

John McNeill
Environment and Empire since 1750
Georgetown, 1999

This course is intended as an exploration in the relationships between environment and society in the context of modern imperialism in Africa, Australia and New Zealand. We will make forays into other parts of the world, but focus on the above.

I. Format

This will be primarily a discussion class, although I will offer a few lectures from time to time, and will occasionally conclude a class with a mini-lecture. This means that, for the most part, I will serve as the pilot, but you will be the engine driving the class. Your responsibilities are to do the reading, come to class having thought about the reading, and to be lively, thoughtful, and courteous to your peers on a consistent basis.

II. Books

I have ordered only three books for the course. We will be using the reserve shelf rather intensively, although you may wish to buy some of the other books via one of the on-line booksellers. If so, I suggest you organize yourselves for the purpose to save on shipping costs. Available (theoretically) at the Leavey Center bookstore are:

Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*
Tim Flannery, *The Future Eaters*
Griffiths and Robin, *Ecology and Empire*

III. Requirements and Grading

A quarter of your grade will rest on your class participation. After each class I will record a grade for each of you. You get 0 if you don't show up, 50 if you do, 70 if you open your mouth (yawning doesn't count), and more if you say something useful.

The remaining three quarters of your grade will rest on your written work. There is one in-class quiz, on April 8 (worth 25%). There is no final exam. Papers: here there are at least two options. One is to write a research paper, due May 10. If you choose this, you need to keep me posted about your topic, your bibliography, your progress. A research paper should be about 20pp double-spaced or 5,000-7,000 words. A second option is to write three shorter papers (c. 5-7pp each) on the environmental histories of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, East Africa, India, or, with approval, somewhere else. These would be due whenever you see fit to submit them, but all must be in by 10 May. To profit from my criticism of your papers, you would need to submit one or more of them some weeks before 10 May. A third option is to propose your own writing assignments: I am open to customized arrangements, but they must be cleared with me before the end of January. However configured, your papers will account for 50% of your final grade.

IV. Schedule of Classes

- Jan 14 introduction
- Jan 19 lecture: modern imperialism in (very long) historical perspective
reading: Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel* pp. 13-28, 295-321, 376-401
- Jan 21 discussion of Diamond
- Jan 26 the theory of ecological imperialism: discussion of Crosby
Reading: Crosby, except chapters 5, 10
- Jan 28 further discussion of Crosby
- Feb 2 discussion of role of disease in modern imperialism
Reading: Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, ch 11 (skipping the familiar parts)
- Feb 4 discussion: role of modern imperialism in disease
Reading: J.N. Hays, *The Burdens of Disease*, ch. 9
- Feb 9 lecture: introduction to African history and environment
Reading: Iliffe, *Africans: The History of a Continent*, pp. 159-270
Or: Roland Oliver, *The African Experience*, pp159-264 [more reader friendly, but less on ecology]
- Feb 11 lecture: the Dutch in South Africa, 1652-
reading: Milton, Carruthers, Grove chapters in *E & E*
- Feb 16 Tanzania: discussion of Giblin,
Reading: *The Politics of Environmental Control in Northeastern Tanzania*
- Feb 18 Tanzania: further discussion of Giblin
- Feb 23 discussion: the Machakos and Kissidigou stories
Reading: Mortimore & Tiffen, "Population and Environment in Time Perspective: The Machakos Story," in: Tony Binns, ed., *People and Environment in Africa*, 69-89.
James Fairhead & Melissa Leach, "Reading Forest History Backward: The Interaction of Policy and Local Land Use in Guinea's Forest-Savanna Mosaic," *Environment & History*, 1:1 (1995), 55-92.
- Feb 25 discussion: Egypt and the Nile
Reading: JRM chapter on the Hydrosphere
- Mar 2 discussion: Brazil
reading: Warren Dean, *With Broadaxe and Firebrand*
- Mar 4 discussion: Brazil, continued

SPRING BREAK

Mar 16 discussion: Caribbean

reading: David Watts, *The West Indies*, pp. TBA

JRM, "Environmental Change and the Geopolitics of the American Tropics, 1600-1825"

Mar 18 discussion: Caribbean

reading: Bonham Richardson, *Economy and Environment in the Caribbean*

Mar 23 Australia: Flannery, *The Future Eaters*

Mar 25 Australia: Flannery

March 26 proposed Friday night pizza and video party
Video: "Wild South"

Mar 30 no class

EASTER HOLIDAY

Apr 6 no class

Apr 8 QUIZ

Apr 13 New Zealand:

Reading: Crosby ch. 10, Flannery ch. 23

Apr 15 New Zealand
reading: TBA

Apr 20 empire and hunting: discussion
reading: John MacKenzie, *The Empire of Nature*

Apr 22 hunting, trapping, and conservation in North America
reading: Dan Flores, "Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy: The Southern Plains, 1800-1850" AND: A.J. Ray, "Some Conservation Schemes of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1821-50"

Apr 27 empire and fire: discussion
reading: Stephen Pyne, *Vestal Fire*, 3-6, 399-499, 532-43
AND: Pyne, pp19-34 in *E & E*

Apr 29 empire and forests: discussion
reading: Williams chapter in *E & E*

May 4 empire and extinctions: discussion
reading: pp. from Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism*