GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

NJIT-Rutgers, Newark: Fall 2012
Graduate Course: History 637
Time: Thursdays, 5:30-8:10
Location: Conklin 338

Instructor: Prof. Neil Maher
Federated Department of History NJIT-Rutgers University, Newark

Office Hours: Cullimore 325 (NJIT campus)
Tuesdays, 2:30-4:30
Thursdays, 2:30-4:30
And by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:
This reading seminar provides an introduction to the field of global environmental history. In it we will explore the ever-changing relationship between nature and culture throughout the world.

Environmental historians, like most historians, have become increasingly interested in developments on the transnational and global scale. In order to explore this new trend within the field, we will spend the semester reading material that places environmental history in a transnational and global perspective. To do this, we will explore not only more traditional historical categories such as race, class, and gender, but will also examine more global themes including migration, imperialism and colonialism, the spread of epidemic diseases, and global capitalism, among others.

In order to ground our understanding of environmental history, we will begin the semester reading a few of the so-called “classics” written since the birth of the field in the mid-1970s. After establishing this intellectual foundation, we will spend the rest of the semester reading more recently published books and articles that focus on the most important themes within the field of global environmental history today.
REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Class Participation: Class participation should involve active listening and engagement — more than simply showing up, and more than sheer volume of oral output. As graduate students, you should not miss class unless an emergency arises.

Readings: Readings for this course will entail at least one book and one scholarly article per week. While I do not expect you to read every word, you should understand and be comfortable discussing the factual content of the readings as well as the author’s argument and his or her use of sources. You should also be able to think critically about the theoretical and interpretative issues raised by the readings. Please purchase the books for the class (you should mark them up as you read); all except one (see below) are available online in cheaper paperback editions, and also available now for purchase at NJ Books, which is located at the corner of University and Bleecker streets (the books are NOT for sale at the Rutgers University bookstore). Hard copies of the assigned articles are available online via Dropbox (to be explained in class).

Papers: During the semester, you will be asked to write two short essays, and a longer final paper. The goal of the shorter essays is to help jump-start you on your final paper. We will discuss all three paper assignments in more detail as the due dates for them approach.

Short Essay #1: Methodological Analysis:
Your first paper of the semester will be a methodology analysis of the readings from the first four weeks of the course (up to and including week 4). For this paper you will compare and contrast the methodologies of these historians – you will focus your analysis on how each historian “does” their history. This will entail an examination of each historian’s source materials, both primary and secondary. The paper will be limited to 4 pages in length.

Short Essay #2: Theme Analysis:
Your second paper of the semester will be an analysis of a specific theme that is explored by the authors of the readings from week 5 through week 9. For this paper you will chose one theme that is explored in all of these books, and compare and contrast how each author engages this particular theme. As with your first essay, this second paper will also be limited to 4 pages in length.

Final Historiographical Paper:
You will also be asked to write a final paper of approximately 15-17 pages in length (please pace your writing to fall within these limits). Students may choose between two types of assignments based on your earlier papers. On the one hand, you may write an historiographical essay that compares and contrasts the various methodologies undertaken by global environmental historians today. Alternatively, you may choose a major theme from the semester’s readings and examine how various global environmental historians have approached that theme. For both types of papers, you should analyze as many of the assigned books and articles as possible.
**Final Paper Outline:** To help organize and conceptualize your final paper, you will also be asked to submit a detailed outline of your project. The outline should include a brief paragraph explaining your argument. The outline is due in class on November 20 (week 12).

**Additional Readings:**
At the end of this syllabus you will find a list of additional readings organized by region. This list can be consulted if you would like to examine additional environmental history literature on a region of your interest.

**HisTEM Concentration:**
While in the Rutgers, Newark—NJIT MA program in history you must choose a major field of study. The concentration in the History of Technology, Environment and Medicine/Health is unique in its integration of three relatively new historical sub-disciplines. The rapid growth of these three fields in recent years reflects greater awareness among professional historians and the general public of the significance of broader issues concerning technology, the environment, and medicine and health in contemporary life. As these issues loom larger in the consciousness of society, so does the need to learn more about their historical origins, causes, and patterns of development. The major field in the History of Technology, Environment and Medicine/Health has been specially constructed to meet this growing need. Major: 18 credits (6 classes).

**GRADING:**
- Attendance and Participation: 50%
- Written Assignments (including book reviews, outline, and finally paper): 50%

Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**
WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS:

INTRODUCTION

WEEK 1: SEARCHING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY (Sept. 6)
Required Reading: In Class

WEEK 2: BIRTH OF GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY (Sept. 13)
Required Reading:

WEEK 3: GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY MATURES (Sept. 20)
WEEK 4: ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY GOES MAINSTREAM (Sept. 27)

NOTE: First Methodological Paper Assignment Due in Class.

PART II: MAJOR THEMES IN GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

WEEK 5: COLONIALISM (Oct. 4)
Required Reading:

WEEK 6: EMPIRE (Oct. 11)
Required Reading:

WEEK 7: AGRICULTURAL MIGRATIONS (Oct. 18)
Required Reading:
James McCann, *Maize and Grace: Africa’s Encounter with a New World Crop, 1500-2000*.

WEEK 8: TRANSNATION TRADE (Oct. 25)
Required Reading:
John Soluri, *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States*.
WEEK 9:  **URBANIZATION** (Nov. 1)

**Required Reading:**
Karl Appuhn, *A Forest on the Sea: Environmental Expertise in Renaissance Venice*.


**NOTE:** Second Thematic Paper Assignment Due in Class.

WEEK 10:  **WAR** (Nov. 8)

**Required Reading:**


WEEK 11:  **GLOBAL DISEASE** (Nov. 16)

**Required Reading:**


WEEK 12:  **MAPS** (Nov. 20 – PLEASE NOTE TUESDAY MEETING)

**Required Reading:**
James Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*.


**NOTE:** Final Paper Outlines Due in Class
WEEK 13:  **ENERGY** (Nov. 27)
Required Reading:

WEEK 14:  **POLITICS** (Dec. 6)
Required Reading:

**ADDITIONAL READINGS BY REGION**

**AFRICA:**


**ASIA**


**INDIA & SOUTHEAST ASIA:**

Guha and Madhav Gadgil, *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992)

**LATIN AMERICA:**
Castro Herrera, "Environmental History (Made) in Latin America," H-ENVIRONMENT Historiography Series (http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~environ/historiography/latinam.htm);
Joan Martinez-Alier, The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar 2002)
MIDDLE EAST:
Peter Christensen, *The Decline of Iranshahr: Irrigation and Environments in the History of the Middle East 500 BC to AD 1500* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1993)

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND:
Don Garden, "Where Are the Historians?: Australian Environmental History," H-ENVIRONMENT Historiography Series, (http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~environ/historiography/australia.htm)
John Dargavel, *Fashioning Australia’s Forests*
Timothy Flannery, *The Future Eaters: An Ecological History of Australasian Lands and Peoples*
Paul Carter, *The Road to Botany Bay: An Essay in Spatial History*
Derek Whitlock, *Conquest to Conservation: History of Human Impact on the South Australian Environment*


**CANADA:**

**EUROPE:**
Matt Osborn, "Sowing the Field of British Environmental History," *H-ENVIRONMENT Historiography Series*, (http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~environ/historiography/british.htm);
Stephen Pyne, *Vestal Fire: An Environmental History, Told Through Fire, of Europe and Europe’s Encounter with the World*
Emmanuel LeRoy Ladurie, *Times of Feast, Times of Famine: A History of Climate Since the Year 1000.*

**COMPARATIVE & TRANSNATIONAL:**

GLOBAL:
Douglas Hughes, An Environmental History of the World: Humankind’s Changing Role in the Community of Life (New York: Routledge, 2001)
Michael Williams, Deforesting the Earth: From Prehistory to Global Crisis (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003)