

**ENVI 343/HIST 343  
IMPERIAL NATURE:  
THE UNITED STATES AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT**

Macalester College, Spring 2007  
Olin-Rice 270, TR 1-2:30

Prof. Chris Wells

Office: Olin Rice 249c  
Email: wells@macalester.edu  
Phone: 651-696-6803  
Office Hours: Wed 3:30-4:30, Thurs 2:35-3:30,  
and by appointment

**Course Description:**

Although the United States accounts for just five percent of the world's population, it consumes roughly twenty-five percent of the world's total energy, has the world's largest economy, and is the world's largest consumer and generator of waste. Relative to its size, its policies and actions have had a significantly disproportionate impact on global economic development and environmental health. Mixing broad themes and detailed case studies, this course will focus on the complex historical relationship between American actions and changes to the global environment.

**Required Readings:**

The following books are available for purchase at the College Bookstore:

John Soluri, *Banana Cultures*  
Vandana Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution*  
Paul Roberts, *The End of Oil*

**Copies of all other readings**, marked with an **X**, are available as e-reserves through the library. Access them at <http://www.macalester.edu/library/resources/reserves/index.html>, or through the course's Moodle website (see below). A hard copy of each reserve reading is also available at the library circulation desk.

**Be advised** that this course has an appropriately heavy reading load for a history seminar. I have chosen readings for readability and interest, but please plan ahead—particularly when assignments are due—so that you are able to complete the readings for the day they are listed in this syllabus. *Completing the readings is vital to the success of this course.*

**Grading:** Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

Book Review (2-3 pages)	10%
Primary documents collection	10%
“Critical commentary” (4-6 pages)	25%
Participation	25%
Research paper (12-15 pages)	30%

## Assignments

*The Book Review:* Identify and read a book that addresses some aspect of the relationship between the United States and global environmental change and assess it in a 2-3 page paper. (I will distribute a list of pre-approved titles in class.) What is its argument? What are its greatest strengths and weaknesses?

*The "Critical Commentary":* In a 4-6 page paper, select a subject of interest to you that deals with the relationship between the United States and the global environment and comment on that relationship in a way that is both accessible and historically grounded, easy to understand and intellectually sophisticated. Pretend you are writing for a large audience in a magazine such as the *Harper's*, *The Nation*, *Grist*, or *Orion*, and that your goal is to set the agenda for a broad public discussion of your topic. Here's your opportunity to play the role of a public intellectual by identifying a pressing issue and commenting on it in a playful and accessible—yet historically informed—manner.

*The Primary Documents Collection:* Complete this assignment as you wrap up your primary research for your research paper. For this assignment, you should:

- 1) Photocopy 10-12 of the best primary source documents that you have found as you have conducted your research. Excerpt each document to a length of no more than two pages to include in the collection. (Do not use more than two documents from any single periodical.) Record the full bibliographic information of each source following the Chicago Manual of Style. (For help with this style, visit this site: [http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChiNotes\\_1stRef\\_book.html](http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChiNotes_1stRef_book.html))
- 2) Write a gloss for each source, limiting yourself to no more than one double-spaced, half-page paragraph per gloss. As you write your glosses, consider questions such as: What does this source say? What are its biases? Why is it valuable? How does it interact with the other sources you have collected?
- 3) Divide your documents into 3-4 subject categories that you plan to use in your research paper. Use these categories to make a table of contents for the collection.
- 4) Write an introduction to your collection no longer than one half-page paragraph. Explain its strengths and weaknesses as a base of evidence for your research paper. Where is your evidence strongest? What holes remain to be filled?
- 5) Provide the working title of your paper in Primary Title: Secondary Title format.

*The Research Paper:* Research papers should be on a topic of your own choosing that deals with some aspect of the relationship between the U.S. and global environmental change, and should aim for 12-15 pages in length. This paper should be based on a mixture of primary and secondary sources, and should represent your best efforts to think through the issues involved and to produce polished, carefully edited, thoughtfully considered prose. (For more on this assignment, see our course website on Moodle.)

*The “Issues Discussion”*: Once during the course of the semester, you will help lead a short (15-30 minute) class discussion. To do so, you will need to identify two primary documents—one historical and one from the recent past—on some aspect of the day’s assigned reading. These documents should be a combined length of three pages or less. (You may need to excerpt documents to keep them within this required page range; please do *not* shrink the text to microscopic proportions.) You must scan these documents and upload them to our course webpage on Moodle by 6 p.m. the day before class, and you will take charge of the discussion that ensues.

**You will be assessed a late penalty** of one-third of a letter grade for each 24-hour period that any written assignment is late, so please plan accordingly.

**Participation grades** will be based on class attendance, participation in discussions, and your leadership of an “issues discussion” (described above). Discussions are the driving force in this class, so it is vital that everyone arrive prepared to discuss the day’s material. Our goal will be to analyze issues revolving around the relationship between the U.S. and the global environment, to explore connections between events, to answer questions, to clear up confusion, to discuss major themes, and above all to engage with the readings. For those who are less comfortable than others speaking in class, remember that asking a good question is often as valuable a means of participation as delivering a long-winded oration. Participation does require speaking, however, so please join the discussion.

**Regular attendance** is required in order to receive a passing grade for the course, regardless of how well you do on your written assignments. Absences will directly affect your class participation grade.

**Academic dishonesty** will not be tolerated. All of your written work should be your own work, and should properly attribute the work and ideas of others who you engage. For help on how to avoid plagiarism, see <http://www.macalester.edu/max/fym>.

**Our course’s Moodle website** duplicates much of the information in this syllabus, including the reading schedule and assignment due dates. It also provides a direct link to our course’s e-reserves, as well as an option for submitting your papers electronically. Go to <http://moodle.macalester.edu/>, and login using your Novell username and password. (These should be the same as for your email account.) After logging in, click on the link to Imperial Nature in the My Courses section. Anything posted to any of the forums will automatically be emailed to everyone registered for the course.

## Class Schedule

All **reserve items** are marked **X**

NOTE: You are also responsible for reading “issues” documents on our Moodle website.

### WEEK 1: INTRODUCTIONS (50)

- T 1/23 Introductions  
R 1/25 Crosby, “Ecological Imperialism,” 103-117. **X**  
Worster, “Transformations of the Earth,” 1087-1106. **X**  
Robertson, ““This is the American Earth”” (draft), 1-15. **X**  
**Please also spend some time with the valuable resources at:**  
<http://www.schrag.info/teaching/index.html>

### UNIT I. YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

#### WEEK 2: THE AGROECOLOGY OF EMPIRE (175)

- T 1/30 Soluri, *Banana Cultures*, chs. 1-3.  
R 2/1 Soluri, *Banana Cultures*, chs. 4-6.

#### WEEK 3: FROM FARM TO PASTURE (113)

- T 2/6 Soluri, *Banana Cultures*, chs. 7-8.  
R 2/8 Tucker, “The Crop on Hooves,” 285-344. **X**  
**Book Review Due in Class**

#### WEEK 4: THE GREEN REVOLUTION (274)

- T 2/13 Doyle, *Altered Harvest*, 255-70. **X**  
Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution*, intro through ch. 3.  
R 2/15 Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution*, chs. 4-7.  
Doyle, *Altered Harvest*, 270-281. **X**

### UNIT II. GLOBAL MARKETS, GLOBAL POLITICS

#### WEEK 5: GREEN NEOLIBERALISM AT THE WORLD BANK (94)

- T 2/20 Goldman, “The Rise of the Bank,” 46-99. **X**  
R 2/22 Goldman, “Eco-Governmentality and the Making of an Environmental State,” 181-220. **X**

#### WEEK 6: RECYCLING AND HEGEMONY (29)

- T 2/27 Grossman, “Not in Our Backyard,” 182-210. **X**  
R 3/1 NO CLASS

**Critical Commentary Due Electronically by 9 p.m.**

#### WEEK 7: DOING HISTORY (78)

- T 3/6 Booth, Colomb, and Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 29-84. **X**  
R 3/8 Zinsser, “The Tyranny of the Final Product,” 255-264. **X**  
Lamott, “Short Assignments” and “Shitty First Drafts,” 16-27. **X**  
**Please also revisit the resources at:**  
<http://www.schrag.info/teaching/index.html>

WEEK 8: SPRING BREAK

T 3/13 NO CLASS (Note: I recommend reading as much of Roberts,  
R 3/15 NO CLASS *The End of Oil*, over break as possible.)

WEEK 9: THE POLITICS OF GLOBAL WARMING (40)

T 3/20 Speth, "First Attempt at Global Environmental Governance" 77-97. X  
R 3/22 Speth, "Anatomy of Failure" 98-116. X

WEEK 10: THE POLITICS OF ENERGY (142)

T 3/27 Roberts, *The End of Oil*, Prologue through ch. 5.  
R 3/29 NO CLASS

**Annotated Primary Documents Collection Due Electronically by 9 p.m.**

WEEK 11: ENERGY IS POWER (190)

T 4/3 Roberts, *The End of Oil*, chs. 6-9.  
R 4/5 Roberts, *The End of Oil*, chs. 10-13.

WEEK 12: WAR AND THE ENVIRONMENT (95)

T 4/10 Buckingham, *Operation Ranch Hand*, Foreword and 87-136. X  
Griffiths, *Agent Orange*, 14 selected pages. X  
R 4/12 Faber, "War Against Nature," 191-221. X

UNIT III. IMPERIAL MORALITY?

WEEK 13: MISSIONARY ZEAL (103)

T 4/17 Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible*, 13-82. X  
R 4/19 Hartmann, "Rethinking the Population Problem," 3-35. X

**Research Paper Draft Due in Class**

WEEK 14: ORGANICS, FAIR TRADE, AND ECOTOURISM (137)

T 4/24 Rice, "Noble Goals and Challenging Terrain," 39-62. X  
Cohen, *Glass, Paper, Beans*, xiii-xviii, 45-60, 166-195, 221-224, 275-289. X  
R 4/26 Honey, "In Search of the Golden Toad," 3-26. X  
Belsky, "The Meaning of the Manatee," 285-308. X

T 4/24-Sun 4/29: **Works in Progress Peer Group Meetings through the MAX Center**

WEEK 15: PRESERVING NATURE, PRESERVING JUSTICE (6)

T 5/1 Reel, "Argentine Land Fight Divides Environmentalists, Rights Advocates." X  
Welsh, "Brazil Tells Foreigners Amazon Not for Sale." X

Sat 5/5 **Final Papers Due Electronically by 9 p.m.**