

HISTORY 394
TH 1:00-3:30
FALL 2004

Mr. WEBB
LV 318

ECOLOGICAL HISTORY

Ecological History is a junior-level seminar that surveys major issues in and interpretations of our changing relationship with the natural environment. The seminar will examine broad themes including the early impact of human beings on the environment, the agricultural revolution, biological imperialism, historical epidemiology, the revolutionary changes of the twentieth century, and the international and domestic environmental movements.

Each week, we will treat a different theme in Ecological History. Participants in the seminar will be required to write an intellectual journal based on the assigned readings, and to submit this intellectual journal in hard copy in the plexiglass box outside my office door by Tuesday at 9 AM before the scheduled Thursday afternoon seminar. The intellectual journals are to be two to three pages in length, with standard one-inch margins, and in twelve-point Times font. These journals can be an excellent means for participants to reflect upon the issues raised in the readings and to bring in additional perspectives from other courses.

There are eleven weekly intellectual journals assignments over the course of the semester. You are required to write ten of eleven. You may skip any assignment of your choice during the semester; alternatively, you may write all eleven papers and I will exclude your lowest mark from the calculation of your semester grade. The eleven intellectual journals are the core assignment for the seminar, and along with your participation in the seminar meetings these journals will be the basis for your seminar grade. There is no particular format required for the intellectual journal, but good grammar and spelling are essential. A penalty will be assessed for late submissions.

You will need to purchase the following materials:

Jared Diamond, Guns, Germs, and Steel (New York, 1997).

Michael Lewis, Inventing Global Ecology: Tracking the Biodiversity Ideal in India, 1947-1997 (Athens, OH, 2004).

Ramachandra Guha, Environmentalism: A Global History (New York, 2000).

John R. McNeill, Something New Under the Sun (New York, 2000).

Shepard Krech, The Ecological Indian: Myth and History (New York, 2000).

All other readings are on reserve in Miller Library.

Attendance Policy. Students are expected to attend all classes and scheduled course events and are responsible for any work missed. Failure to attend can lead to a warning, grading penalties, and/or dismissal from the course with a failing grade. If you want to be excused from a class in order to attend a College-sponsored activity such as musical performance or an athletic competition, it is the responsibility of the student to communicate promptly and directly with me concerning these matters.

Excuses will be granted for critical emergencies (normally verified by the Dean of Students Office), athletic or organizational trips, or illness (normally verified by the College Health Center). Students on academic probation should know that they cannot be excused from any class because of extracurricular or athletic activities.

Students who are dismissed from a course due to unsatisfactory attendance through the mid-semester deadline (with the exception of first-year students) will receive a grade of WF. Students dismissed after mid-semester day will receive a grade of F in the course, with the exception of first-year students who will be dismissed with a mark of WF.

Contact Information

Faculty Office: room 245 (second floor) of Miller Library

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Office hours: 3:30-4:30PM on TH, or by appointment

HISTORY 394
TH 1:00-3:30
SPRING 2004

Mr. WEBB
LV 318

ECOLOGICAL HISTORY

SEPT 9: An Introduction to the Seminar
Ecological and Historical Processes: Assumptions and Evidence

SEPT 16: Topic I: What challenges does ecological science pose for environmental history? What is environmental history anyway?

Readings: William Cronon, "The Uses of Environmental History," Environmental History Review, vol. 17, no. 3 (1993), 1-22; Donald Worster, "The Ecology of Order and Chaos," in Char Miller and Hal Rothman (eds.), Out of the Woods: Essays in Environmental History (Pittsburgh, 1997), 3-17; Frank Uekoetter, "Confronting the Pitfalls of Current Environmental History: An Argument for an Organisational Approach," Environment and History, vol. 4 (1998), 31-52.

Film: Mammoths of the Ice Age, Video 2963

SEPT 23: Topic II: Human Ecological Impacts Before the Agricultural Revolution
What were the environmental impacts of early human communities before the agricultural revolution? Was nature in balance?

Readings: Jared Diamond, Guns, Germs, and Steel, 35-66; Shepard Krech, The Ecological Indian: Myth and History, 15-43; William R. Dickinson, "Changing Times: The Holocene Legacy," Environmental History, vol. 5, no. 4 (2000), 483-502; William H. McNeill, Plagues and Peoples (New York, 1976), 15-30.

Film: The Agricultural Revolution, Video 2415, vol. 2.

SEPT 30: Topic III: The Agricultural Revolution and Its Aftermaths
What was the agricultural revolution? What was so different about it? How do you evaluate the ecological consequences of the agricultural revolution? What trade-offs were involved?

Readings: Jared Diamond, Guns, Germs, and Steel, 85-191, 376-401; Shepard Krech, The Ecological Indian: Myth and History, 45-72; Mark Nathan Cohen, Health and the Rise of Civilization (New Haven, 1989), 130-142.

Early Complex Human Societies and Their Natural Worlds

OCT 7: Topic IV: Ecological Balances Before Industrialization
Did different preindustrial societies have significantly different ecological balances? If so, what were they? And what accounted for those differences? If there were no significant ecological differences, why was this the case?

Readings: Jared Diamond, Guns, Germs, and Steel, 195-354; Krech, Ecological Indian, 100-122; Andrew Watson, "The Arab Agricultural Revolution and Its Diffusion, 700-1100," Journal of Economic History, vol. 34, no. 1 (1974), 8-35.

FILM: Spirit and Nature, Video 2710

OCT 14: Topic V: Religion and Ecological Change
What role have religious attitudes played in human environmental behavior? Do some religions significantly restrain or encourage ecologically reckless behavior? Or not?
Readings: Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," Science, vol. 155 (1967): 1203-1207; Yi-Fu Tuan, "Discrepancies Between Environmental Attitudes and Behaviour: Examples from Europe and China," Canadian Geographer, vol. 12 (1968): 176-191; Carolyn Merchant, Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England (Chapel Hill, 1989), 69-111; Judith Shapiro, Mao's War on Nature (Cambridge, 2001), 67-93.

Ecological Issues in the Expansion of Europe

OCT 21: Topic VI: The Ecological Expansion of Europe
What would a balance sheet of European ecological imperialism include? How would one weigh the ecological "pros" and "cons" of European imperialism?
Readings: Jared Diamond, Guns, Germs, and Steel, 67-81, 354-375; Krech, Ecological Indian, 73-99, 123-229; Stephen Pyne, "Frontiers of Fire," in Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (eds.), Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies (Seattle, 1997), 19-34.

FILM: The Power of Water, Science Video 240

OCT 28: Topic VII: Ecological Revolution in the Twentieth Century? The Atmosphere, Hydrosphere, and Biosphere
How would you evaluate the ecological costs and benefits of urbanization and pollution?
Readings: Joel A. Tarr, The Search for the Ultimate Sink: Urban Pollution in Historical Perspective (Akron, 1966), 7-35 and 323-333; Ramachandra Guha, Environmentalism: A Global History, 1-62; J. R. McNeill, Something New Under the Sun, 21-266.

FILM: Rachel Carson's Silent Spring, Video 1407.

NOV 4: Topic VIII: Ecological Revolution in the Twentieth Century? New Chemical and Biological Powers
Were the new powers over nature illusory? If so, in what senses? If not, why not?
Readings: J.R. McNeill, Something New Under the Sun, 267-362; Ramachandra Guha, Environmentalism: A Global History, 63-97.

FILM: Guardian of Africa: The Tsetse Fly, Science Video 312.

NOV 11: Seminar rescheduled to show the film River Taming Mantras
Two Options: W NOV 10 at 7PM or TH Nov 11 at 7PM

NOV 18: Topic IX: Environmental Change in Twentieth-Century Africa

How well do western models of environmental change describe African historical processes? Should there be different models of conservation in the West than in the rest of the world?

Readings: Tamara Giles-Vernick, "We Wander Like Birds: Migration, Indigeneity, and the Fabrication of Frontiers in the Sangha River Basin of Equatorial Africa," Environmental History, vol. 4, no. 2, 1999, 168-197; James C. McCann, "The Plow and the Forest: Narratives of Deforestation in Ethiopia, 1840-1992," Environmental History, vol. 2, no. 2 (1997): 138-159; James Fairhead and Melissa Leach, Reframing Deforestation. Global Analysis and Local Realities : Studies in West Africa (New York, 1998), 182-197.

FILM: Paul Ehrlich and the Population Bomb, Video 3945

THANKSGIVING BREAK

DEC 2: Topic X: New Paradigms of Global Ecology
What does the ecological past indicate about the ecological future?
Readings: Ramachandra Guha, Environmentalism, 98-145; Michael Lewis, Inventing Global Ecology: Tracking the Biodiversity Ideal in India, 1947-1997 (Athens, OH, 2004).

FIELD TRIP: Perkins Arboretum and Bird Sanctuary

DEC 9: TOPIC XI: Conservation and Resource Management: Changing Views of Nature
How should we understand the "nature" in the Perkins Arboretum and Bird Sanctuary?

Readings: William Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in Char Miller and Hal Rothman (eds.), Out of the Woods: Essays in Environmental History (Pittsburgh, 1997), 28-50; David R. Foster, "From Bobolinks to Bears: Interjecting Geographical History into Ecological Studies, Environmental Interpretation, and Conservation Planning," Journal of Biogeography, vol. 27 (2000), 27-30; Tom Cheetham, "Dogmas, Idols and the Edge of Chaos," Human Ecology Forum, vol. 7, no. 1 (2000), 68-71.

Special Reserve Documents: Joel Ossoff, A Guide to Perkins Arboretum (Waterville, 1973); Stephen Higgs, A Field Guide to the Perkins Arboretum and Bird Sanctuary (Waterville, 1998); Historical Photographs of Land Use in Waterville, Maine.

Course Evaluations