

John McNeill
Environmental History: Issues and Literature
Georgetown (protosyllabus) 2003

This course is intended as a graduate-level introduction to environmental history, oriented to the needs of Ph.D. students. Since the 1970s, environmental history has been growing as a sub-discipline within the historical profession. The ASEH, founded in 1976, has several hundred members and holds annual meetings. The ESEH emerged in 2000 and will hold its first meeting in September 2001. There are parallel organizations in Australia, Spain, India and probably elsewhere. Environmental history is by its nature an interdisciplinary business, leaning in particular on the natural sciences, but also on wings of geography and anthropology.

Some websites offers visions of what environmental history is. Visit <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~environ/> to get started, then try <http://www.cnr.berkeley.edu/departments/espm/env-hist/eh-internet.html>.

Key bibliographic aids:

1. the Table of Contents of the leading American journal, now called *Environmental History*, is at: <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~environ/EHTOC.html>

This journal publishes a quarterly bibliography of new work in the field, called *Biblioscope*, in each issue.

2. the leading UK journal, *Environment and History* is at:

<http://www.ericademon.co.uk/EH.html>. Full articles are available on-line (follow a few links) if you use a GU computer.

3. The leading on-line bibliography is at: <http://www.lib.duke.edu/forest/biblio.html>

4. An on-line bibliography focusing on Latin America:

<http://www.lib.duke.edu/forest/biblio.html>

In this course we will read a handful of books and articles together to acquire some grounding in the field. But the majority of the work will be done on your own or in pairs and small groups. I want you to read the literature in environmental history that most pertains to your program, so there will be, in effect, customized reading lists.

I. Requirements

1. attendance and participation at our meetings (30% of final grade)
2. one presentation to the class combined with a discussion paper (10% + 10% = 20%)
3. one long paper (50%)

A discussion paper is intended to introduce a set of readings to the class and serve as the springboard for that meeting's discussion. It should summarize and analyze the readings very concisely. The paper should be about 1,000 words, and must be distributed by e-mail to the class ahead of time (you will collectively decide how far ahead of time). Each student will prepare

one such paper, and on that occasion will inaugurate class discussion by raising problems and issues from the reading.

The long paper is due on May 11. It should be about 8,000-10,000 words. It may be historiographical. It may be a research paper. It may be something else. But you must give me a clear idea of what it is to be by 26 February.

Schedule of Meetings

Jan 22 introduction and organization
E-mail; languages; presentations

Jan 29 Theory & Method I: Perspectives from The Americas

core readings:

Crosby, Alfred W. 1995. "The Past and Present of Environmental History." *American Historical Review* 100, no. 4: 1177-1190

Cronon, William 1993. "The Uses of Environmental History." *Environmental History Review* 17: 1-22.

Leibhardt, Barbara 1988. "Interpretation and Causal Analysis: Theories in Environmental History." *Environmental Review* 12, no. 1: 23-36.

W. Cronon, *Changes in the Land* (1984)[I have 6 copies]

volunteers needed for:

Stewart, Mart A. "Environmental History: Profile of a Developing Field." *History Teacher* 31 (May 1998): 351-68.

Worster, Donald, et al 1990. "A Roundtable: Environmental History." *Journal of American History* 74, no. 4:1087-1147.

Worster, Donald 1994. "Nature and the Disorder of History." *Environmental History Review* 18: 1-15.

---- 1988. "Doing Environmental History." In: D. Worster, ed., *The Ends of the Earth* (New York: Cambridge UP), 289-307.

----. "History as Natural History: An Essay on Theory and Method," *Pacific Historical Review* 53(1984), 1-19.

Castro Herrera, Guillermo 1997. "The Environmental Crisis and the Tasks of History in Latin America," *Environment and History* 3: 1-18

Dean, Warren 1992. The Tasks of Latin American Environmental History. In *Changing Tropical Forests: Historical Perspectives on Today's Challenges in Central & South America*. Eds. Harold K. Steen, and Richard P. Tucker, 5-15.

Drummond, José Augusto 1991. "História Ambiental: Temas, Fontes e Linhas de Pesquisa," *Estudos Históricos* 8.

Martinez Alier, Juan 1993. "Temas de historia economico-ecologica," *Historia y Ecologia*, no. 11:19-48

Carolyn Merchant 1997. "The Theoretical Structure of Ecological Revolutions." In: *Out of the Woods: Essays in Environmental History* (Pittsburgh: UP Press)

Feb 5 Biological Exchanges and Invasions

Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange* (1971) or
Elinor Melville, *A Plague of Sheep* (1994)

di Castri, Francesco 1989, "History of Biological Invasions With Special Emphasis on the Old World." In: J.A. Drake et al, eds., *Biological Invasions: A Global Perspective*, 1-30.

J.R. McNeill 2000, "Biological Exchange and Biological Invasion in World History"

Feb 12 Frontiers, c. 1650-1880

Andrew Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison* (2000), 1-163.

James Webb, *The Desert Frontier* (1995) [130pp]

Tom Barrett, *At the Edge of Empire: The Terek Cossacks and the North Caucasus Frontier* (1999), ch. 4

Feb 19 holiday

Feb 26 Forests

core reading:

Warren Dean, *With Broadaxe and Firebrand* (1994)

and one of:

Conrad Totman, *The Green Archipelago* (1988)

Michael Williams, *Americans and Their Forests* (1989)

Gadgil and Guha, *This Fissured Land* (1992)

E. Bauer Manderscheid, *Los montes de España en la Historia* (1981)

H.C. Darby, "The Clearing of the Woodland of Medieval Europe." In: William L. Thomas et al eds., *Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth* (1956)
R.A. French, "Russians and the Forest," *Historical Geography* (1983)
Andrée Corvol, *L'homme aux bois* (1987)
Robin L. Anderson, *Colonization as Exploitation in the Amazon Rain Forest, 1758-1911* (1999)
Richard P. Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite* (2000), pp345-415.

SPRING BREAK

Mar 12 Agrarian Societies, Agriculture, Population (China and Mexico)

core readings:

Mark Elvin, "3,000 Years of Unsustainable Development," *East Asian History* (1993)

Arij Ouweneel, *Shadows Over Anáhuac: An Ecological Interpretation of Crisis and Development in Central Mexico, 1730-1800* (1996) [compare with Melville]

Sonya Lipsett-Rivera, *To Defend Our Water with the Blood of Our Veins: The Struggle for Resources in Colonial Puebla* (1999)

Robert Marks, *Tigers, Rice, Silk and Silt* (1998)

Mar 19 Cities

core reading:

Wm Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis* (1991)

Martin Melosi, *The Sanitary City* (2000)

Brailovsky & Foguelman, *Memoria verde* (1991)

Peter Brimblecombe, *The Big Smoke* (1987)

Mar 26 Industrialization

B.W. Clapp, *An Environmental History of Britain* (1994)

James Winter, *Secure From Rash Assault: Sustaining the Victorian Environment* (1999)

Theodore Steinberg, "An Ecological Perspective on the Origins of Industrialization," *Environmental Review* 10(1986), 261-76.

Frank Uekotter, "Confronting the Pitfalls of Current Environmental History," *Environment and History* 4, 1(1998), 31-52.

Werner Baer and Charles Mueller 1995-6. "Environmental Aspects of Brazil's Economic Development," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 32:83-99 and 33:21-41.

German material?

Apr 2 Water

Marc Cioc, *The Rhine: An Eco-Biography* (2001)[in ms still]

D. Worster, *Rivers of Empire* (1985)

Patricia Romero 1999. *Obra hidraulica de la Ciudad de Mexico y su impacto socioambiental, 1880-1990* (Mexico City: Instituto Mora).

Gerard Koepfel 2000. *Water for Gotham: A History* (Princeton: PUP).

R. Hoffmann in AHR

Apr 9

Apr 16 Easter Holiday

Apr 23

Apr 30 critique of two (or three?) manuscripts
George Vrtis' dissertation chapters
J.R. McNeill, "Yellow Jack and Geopolitics"

Environmental Movements?

Environmental Ideas?

Disease History?

Ancient Civilizations?

Montane Environments?

JRM on 20th century?

Fire history?

Mining, Smelting?

Here is a brief bibliography of macro-scale works in environmental history that are worth reading in their own right, but will also lead you to the monographic literature pertaining to their part(s) of the world. That literature is comparatively weak for Russia, the Middle East, and SE Asia; a little stronger for Latin America; strong for India, China, Africa, and Europe; strongest for Australia and the USA.

ANTHOLOGIES:

B.L. TURNER et al, eds. 1990. The Earth As Transformed By Human Action: Global and Regional Changes in the Biosphere Over the Past 300 Years (New York: Cambridge University Press).

W.L. THOMAS et al eds. 1956. Man's Role in Changing the Face of the Earth (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

CONTINENTAL (and SUB-CONTINENTAL)-SCALE WORKS:

Madhav GADGIL and Ramachandra GUHA 1993. This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Mark ELVIN and Ts'ui-jung LIU, eds. 1998. The Sediments of Time: Society and Environment in Chinese History (New York: Cambridge University Press).

Stephen BOYDEN 1987. Western Civilization in Biological Perspective (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Jim McCANN 1999. *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: African Environmental History, 1800-1990* (Portsmouth: Heinemann).

Richard GROVE, Vinita. DAMODARAN, Satpal SANGWAN, eds. 1998. *Nature and the Orient: The Environmental History of South and Southeast Asia* (Delhi: Oxford UP)

Peter Boomgaard et al eds. 1997. *Paper Landscapes: Explorations in the Environmental History of Indonesia* (Leiden: KITLV).

Jeff Albert et al eds., 1998. *Transformations of Middle Eastern Natural Environments: Legacies and Lessons* (New Haven: Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies Bulletin Series, No. 103)

Castro Herrera, Guillermo. 1994. *Los Trabajos de Ajuste y Combate: Naturaleza y Sociedad en la Historia de America Latina*. (Havana: Casa de las Americas).

Elinor MELVILLE forthcoming on Latin America

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORIES:

Neil ROBERTS 1989. The Holocene: An Environmental History (Oxford: Basil Blackwell)

Clive PONTING 1991. A Green History of the World: The Environment and the Collapse of Great Civilizations (London: Penguin).

Stephen BOYDEN 1992. Biohistory: The Interplay Between Human Society and the Biosphere, Past and Present (Paris: UNESCO).

I.G. SIMMONS 1989. Changing the Face of the Earth: Culture, Environment, History (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).

I.G. SIMMONS 1993. Environmental History: A Concise Introduction (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).

William B. Meyer 1996. Human Impact on the Earth (New York: CUP)

J.R. McNeill 2000. *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the 20th-Century World* (New York: Norton).

J. Donald HUGHES 2001

J.F. Richards 2002