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Latin American Environmental History
Center for Sustainable Development, University of Brazil, 1999

Goals. Offer students a systematic contact with a representative sample of the scholarship about the mutual relationships between human societies and natural environments, particularly but not exclusively in Latin America. Discuss the research questions, the methodologies and sources of information used by environmental historians and other social scientists interested in environmental issues. Provide students with instruments that will allow further independent exploration of course topics.

Class format. Combination of lectures, group discussions, video showings and student presentations.

Required books.

Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism* (Cambridge University Press).

Warren Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand* (California University Press).

Elinor Melville, *A Plague of Sheep* (Cambridge University Press).

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel* (Norton).

Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism* (Cambridge).

Books are available at the IWU Bookstore. A few other texts will be used during the course; references and/or xerox copies will be made available in due time.

Course Requirements.

a - attendance and participation (10% of term grade).

b – book review (25% of term grade). Each student will choose **one** of the five required books listed above and write a review about it, with up to four double-spaced typed pages in length. The review should refer to the entire book, meaning that it must also include any and all chapters that are not required for reading and class discussion. A five-minute oral presentation in class will be required on the due date. No specific style is required, but each review should contain at least the following:

- a full reference;
- relevant available information about the author and his/hers other writings;
- a brief summary of the book's identity (genre, academic field(s), major topic, time and space frames);
- a summary of the major findings; evidence of interdisciplinary research; at least two examples of sources of information and types of evidence used;
- strongest and weakest aspects;
- a recommendation (why the book should or should not be used in a class like this).

c – video commentary (10% of term grade). Three relevant videos (to be announced) will be shown and discussed in class. Each student will choose **one** of the videos for writing a commentary of one and a half to two double-spaced typed pages. This is to be a “free” but articulated statement about the film. No style is required, but the commentary should contain at least the title, the name of the director, the year of production and the country of origin.

d – bibliographic search (15% of term grade). Each student will visit the Latin American Environmental History bibliography page <<http://www.stanford.edu/group/LAEH/index.html>> being organized by Lise Sedrez (a graduate student in environmental history at Stanford University) as part of her personal home-page. The goal of the exercise is (1) learn about the resources available for further exploration of the field, (2) to find at least one article, book, thesis or dissertation, video, map, CD-ROM, or another relevant list of sources that is **not** currently listed or mentioned in the page and (3) to send the reference to Ms. Sedrez, who will eventually post it on the page. Extra credit will be given to a written summary statement about the source sent to Ms. Sedrez along with the reference. Please make hard copies of your exchanges with Ms. Sedrez for the purpose of evaluation. A five-minute oral presentation about this exercise will be required in class on the due date.

e – mid-term exam (20% of term grade). Take-home questions to be handed out on October 11.

f – final exam (20% of term grade).

Schedule of Assignments and Activities

September 8 and 13

Readings:

Donald Worster *et al*, 1990. "A Round Table: Environmental History", *The Journal of American History*, vol 76, n 4, pp 1087-1147.

Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, Prologue, chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4.

September 15 and 20

Readings:

Diamond, chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

September 22 and 27

Readings:

Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, chapters 2, 4, 7, 8 and 9.

Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, chapter 11.

September 29

No readings: first video exhibition in class (title to be announced) (commentary due next class)

- decision about which book to review due.

October 4 and 6

Readings:

Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand*, Chapters 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

October 11

Readings:

Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand*, Chapters 8, 9, 11, 13 and 14

Jose Drummond, "The Garden in the Machine: An Environmental History of Brazil's Tijuca Forest", *Environmental History*, 1(1), p. 83-105.

- Bibliographic search exercise materials due at beginning of class; oral presentation about exercise;

- Questions for mid-term exam will be handed out.

October 13

Readings:

Elinor Melville, *A Plague of Sheep* (all chapters).

October 18

No readings: second video exhibition in class (title to be announced) (commentary due next class)

- mid-term exam due at beginning of class.

October 20 and 25

Continuation of the discussion of Melville.

October 27 and November 1

Readings:

Grove, *Green Imperialism*, chapters 1 and 2.

Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, chapter 4.

November 3 and 8

Readings:

Grove, *Green Imperialism*, chapters 5 and 6.

November 10

No readings: third and last video exhibition in class (title to be announced) (commentary due next class).

November 15 and 17

Readings:

Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, chapters 13, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19.

November 22

No readings

- book reviews due at beginning of class; oral presentations about reviews.

November 29 and December 1

Readings:

Grove, *Green Imperialism*, "Conclusion".

Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*, "Epilogue".

Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand*, chapter 15.

Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, chapter 12.

December 6

Readings:

Jose Drummond, text to be announced.

Jose Augusto Padua, "Problems and Prospects for a Sustainable Relationship with the Amazon Forest in Brazil", (print-out, 1998).

December 8

No readings: last class meeting dedicated to general overview and evaluation.

December 13 and 15

Final exam week