am – 9:20am

Research Project Presentations