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Stony Brook University
Spring 2004

AAS/HIS 352-H

Environmental History of China: Nature, Culture, and the State

Course Description. This course explores the history of human interaction with the natural environment in China, with special attention to the ecological consequences of such activity. The first part of the courses focuses primarily on the imperial period of Chinese history, while that latter half of the course addresses issues of environmental history and environmental management in twentieth century China. Analysis and interpretation focus on the political ecology of state-level society, and the relationships between cultural ideas, behavioral practices, human health, and environmental change.

Requirements and Evaluation. Regular attendance is required. Class sessions will present a considerable amount of material not found in reading assignments. Students are granted two unexcused absences without penalty. All Required Readings must be completed before class-time, and questions prepared in advance for discussion. Final grades will be calculated on the following basis: Participation (10%), Quizzes (30%), a Mid-Term Exam (30%), and a Term Paper (30%) submitted in accordance with guidelines and standards of the History Department. Detail guidelines regarding the Term Paper and topical options will be provided separately.

“Blackboard” A website for this course will be maintained through the university’s server at: <http://blackboard.sunysb.edu/>. You should visit the course’s ‘Blackboard’ site regularly. Posted there you will find Announcements, Selected Reference Material (such as chronologies, images, maps, and transliteration tables), Supplementary Reading Assignments, a Discussion Forum (in which you are expected to participate regularly), and Grades for all quizzes and exams (grades will NOT be disclosed by telephone or email). Recommended Readings (non-mandatory) are also suggested for selected class sessions.

Assigned Readings will be placed on reserve in the main (Melville) library; a course-pack containing assigned readings will also be made available. The following texts will be ordered through “Stony Books” bookstore:

Richard Louis Edmonds, Managing the Chinese Environment, Oxford University Press, 2003, 0-19-829635-5

R. Keith Schoppa, Song Full of Tears: Nine Centuries of Chinese Life at Xiang Lake, Boulder: Westview, 2002, 0-8133-4020-9

Judith Shapiro, Mao’s War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China, Cambridge, 2001, 0-521-78680-0

Vaclav Smil, China’s Past, China’s Future: Energy, Food, Environment, Routledge, 2003, 0-415-31499-2

If you have a physical, psychological, medical, or learning disability that may affect your ability to carry out assigned course work, you are urged to contact the staff at the Disabled Student Services (DSS) office, Humanities 133 (2-6748/TDD). DSS will review your concerns and determine, with you, what accommodations are necessary and appropriate. All information and documentation of disability are confidential.

Course Outline

Week 1

Mon., Jan 26

Introduction

Weds., Jan 28

Overview: Nature, Culture, and the State

Read:

Sharachchandra Lele, 1991, "Sustainable Development: A Critical Review," World Development 19(6):607-621

Rhoads Murphey, 1967, "Man and Nature in China," Modern Asian Studies 1(4):313-333

Week 2

Assessing the Environmental History of Chinese State Development

Mon., Feb 2

Read:

J.R. McNeill, 1997, "China's Environmental History in World Perspective," in Mark Elvin and Tsui'jung Liu (eds.), Sediments of Time: Environment and Society in Chinese History, Cambridge, pp. 31-49

Mark Elvin, 1999, "The Environmental Legacy of Imperial China," China Quarterly 156:733-756

Weds., Feb 4

Read:

Richard L. Edmonds, 1994, Patterns of China's Lost Harmony, Routledge, pp. 1-41 (Chs. 1 & 2)

Richard L. Edmonds, 1999, "The Environment in the People's Republic of China 50 Years On," China Quarterly 159:640-650

Week 3

Constructing Knowledge: Culture, Concepts, and Behavior

Mon., Feb 9

Read:

Wenhui Hou, 1997, "Reflections on Chinese Traditional Views of Nature," Environmental History 2(4):482-492

Helen Dunstan, "Official Thinking on Environmental Issues and the State's Environmental Roles in Eighteenth-Century China," in Mark Elvin and Tsui'jung Liu (eds.), Sediments of Time, op. cit., pp. 585-614

Yi-fu Tuan, 1968, "Discrepancies between Environmental Attitude and Behavior: Examples from Europe and China," Canadian Geographer 12(3)

Weds., Feb 11

Read:

Robert P. Weller and Peter K. Bol, 1998, "From Heaven-and-Earth to Nature: Chinese Concepts of the Environment and their Influence on Policy Implementation," in Michael B. McElroy, Chris P. Nielsen, and Peter Lydon, eds., Energizing China, Harvard, pp. 473-499

Williams, Dee Mack. Sept 2000. "Representations of Nature on the Mongolian Steppe: An Investigation of Scientific Knowledge Construction" American Anthropologist 102(3):503-

Weeks 4-5

Mon., Feb 16, Weds., Feb 18, Mon., Feb 23

Constancy and Change over a Longue Duree

Read:

R. Keith Schoppa, 2002, Song Full of Tears: Nine Centuries of Chinese Life at Xiang Lake, Boulder: Westview.

Weds., Feb 25

Frontiers

Read:

Anne Osborne, 1997, "Highlands and Lowland: Economic and Ecological Interactions in the Lower Yangzi Region under the Qing," in Mark Elvin and Tsui'jung Liu (eds.), Sediments of Time, op. cit., pp. 203-234

Eduard B. Vermeer, 1997, "Population and Ecology along the Frontier in Qing China," in Mark Elvin and Tsui'jung Liu (eds.), Sediments of Time, op. cit., pp. 235-279

Week 6

Hydrology in History

Mon., Mar 1

Read:

Peter Purdue, Exhausting the Earth: State and Peasant in Hunan, 1500-1850, Harvard, 1987, 164-233 (Chs. 6 & 7)

Weds., Mar 3

Read:

Pierre-Etienne Will, "Clear Waters versus Muddy Waters: The Zheng-Bai Irrigation System of Shaanxi Province in the Late Imperial Period," in Mark Elvin and Tsui'jung Liu (eds.), Sediments of Time, op. cit., pp. 283-343

Mark Elvin and Su Ninghu, "Action at a Distance: The Influence of the Yellow River on Hangzhou Bay since A.D. 1000, in Mark Elvin and Tsui'jung Liu (eds.), Sediments of Time, op. cit., pp. 344-407

Week 7

Settlement and Environmental Change

Mon., Mar 8

Read:

Shiba Yoshinobu, "Environment versus Water Control: The Case of the Southern Hangzhou Bay Area from the Mid-Tang Through the Qing," in Mark Elvin and Tsui'jung Liu (eds.), Sediments of Time, op. cit., pp. 135-164.

Liu Ts'ui-jung, "Han Migration and the Settlement of Taiwan: The Onset of Environmental Change," in Mark Elvin and Tsui'jung Liu (eds.), Sediments of Time, op. cit., pp. 165-199

Weather and Climate

Weds., Mar 10

Read:

Robert Marks, "'It Never Used to Snow:' Climatic Variability and Harvest Yields in Late-Imperial South China, 1650-1850," in Mark Elvin and Tsui'jung Liu (eds.), Sediments of Time, op. cit., pp. 411-446.

Bozhong Li., 1997, "Changes in Climate, Land, and Human Efforts: The Production of Wet-field Rice in Jiangnan during the Ming and Qing Dynasties," in Mark Elvin and Tsui'jung Liu (eds.), Sediments of Time, op. cit., pp. 447-484

Week 8

Battling Against Nature: The Political Ecology of Revolutionary Mass Mobilization

Mon., Mar 15

Read:

Judith Shapiro, 2001, Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China, Cambridge, pp.1-93 (Intro, Chs. 1 & 2)

Weds., Mar 17

Read:

Judith Shapiro, 2001, Mao's War Against Nature: Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China, Cambridge, pp. 95-193 (Chs. 3 & 4)

Week 9

Mon., Mar 22

Exam

Weds., Mar 24

Documentary Video: The Three Gorges Dam

Week 10

Forests and Grasslands Management

Mon., Mar 29

Read:

Richard L. Edmonds, Patterns of China's Lost Harmony, op. cit., pp. 42-97 (Ch. 3: "Vegetation Reduction" and Ch. 4: "Soil Erosion")
R.S. Yin, 1998, "Forestry and the Environment in China: The Current Situation and Strategic Choices," World Development 26(12):2153-2167.

Emily Yeh, 2000, "Forest Claims, Conflicts and Commodification: The Political Ecology of Tibetan Mushroom-Harvesting Villages in Yunnan Province, China," China Quarterly 161:264-278

Weds., Mar 31

Read:

Richard L. Edmonds, Patterns of China's Lost Harmony, op. cit., pp. 98-132 (Ch. 5: "Desertification")

Dee Mack Williams, 1996, "Grassland Enclosures: Catalyst of Land Degradation in Inner Mongolia," Human Organization 55(3):307-312

Dee Mack Williams, 2002, Beyond Great Walls: Environment, Identity, and Development on the Chinese Grasslands of Inner Mongolia, Stanford, pp. 24-40 (Ch. 2: "Land Degradation and the Chinese Discourse")

Week 11

SPRING RECESS

Weeks 12-13

Mon., Apr 12, Weds., Apr 14, Mon., Apr 19

Environmental Management in Post-Mao China

Read:

Richard Louis Edmonds, Managing the Chinese Environment, Oxford University Press, 2003

Mon., Apr 19

Read:

Margaret A. McKean, 1998, "The Role of Common Property Regimes in Managing Common-Pool Resources in China Today," in Vermeer, Pieke, and Chong (eds.), Cooperative and Collective in China's Rural Development: Between State and Private Interests, Armonk: ME Sharpe, pp. 75-89

Eduard Vermeer, "Decollectivization and Functional Change in Irrigation Management in China," in Vermeer, Pieke, and Chong (eds.), Cooperative and Collective, op. cit., pp. 136-173

John Morton and Robin Grimble, "Institutions, Households, and Groundwater in an Inner Mongolian Oasis," in Vermeer, Pieke, and Chong (eds.), Cooperative and Collective, op. cit., pp. 174-195

W. Hu, 1997, "Household Land Tenure Reform in China: Its Impact on Farming Land Use and Agro-Environment," Land Use Policy 14(3):175-186.

Weds., Apr 21

Poverty, Pollution, and Health

Read:

Rozelle, Huang and Zhang, 1997, "Poverty, Population and Environmental Degradation in China," Food Policy 22(3):229-253

Yixia Zhang and Mark Elvin, "Environment and Tuberculosis in Modern China," in Mark Elvin and Tsui'jung Liu (eds.), Sediments of Time, op. cit., pp. 520-542

Weeks 14-15

Mon., Apr 26, Weds., Apr 28, Mon., May 3

Looking Forward

Read:

Vaclav Smil, China's Past, China's Future: Energy, Food, Environment, Routledge, 2003

Weds., May 5

Concluding Discussion

Read:

World Bank, 1997, Clear Water, Blue Skies: China's Environment in the New Century, Washington, DC