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HIST 205-02, Introduction to Environmental History, Fall 2008

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RHODES COLLEGE
FALL 2008
INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY
HIST 205-02

Prof. Tait Keller
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Office: Clough Hall 317
Office Hours: MW 4-5:30 PM and by appointment

Class Days: MWF 3 PM
Classroom: Palmer Hall 206

Course Description

Environmental history is the study of how humans have influenced the environments around them and how the environment itself has influenced the course of human societies. This course provides students with the skill to identify and analyze these interactions. This course will also help participants recognize the important developments that have led to present day human-environment relationships. Because environmental change often transcends national boundaries, this course places important subjects in environmental history such as disease, agriculture, frontiers, industrialization, and conservationism into a global context. Classes will typically include lecture and discussion. On a few occasions we will use our time to watch films, go on field trips, or host guest lecturers.

Course Requirements and Grading

Grades in the course will be based on several components. The first is spirited participation in the discussions, as well as leading one of them. The second component will be two analytical essays. The third is an excursion report, and the last component is a research paper on any aspect of environmental history that may interest you.

I. Attendance and Participation

This is an earned grade. Constructive and informed contributions to discussion are essential for satisfactory performance in this course. I expect you to come to class prepared, having done the assigned reading and eager to participate in the discussion. One of the most important skills emphasized in this course is learning to say something of substance – something worth listening to or reading. This is a skill necessary for success in college, and for whatever you decide to do after graduation. So not participating is not an option, and unexcused absences will negatively impact your final grade.

You will also be responsible for leading one of the Friday discussions. I ask that you meet with me at some point during the week before the Friday discussion to go over your ideas and the questions you intend to ask.

II. Analytical Essays

The two analytical essays will be based on the required readings and themes raised in class; no outside research is necessary. Questions and guidelines for each essay will be posted on Moodle. The essays will be 4-5 pages in length (Times New Roman, 12 pt. font, 1 inch margins), double spaced, and follow the guidelines of either the *MLA Handbook* or Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*. In no event should your paper be more than 5 pages; I look for cogency not length. A writing style guide will be available on Moodle to assist you when you proof-read your papers. Be sure to follow the style guide and make note of typical mistakes undergraduates often make in their papers. Your grade will suffer if you commit these mistakes. No, this is not an English course, but you cannot do good history without writing competently. The essays are due at the beginning of class on the following dates: **Monday, September 29** and **Monday, November 3**.

III. Excursion Report

The purpose of the excursion report is for you to put into practice some of the approaches that environmental historians use. For example, you may want to walk through Overton Park and write a

short account of its history. Or you could visit Memphis Light, Gas and Water (the nation's largest three-service municipal utility) and write about energy use in the city. You could take a trip down to Mud Island and analyze the issue of sustainable development on the Mississippi River. You might want to visit the Shelby County Environmental Court, one of the first environmental courts in the country, and write on environmental justice. Perhaps you are going camping for fall break or heading to the beach. You could use the trip as a basis for a paper on the environment and leisure time. The possibilities for this paper are almost endless. But the following caveats apply: you must actually visit a site/location, and you must do so during this semester. The paper is to be 3-4 pages in length and will require a small amount of research. Additional guidelines for this assignment will be posted on Moodle. The last day to submit this assignment is **Monday, November 24**.

IV. Research Paper

You will write a concise, literate, well-organized 8-10 page research paper on any dimension of environmental history. Additional guidelines for the paper will be posted on Moodle. If you are unsure of a topic, come talk to me and check out *The Columbia Guide to American Environmental History* and the *Encyclopedia of World Environmental History*, both of which will be on reserve in the library. I ask that you submit a 250 word abstract with a preliminary bibliography to me by **Monday, November 10**. As part of this assignment, you will give a 10 minute presentation on your research at the end of the semester. The paper will be due **Monday, December 15 by 5:30 PM**.

The final grade for the class will be established as follows:

Grading Scale:

Attendance and Participation	25%	A Outstanding
Analytical Essays	30%	B Above Average/Very Good
Excursion Report	20%	C Average/Good
Research Paper	25%	D Below Average/Poor
		F Fail

***NOTE:** All assignments must be completed to pass the course. Failure to complete any of the course requirements by **Monday, December 15** will result in a final course grade of F.

Required Texts (in order texts are read)

John F. Richards, *The Unending Frontier: An Environmental History of the Early Modern World*
 Publisher: University of California Press, (2006)
 ISBN-10: 0520246780

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*
 Publisher: Hill and Wang (1983)
 ISBN-10: 0809001586

Steven Johnson, *The Ghost Map: the Story of London's most Terrifying Epidemic and how it Changed Cities, Science, and the Modern World*
 Publisher: Riverhead Trade (2007)
 ISBN-13: 978-1594482694

John R. McNeill, *Something New under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World*
 Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; Reprint edition (2001)
 ISBN-10: 0393321835

All of these titles are on sale at the bookstore and on reserve in the library. You can also find all these books used (read: much cheaper) at online bookstores, including addall.com, alibris.com, amazon.com, and half.com. You are welcome to read these books in any edition, condition, or language.

Course Policies – read these all carefully

Moodle: All students in the class are automatically registered for this course on Moodle. When you log on to Moodle and access the site for this course, you will find all course materials, including this syllabus, readings, and guidelines for assignments.

Email: All email correspondence will be sent to your Rhodes email account. It is your responsibility to check this account regularly.

Special Needs and Accommodations: I am strongly committed to accommodating students with disabilities, and ask your cooperation in making sure that I am aware of any such accommodation you might need. All accommodation requests are the responsibility of the student. For more information, please contact Student Disability Services (SDS) to alert them of any needs you may have.

Food, Drink, Tobacco: Drink is permitted in my classroom, but food and tobacco products of all kinds are prohibited.

Cell phones: turn them off!

Sleeping in class is not permitted. Those who fall asleep will be subject to a rude awakening.

Grades: I do not give “I” (incomplete) grades. Late papers, except in documented cases of bereavement or catastrophic illness, will suffer a substantial reduction in grade. Therefore, please plan ahead and do your work on time. I will be delighted to discuss your papers with you. Be advised however that grades, once assigned, are not subject to change. I also will not communicate grades over email or the telephone. The most important part of the grading process is not the grade, but the comments you will find on your papers when you pick them up.

Honor Code: I believe in the University’s standards of academic honesty, and I do my best to enforce them vigorously and to the letter. Be aware of those standards, and observe them. Plagiarism and cheating are easy to detect; so are papers pulled off the internet. If I suspect that you have cheated or plagiarized another’s work, I will discuss this matter with you. If I am not satisfied, I will report your case to the Honor Council for due process. I always recommend failure for the course when I submit a file. The bottom line is this: do your own work. You are spending your time and money to be here and learn. Don’t waste either by plagiarizing or cheating.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS
(subject to change)

<i>Introductions</i>	W Aug 27	Class cancelled for Convocation
	F Aug 29	Welcome!
<i>Approaches</i>	M Sept 1	Labor Day Holiday!
	W Sept 3	The Lay of the Land <input type="checkbox"/> Richards, introduction <input type="checkbox"/> McNeill, preface and prologue
	F Sept 5	At Play in the Field <input type="checkbox"/> Donald Worster, "Doing Environmental History," in <i>The Ends of the Earth</i> , pp. 289-307 <input type="checkbox"/> William Cronon, "The Uses of Environmental History," <i>Environmental History Review</i> 17 (1993): 1-22. <input type="checkbox"/> J.R. McNeill, "Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History," <i>History and Theory</i> 42 (2003): 5-43.
<i>A Virgin World?</i>	M Sept 8	The Nature of Nature
	W Sept 10	Agrarian Revolutions <input type="checkbox"/> Jared Diamond, <i>Guns, Germs, and Steel</i> , pp. 35-52; 85-92; 104-113; 131-156
	F Sept 12	Soil and Societies <input type="checkbox"/> McNeill, chapter 2
<i>Early Modern Transformations</i>	M Sept 15	Making the Modern State <input type="checkbox"/> Richards, pp. 17-57
	W Sept 17	The Little Ice Age <input type="checkbox"/> Richards, pp. 58-85
	F Sept 19	Managing Nature <input type="checkbox"/> Richards, pp. 148-192
<i>Biological Invasions</i>	M Sept 22	Issues of Determinism <input type="checkbox"/> Jared Diamond, <i>Guns, Germs, and Steel</i> , pp. 67-81
	W Sept 24	The Columbian Exchange <input type="checkbox"/> Richards, pp. 309-333
	F Sept 26	Invading Sheep and Imperialist Pigs <input type="checkbox"/> Elinor Melville, <i>A Plague of Sheep</i> , pp. 60-77 <input type="checkbox"/> Alfred Crosby, <i>Ecological Imperialism</i> , pp. 171-194
<i>Frontiers</i>	M Sept 29	First Analytical Essay due Nature on the Edge of Civilization
	W Oct 1	Conquest and Colonialism <input type="checkbox"/> Richards, pp. 89-111; 242-273
	F Oct 3	Class cancelled with my apologies ⇒ You would be wise to begin reading Cronon

<i>Changing the Land</i>	M Oct 6	“Primitive” Places ☐ Cronon, Parts I and III
	W Oct 8	Colonial Changes ☐ Cronon, chapters 2-4
	F Oct 10	Shaping the New World ☐ Cronon, chapters 5-7
<i>The Industrial Revolution</i>	M Oct 13	A Mechanical World ☐ Richards, pp. 209-214; 227-241 ☐ Richard G. Wilkinson, “The English Industrial Revolution,” in <i>The Ends of the Earth</i> , pp. 80-99
	W Oct 15	Industry, Technology and Environment ☐ McNeill, chapters 3
	F Oct 17	The Invention of Pollution ☐ McNeill, chapter 4 Fall recess begins 5 PM! ⇒ You would be wise to begin reading Johnson
<i>Urban Places and Disease</i>	M Oct 20	Fall recess!
	W Oct 22	The Cityscape
	F Oct 24	Pathogens and Progress ☐ Johnson
<i>Empires and Environments</i>	M Oct 27	Imperialism, Nature, and Race ☐ Diana Davis, <i>Resurrecting the Granary of Rome</i> , chapters 1 and 2
	W Oct 29	Managing the World ☐ Richard Drayton, <i>Nature’s Government</i> , pp. 85-128
	F Oct 31	Capitalism and the Environment ☐ Thomas Dunlap, “Creation and Destruction in Landscapes of Empire,” in <i>City, Country, Empire</i> , pp. 207-225
<i>Water and the Flow of Power</i>	M Nov 3	Second Analytical Essay due Water and Civilization ☐ McNeill, chapter 5
	W Nov 5	Damming the Deluge ☐ McNeill, chapter 6
	F Nov 7	The Future Water Wars ☐ UN reports and newspaper articles (moodle)
<i>Fire and Fuel</i>	M Nov 10	Research Abstract due The Fire Planet ☐ Stephen Pyne “Firestick History,” <i>The Journal of American History</i> 76 (1990): 1132-1141.
	W Nov 12	Energy and Consumption ☐ McNeill, chapter 9
	F Nov 14	The Fossil Age ☐ McNeill, chapter 10

<i>Ideology and the Environment</i>	M Nov 17	Conservationism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ McNeill, chapter 11 ❑ Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” <i>Science</i> 155 (1967): 1203-1207.
	W Nov 19	The Ecology of Totalitarianism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Paul Josephson and Thomas Zeller, “The Transformation of Nature under Hitler and Stalin,” in <i>Science and Ideology</i>, 124-155
	F Nov 21	Politics and Preservation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ UN reports and newspaper articles (moodle) ❑ Stephen Ellis, “Of Elephants and Men: Politics and Nature Conservation in South Africa,” <i>Journal of Southern African Studies</i> 20 (1994): 53-69.
<i>The Nature of Modernity</i>	M Nov 24	Last day to submit the Excursion Report The Modern State and the Environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ James Scott, <i>Seeing Like a State</i>, chapter 1
	W Nov 26 F Nov 28	Happy Thanksgiving!
<i>Research Presentations</i>	M Dec 1	
	W Dec 3 F Dec 5	Presentations – schedule to be posted
	M Dec 8 W Dec 10	Presentations – schedule to be posted

Research paper due:

**Monday
December 15
5:30 PM**