

**Lise Sedrez**  
**Environmental History of Latin America**  
**Stanford University - Spring 2004**

For readings and course materials, check <http://coursework.stanford.edu>.

Environmental history is a new field in Latin American historiography—and yet it has already built a solid body of works that study the relationship between nature and society in Latin America. Environmental history is by its nature an interdisciplinary business, leaning in particular on the natural sciences, but also on wings of geography and anthropology. Students are encouraged to consider the readings in their disciplinary context and how they touch other disciplines. The goal of this class is to understand how scholars have incorporated nature in their understanding of Latin America history.

**Structure:** We will meet once a week to discuss our core readings. Success or failure of the class depends on the commitment of the participants in keeping up with the readings. Come to class prepared. Be ready to explain the main argument of the readings, as some of your colleagues may have chosen other readings, but be also ready to be critical and able to connect that work with other readings.

**Assignments:**

- a) In conjunction with the required readings, you are expected to submit **one paragraph reviews** of articles of your choice, chosen among the Online Bibliography on Latin America Environmental History ([www.stanford.edu/group/LAEH](http://www.stanford.edu/group/LAEH)). (Plus participation/attendance grade=30%). The short reviews should be submit at Panfora, via coursework, on the day of the class.
- b) You should write a scholarly **review of a book** of your choice-1 to 3 pages. Check the Environmental History journal, or H-Net reviews (<http://www.h-net.org/reviews/>) , as examples. (30%--if this grade is less than your final paper's grade, it will be dismissed and the final paper counts for 70%. If you fail to hand your review, however, this option does not apply).
- c) The weekly reviews build toward the course's final assignment, **a review paper** on one aspect of the field (7-10 pages). Suggested topics for the final assignment include, but are not limited to: the ecological impact of the European arrival in the New World; the urban environment in Latin America; land use and forest conservation; the history of science and nature in Latin America; environmental movements; Latin American environmental history in a global context; and demography and natural resources. You must meet with me by week five to discuss your topic. (40%)

## REQUIRED READINGS:

### Required readings\*

There is no course reader for this class. The following books are available for purchase at the Stanford Bookstore.

Crosby Jr., Alfred W. *Ecological imperialism: the biological expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press; 1986.

Cunha, Euclides da. *Revolt in the Backlands*. London: Gollancz, 1947, c1944.

Dean, Warren. *With Broadax and Firebrand: The destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest*. Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA; London: University of California Press, 1997.

McCook, Stuart George. *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture, and Environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940*. Austin: University of Texas Press; 2002.

McNeill, John R. *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World*. London, New York: W.W. Norton & Company; 2000

Melville, Elinor Gordon Ker. *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

Mintz, Sidney W. *Sweetness and Power the Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986.

Sauer, Carl Ortwin. *The early Spanish Main*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; 1966

Slatta, Richard W. *Gauchos and the vanishing frontier*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press; 1983.

Wright, Angus Lindsay. *The death of Ramón González: the modern agricultural dilemma*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press; 1990.

You must enroll at <http://coursework.stanford.edu> to have access to the digital materials. Online material may include JSTOR articles, digital images, and music. If for any reason you have problems with the files, please let me know as soon as possible.

### GRADING:

Participation (class and short reviews)	30%
Mid-term review	30%
Final paper	40%

### GUIDELINES:

ATTENDANCE at weekly class meetings is mandatory. All absences, except for emergencies, must be cleared in advance. For any class missed, students must turn in a 2-page critical essay on the readings assigned for that week's session; failure to do so will result in a participation grade of zero for that week.

**COLLABORATION:** Students are encouraged to discuss the readings, but they are individually responsible for their assignments. I also encourage you to read reviews of our readings in academic journals, but be \*extremely\* careful in giving due credit to the authors. It is better to err on the side of caution. I require scholarly footnoting of your quotations AND paraphrases. If you have doubts on collaboration or quotation, consult with me. As a Stanford student, you must be familiar with the Honor Code.

**DISCUSSION WITH THE AUTHOR.** Prof. Angus Wright will visit our campus on April 28. He is supposed to also be responsible for reading the responses of his or her classmates before coming to class each week.

**ASSIGNMENTS.** Short reviews are to be posted at Panfora one day before the class. Mid-term review and final paper may be handed in class, uploaded at coursework or email to me, UNTIL 8:00PM OF THE DUE DATE.

\*\*your grade may be lowered by one-third grade for each day of lateness. \*\*

## **Class Schedule**

### **Week One: What is Environmental History? (March 31)**

Introduction, Syllabus

### **Week Two: What is Environmental History? (April 7)**

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

Castro Herrera, Guillermo. February 2001. "Environmental History (made in) Latin America". Historiographic series on global environmental history. (19 March, 2004)

### **Week Three: Historical Geography, Political Ecology and other strange animals**

#### **April 14**

Cunha, Euclides da. *Revolt in the Backlands*. London: Gollancz, 1947, c1944. [trick used by Brazilian high school students: read first part III, then part II and finish with part I]

Sauer, Carl Ortwin. *The early Spanish Main*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press; 1966 (Choose ONE of them)

### **Week Four: Across the Atlantic (April 21)**

Crosby Jr., Alfred W. *Ecological imperialism: the biological expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. Cambridge [Cambridgeshire]; New York: Cambridge University Press; 1986.

Melville, Elinor Gordon Ker. *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

(Choose ONE of them)

### **Week Five: Anthropology and Agriculture (April 28)**

Wright, Angus Lindsay. *The death of Ramón González: the modern agricultural dilemma*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press; 1990.

**Discussion with Author. (Time and place TBA).**

**Week Six: Consumption and Production (May 5)**

Mintz, Sidney W. *Sweetness and Power the Place of Sugar in Modern History*. New York, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986.

**One Page Review Due**

**Week Seven: Frontiers and Industrialization (May 12)**

Slatta, Richard W. *Gauchos and the vanishing frontier*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press; 1983.

**Week Eight: Science and Nature (May 19)**

McCook, Stuart George. *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture, and Environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940*. Austin: University of Texas Press; 2002.

**Week Nine: Forests (May 26)**

Dean, Warren. *With Broadax and Firebrand: The destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest*. Berkeley & Los Angeles, CA; London: University of California Press, 1997.

**Week Ten: Placing LA in the World (June 2)**

McNeill, John R. *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World*. London, New York: W.W. Norton & Company; 2000  
(Introduction + three chapters of your choice)

**Final Paper Due June 9**