

**Andrew Isenberg and Emmanuel Kreike**  
**World Environmental History**  
Princeton, Spring 2001

In this course, the natural environment intersects with major themes in world history, including colonialism, industrialization, and war. We investigate the environmental context and consequences of these and other subjects, with the understanding that the environment is an agent and a presence in human history. Because environmental change often transcends national boundaries, this course places important subjects in environmental history such as disease, agriculture, pollution, and conservationism into a global context.

The following books are available for purchase. In addition, there is a packet of photocopied articles.

- Donald Worster, ed., The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- Jared Diamond, Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies (New York: Norton, 1997).
- Alfred Crosby, Jr., Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986).
- William McNeill, Plagues and Peoples (New York: Anchor, 1998).
- Andrew C. Isenberg, The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
- Richard H. Grove, Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
- Richard White, The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995).
- John R. McNeill, Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World (New York: Norton, 2000).
- Andrew Hurley, Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

### **Grading**

The final grade in this course is based on oral participation in precepts (30%); a weekly journal of 1 to 2-page responses to readings (20%); a 7 to 10-page paper due before the Spring Break (25%); and a 7 to 10-page paper due at the end of the term (25%).

Journal entries are due, either in hard copy or by e-mail, 24 hours before your weekly precept meeting. They should include your reaction to the readings, suggestions for questions to be

discussed during the coming precept meeting, and a continuing discussion of how the readings relate to the main themes of the course.

The first paper is due on the Friday before spring break, at 3 pm, at the History Department Undergraduate Office, 129 Dickinson Hall. The final paper topics will be assigned on the last lecture. The paper will be due on Dean's Date.

A description of standards for precept participation and written work is appended to this syllabus.

### **Lectures and Readings**

#### **Week 1: Environmental History.**

Lectures:

- 2-5 Prof. Kreike: Environment and History
- 2-7 Prof. Isenberg: Causes and Consequences in Environmental History

#### **Week 2: People and Nature.**

Reading:

Donald Worster, "The Vulnerable Earth: Toward a Planetary History"; Gustaf Utterström, "Climatic Fluctuations and Population Problems in Early Modern History"; Arthur F. McEvoy, "Toward an Interactive Theory and Nature and Culture"; and Worster, "Doing Environmental History," in Worster, ed., Ends of the Earth, 3-20, 39-79, 211-229, 289-307.

William Cronon, "The Uses of Environmental History," Environmental History Review (1993), 1-22.

Alfred Crosby, "The Past and Present of Environmental History," American Historical Review (1995), 1177-1189.

John McNeill, Something New Under the Sun, xxi-xxvi, 3-17.

William Chester Jordan, The Great Famine: Northern Europe in the Early Fourteenth Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 7-39.

Lectures:

- 2-12 Prof. Kreike: Humans and Nature
- 2-14 Prof. Kreike: Systems and Land Use.

#### **Week 3: "Pristine Primitives" and "Pristine Nature."**

Reading:

Richard B. Lee, "What Hunters Do for a Living; or, How to Make Out on Scarce Resources," in Lee and Irven DeVore, eds., Man the Hunter (Chicago: Aldine, 1968), 30-43.  
Marshall Sahlins, Stone Age Economics (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972), 1-39.  
Ester Boserup, "Environment, Population, and Technology in Primitive Societies," in Worster, ed., Ends of the Earth, 23-38.  
Diamond, Guns, Germs, and Steel, 13-52, 85-113, 131-214, 295-401.

2-19 Prof. Kreike: Lost Cities  
2-21 Prof. Isenberg: Hunting and Foraging, Herding and Farming

#### **Week 4: The Ecology of Invasions.**

Reading:

Crosby, Ecological Imperialism, 1-103, 145-308.  
Elizabeth Fenn, "Biological Warfare in Eighteenth-Century North America: Beyond Jeffery Amherst," Journal of American History, 86 (March 2000), 1552-1580.

Lectures:

2-26 Prof. Isenberg: Ecological Invasions  
2-28 Prof. Kreike: African Colonizers of Worlds New and Old

#### **Week 5: Disease and Demography in History.**

Reading:

William McNeill, Plagues and Peoples, 1-207.  
John McNeill, Something New Under the Sun, 192-211, 269-295.  
Paul Ehrlich, The Population Bomb (New York: Ballantine, 1968), 15-35.

Lectures:

3-5 Prof. Isenberg: Epidemics in History  
3-7 Prof. Kreike: Population Growth: Bomb or Blessing?

#### **Week 6: Colonialism and Resource Depletion**

Readings:

Richard P. Tucker, "The Depletion of India's Forests under British Imperialism," and Timothy C. Weiskel, "Toward an Archeology of Colonialism: Elements in the Ecological Transformation of the Ivory Coast," in Worster, Ends of the Earth, 118-171.  
Isenberg, Destruction of the Bison, 1-198.

John McNeill, Something New Under the Sun, 228-266.

Lectures:

3-12 Prof. Isenberg: Grasslands

3-14 Prof. Kreike: Game Parks and Forest Reserves

### **Spring Break**

### **Week 7: Industrialization and the Environment**

Richard G. Wilkinson, "The English Industrial Revolution, " in Worster, Ends of the Earth, 80-99.

Robert B. Marks, "Commercialization without Capitalism: Processes of Environmental Change in South China, 1550-1850," Environmental History, 1 (January 1996), 56-82.

Franz-Josef Bruggemeier, "A Nature Fit for Industry: The Environmental History of the Ruhr Basin, 1840-1990," Environmental History Review, 18 (1994), 35-54.

John McNeill, Something New Under the Sun, 19-117, 296-324.

Lectures:

3-26 Prof. Kreike: Wood and Steel

3-28 Prof. Isenberg: Environmental Costs of Industrialization

### **Week 8: Imperialism and Conservation**

Readings:

Conrad Totman, "Timber Depletion during the Early Modern Predation, 1570-1670," and "The Negative Regimen," in The Green Archipelago: Forestry in Pre-Industrial Japan (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1998), 50-115.

Grove, Green Imperialism, 1-152, 264-379, 474-486.

William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness, or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," Environmental History, 1 (January 1996), 7-28.

Jane Carruthers, "Creating a National Park, 1910 to 1926," Journal of Southern African Studies, 15 (January 1989), 188-216.

Lectures:

4-2 Prof. Isenberg: Preservation and Conservation

4-4 Prof. Kreike: Culture and Conservation: Environmental Racism and Environmental Justice

### **Week 9: Water World.**

Reading:

White, Organic Machine.

Donald Worster, "Hydraulic Society in California: An Ecological Interpretation," Agricultural History, 56 (July 1982), 503-515.

John McNeill, Something New Under the Sun, 118-191.

Lectures:

4-9 Prof. Isenberg: Hydraulic Societies

4-11 Prof. Kreike: Dikes and Deserts

### **Week 10: Agriculture**

Readings:

Warren Dean, "Coffee Dispossesses the Forest," and "Instruments of Devastation," in With Broadax and Firebrand: The Destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 168-212.

William Durham, Scarcity and Survival in Central America: Ecological Origins of the Soccer War (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1979), 1-62, 159-173.

David A. Sonnenfeld, "Mexico's 'Green Revolution,' 1940-1980: Towards an Environmental History," Environmental History Review, 16 (Winter 1992), 29-52.

John McNeill, Something New Under the Sun, 212-227.

Lectures:

4-16 Prof. Isenberg: Modern Agriculture

4-18 Prof. Kreike: Science and Indigenous Technical Knowledge

### **Week 11: The Urban Environment.**

Readings:

David Stradling and Peter Thorsheim, "The Smoke of Great Cities: British and American Efforts to Control Air Pollution, 1860-1914," Environmental History, 4 (January 1999), 6-31.

Richard White, "'Are You an Environmentalist or Do You Work for a Living?': Work and Nature," in Cronon, ed., Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature (New York: Norton, 1995), 171-185.

Hurley, Environmental Inequalities, xiii-xv, 1-182.

Lectures:

4-23 Prof. Isenberg: Energy

4-25 Prof. Kreike: War, Dislocation, and Environment

### **Week 12: Environmentalism**

Reading:

Aldo Leopold, "Conservation Esthetic," "Wildlife in American Culture," "Wilderness," and "The Land Ethic," in Leopold, A Sand County Almanac, and Sketches Here and There (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 165-226.

Raymond Dominick, "Capitalism, Communism, and Environmental Protection: Lessons from the German Experience," Environmental History, 3 (July 1998), 311-332.

Jennifer Price, "Finding Nature at the Mall: A Field Guide to the Nature Company," in Cronon, ed., Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature (New York: Norton, 1995), 186-203.

Stephen Ellis, "Of Elephants and Men: Politics and Nature Conservation in South Africa," Journal of Southern African Studies, 20 (March 1994), 53-69.

Clayton R. Koppes, "Efficiency, Equity, Esthetics: Shifting Themes in American Conservation"; and Douglas Weiner, "The Changing Face of Soviet Conservation," in Worster, ed., Ends of the Earth, 230-273.

John McNeill, Something New Under the Sun, 325-362.

Lectures:

4-30 Prof. Isenberg: The Environmental Movement(s)

5-2 Prof. Isenberg: Conclusions