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HIST 270-01, Global Environmental History, Spring 2012

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Authors	Keller, Tait
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RHODES COLLEGE
SPRING 2012
GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY
HIST 270

Prof. Tait Keller
kellert@rhodes.edu
Office: Buckman Hall 211
Office Hours: MWF 10:30-12:00 and by appointment

Class Days: MW 2:00-3:15
Lab: W 3:30-5:00
Classroom: Palmer Hall 205

Course Description

What can our environment tell us about our past? How have natural resources shaped patterns of human life? What meanings have people attached to nature, and how have those attitudes shaped their cultural and political lives? This course is intended as an introduction to the field of environmental history. We will analyze the ecological context of human existence, with the understanding that the environment is an agent and a presence in human history. Because environmental change often transcends national boundaries, this course places important subjects in environmental history into a global context.

We will incorporate several off-campus educational experiences to draw connections between our course work and environmental change in Memphis. The knowledge gained from our outings will be essential to our understanding of environmental history. This course will help us recognize the important developments that contributed to present day environmental transformations around the world and in our local community.

Course Objectives

The learning objectives for the course are three-fold:

- The first objective is learning to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view, with a focus on sharpening higher level thinking skills.
- The second objective is developing skill in expressing yourself in orally or in writing, with a focus on improving your written communication.
- Learning about environmental change fulfills the third objective, which is gaining factual knowledge (terminology, classifications, methods, trend) and building your knowledge base.

Course Requirements and Grading

Grades in the course will be based on several components. The first is spirited participation in the discussions. The second component will be short reflections on our excursions. The third will be two place papers. The last component is a cumulative final exam.

I. Participation

The success of the course depends on your active participation, which also happens to make up a big part of your grade. I expect you to come to class prepared, having done the assigned reading and eager to participate in the discussion. Constructive and informed contributions to discussion are essential for satisfactory performance in this course. Unexcused absences will negatively impact your final grade. To insure your mastery of the course material, I will give unannounced quizzes.

II. Reflections

Throughout the semester you will write five short (300-word) reflections on our field trips. Topics and questions for each reflection piece are explained on the syllabus. You may write a sixth reflection for extra-credit.

III. Place Papers

The two place papers give you the opportunity to put into practice some of the approaches that environmental historians use. The assignments will ask you to relate the key concepts from our lectures and discussions to the information learned from our field observations. I will provide the questions for each paper. The papers will be 1500 words in length, double spaced, and follow the

guidelines of either the *MLA Handbook* or Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*. In no event should your essay be longer than 1750 words; I look for cogency, not length. You must have a title page with a creative and intriguing title, your name, and word count. The papers are due at the start of class on **Monday, February 20** and **Wednesday, April 18**.

A writing style guide is available on Moodle to assist you when you proofread 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.

IV. Final Exam

The cumulative final exam will test your mastery of the course material. The exam will be a combination of identification, map, and essay questions. A review guide will be available on Moodle. The final exam will be held on **Wednesday, May 2**.

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

Participation	30%
Reflections	15%
Place Papers	30%
Final exam	25%

Grading Scale:

A	Outstanding
B	Above Average/Very Good
C	Average/Good
D	Below Average/Poor
F	Fail

A (94-100); A- (90-93); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72) and so on. Any number below 60 will be marked as an F

***NOTE:** All assignments must be completed to pass the course. Failure to complete any of the course requirements by **Wednesday, May 2** may result in a final course grade of F.

Required Texts (in order texts are read)

John R. McNeill, *Something New under the Sun*

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*

Atlas of World History

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*

Barbara Freese, *Coal: Human History*

Richard White, *Organic Machine*

Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism: Global History*

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

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.

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. Emails are not text messages. When writing me, I expect your emails to be professional.

Field Trips/Labs: The field trips/labs are an integral part of the course. Attendance to all field trips is required for the successful completion of the course. Be aware of the weather and dress appropriately for the outings.

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

Cell phones, Blackberries, ipods, and other such devices: Turn them off!

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

Honor Code: I believe in the College's standards of academic honesty, and I 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.

A Word on Grading:

Papers will be evaluated on four main criteria: thesis, organization, evidence, and style. In general, a paper that does a very good job in each category is a 'B'. A paper that almost does is a 'B-', and a paper that performs well in each category and goes beyond in one category is a 'B+'. A paper that is satisfactory but weak in one or two categories is a 'C'. A 'D' paper is weak in three or more categories, or omits one criterion completely. Papers without notes crediting sources and location quotations, paraphrases, and allusions will receive, at best, a grade of 'D'. An 'A' range paper performs outstandingly well in each category, and achieves something extraordinary in two or more categories.

Remember that a grade does not reflect process (it does not measure whether you worked hard) and it certainly does not reflect a value judgment about you as a person. A grade constitutes an evaluation of the quality and analytical rigor of the thesis, organization, evidence, and style of a single piece of work.

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.

I do not give "I" (incomplete) grades. Late work, except in documented cases of bereavement, major injury, or catastrophic illness, will suffer a substantial and progressive reduction in grade. Therefore, please plan ahead and do your work on time.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS
(subject to change)

Week/Theme	Day	Date	Lectures, Discussions, Readings, and Field Trips
WEEK 1 <i>Introductions</i>	Wed	Jan 11	Welcome! LAB: The Rhodes Arboretum
			➤ Reflection: Using the brochure available on Moodle, explore the Rhodes arboretum. Pick a tree species and find out what you can about it. For example: from where did it originate? Have humans used that tree for any particular purpose? Due January 18.
WEEK 2 <i>Lay of the Land</i>	Mon Wed	Jan 16 Jan 18	No Class: Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Nature and Culture <input type="checkbox"/> William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in <i>Uncommon Ground</i> <input type="checkbox"/> McNeill, chpt.1 LAB: Overton Park Nature Hike
WEEK 3 <i>Neolithic Revolutions</i>	Mon Wed	Jan 23 Jan 25	The Holocene Legacy A Harvest of Riches <input type="checkbox"/> Diamond, Parts One and Two <input type="checkbox"/> Atlas, pp. 6-27, 70-71 LAB: The Memphis and Shelby County Room
			➤ Reflection: Head to library and look up old pictures of Rhodes. See also the Rhodes College Archives Digital Collection (dlynx). How has the campus landscape changed? How does it compare to Overton Park? What defines "natural beauty" for those two spaces? In other words, what values are being expressed? Due February 1.
WEEK 4 <i>Pristine Places</i>	Mon Wed	Jan 30 Feb 1	Primitive Harmony? <input type="checkbox"/> Shepard Krech, <i>The Ecological Indian</i> , introduction and chpt.3 <input type="checkbox"/> Neal Lopinot and Will Woods, "Wood Overexploitation and the Collapse of the Cahokia," in <i>Foraging and Farming in the Eastern Woodlands</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Atlas, pp. 50-51 LAB: Memphis Mounds
WEEK 5	Mon Wed	Feb 6 Feb 8	Classical Civilizations Medieval Attitudes <input type="checkbox"/> Lynn White, Jr., "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," <i>Science</i> (1967) <input type="checkbox"/> Yi-Fu Tuan, "Discrepancies between Environmental Attitude and Behaviour: Examples from Europe and China," <i>Canadian Geographer</i> 12 (1968): 176-191
WEEK 6 <i>Early Modern Environments</i>	Mon Wed	Feb 13 Feb 15	The Little Ice Age Divergent Ecologies <input type="checkbox"/> John Richards, <i>The Unending Frontier</i> , chpts. 5 and 6 <input type="checkbox"/> Sam White, <i>The Climate of Rebellion in the Early Modern Ottoman Empire</i> , chpts. 1 and 5

➤ **First Place Paper due Feb. 20 at the start of class. See Moodle for topics and guidelines.**

WEEK 7 <i>Transoceanic Transfers</i>	Mon	Feb 20	The Columbian Exchange ☐ Atlas, pp. 72-77, 84-85, 88-89, 91
	Tues	Feb 21	7:00-8:00 PM Film: Shark Loves the Amazon
	Wed	Feb 22	Film Discussion ☐ Warren Dean, <i>With Broadax and Firebrand</i> , chpt. 3
WEEK 8	Mon	Feb 27	Cronon part II
	Wed	Feb 29	Cronon part III
WEEK 9 <i>Machine in the Garden</i>	Mon	Mar 5	Industrial Realities and Romantic Dreams ☐ Franz-Josef Bruggemeier, "A Nature Fit for Industry: The Environmental History of the Ruhr Basin, 1840-1990," <i>Environmental History Review</i> (1994): 35-54 ☐ Friedrich Engels, <i>The Condition of the Working Class in England</i> , selections ☐ Atlas, p.98
	Wed	Mar 7	LAB: Historic Elmwood Cemetery Visit

- Reflection: Do some digging (research-wise) and see how Elmwood compares to other cemeteries around the world. How do the physical forms of cemeteries reflect different cultural attitudes towards nature? What does Elmwood tell us about attitudes toward life, death, and people's place in the natural world? Due March 21.
- Alternative Reflection: If you are traveling someplace other than Memphis for spring break, you may write a reflection on your destination. For example, if you are heading to the beach or to the mountains, consider how people use the natural world for recreation. Due March 21.

Spring Break

WEEK 10 <i>Imperial "Improvement"</i>	Mon	Mar 19	Managing the World ☐ Richard Grove, "Conserving Eden: The (European) East India Companies and Their Environmental Policies on St. Helena, Mauritius and in Western India, 1660 to 1854," <i>Comparative Studies in Society and History</i> (1993): 318-351 ☐ McNeill, chpt.8 ☐ Atlas, pp. 99-101, 106-109
	Wed	Mar 21	LAB: Memphis Zoo Visit

- Reflection: All zoos are not created equal. What makes for a good zoo? What is the purpose of a zoo? How do you think endangered species should be preserved? Some conservationists focus on scientific principles of resource management and others on spiritual, more romantic reverence for the natural world? Which approach has better served environmental protection? Due March 28.

WEEK 11 <i>Urban Spaces</i>	Mon	Mar 26	Pollution and Progress ☐ McNeill, chpts. 3-7 and 9-10
	Wed	Mar 28	LAB: Water Treatment Plant

Labs: Wild Places and Humans Spaces

Our various field trips are designed to complement our classroom activities and explore local environmental change. Our off-campus excursions will help us better understand the intricate relationships between us and our environment – the built and the natural, the local and the global, our role in it, and our effects upon it.

Rhodes College Arboretum

This past year, Rhodes College received notification from the Tennessee Urban Forestry Council (TUFC) that it is now a Level IV Certified Arboretum, the highest designation for certification. Rhodes was first certified as a Level IV Arboretum in 1956 and again in 1995. The most recent effort to renew Rhodes Arboretum certification started in 2009 and was led by Rhodes Biology Professor Rosanna Cappellato. Dr. Cappellato, along with students, faculty and staff, have identified and tagged 123 different species of trees on the campus and produced an accompanying brochure for a self-guided tour. In recent years, Rhodes has planted hundreds of new trees and added many new species to ensure its arboretum status. Why are college campuses focused on manicured grounds? What defines “natural beauty”?

Overton Park

Overton Park was established at the start of the twentieth century, and its creation helped lay the foundation for municipal park systems across Tennessee. Overton Park’s history is filled with controversy. City officials faced legislative battles to exercise eminent domain rights to create the Park. In the later half of the twentieth century, federal highway planners set Interstate Highway 40 to pass through the Park and designated several acres of the old-growth forest for demolition. In response, midtown residents formed the Citizens to Preserve Overton Park and took their case to the Supreme Court, which ruled in their favor. Controversy remains alive today as CPOP reincorporated itself to challenge the Memphis Zoo’s expansion plans. Prof. Carden (Dept. of Economics) recently wrote in *Forbes*: “Development is opposed by people saying that we owe it to our children to conserve our precious natural resources, but University of Rochester economist Steven Landsburg asks the right question. Who are we to say that our children will prefer an old-growth forest to the income produced by a parking lot or high rise?” What do you think responsible environmental stewardship means? More information on CPOP can be found on its website: <http://www.overtonparkforever.org/>

The Memphis and Shelby County Room

Like other fields within the History discipline, environmental historians conduct the bulk of their research in libraries and archives. Our tour of the Memphis and Shelby County Room at the Benjamin L. Hooks Central Library on Popular Avenue will introduce us to the materials available for historical inquiry. More information about the Memphis and Shelby County Room can be found on its website: <http://www.memphislibrary.org/history/memshe1.htm>

Memphis Mounds

Before Europeans set foot upon Mississippi Valley Soil, Native Americans developed a vibrant and sophisticated culture in the Memphis area. The earthen mounds located around Memphis were constructed and occupied between 1000 - 1500 CE by people of the Mississippian culture. These tribes occupied nearly the entire Mississippi River Valley from Wisconsin to the Gulf of Mexico. The Mississippians built platform mounds used for ceremonies and residences of high-ranking officials. Some mounds were used as cemeteries for the dead. The Mississippians participated in a vast trade network and a complex society. Their descendants, including the Choctaw, Chickasaw, Quapaw and Cherokee, are a few of the contemporary tribes that still live in the Midsouth region. We will examine the mounds at Desoto Park and possibly the C.H. Nash Museum at the Chucalissa Archaeological Site. For more on the museum see: <http://www.memphis.edu/chucalissa/index.htm>

For more on mounds in the Mississippi Valley see: <http://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/mounds/>

Film: *Shark Loves the Amazon*

Mark London is a trial lawyer and a partner in the firm of London & Mead in Washington D.C. Together with Brian Kelly (executive editor of *U.S. News & World Report*) he co-authored *Amazon* (1983) and *The Last Forest: The Amazon in the Age of Globalization* (2007). London has recently produced an hour-long documentary about the Amazon, and will screen it on our campus. For more information on the film see: <http://sharklovestheamazon.com/>

Historic Elmwood Cemetery

Like the living, the dead also shape the natural world. We will visit the Elmwood Cemetery to see what we can learn from it as a historical document. What can we learn about the lives of those who are buried there: how long they lived, how they died, what their family relations were? What does the cemetery tell us about their attitudes toward life, death, and their place in the natural world? Elmwood is a classic example of a garden cemetery with its park-like setting, sweeping vistas, shady knolls, large stands of ancient trees, and magnificent monuments. How does the physical form of the cemetery itself reflect cultural attitudes toward nature? More information about the cemetery can be found on its website: www.elmwoodcemetery.org

The Memphis Zoo

Zoos have existed for centuries. Once the exclusive property of royalty, zoos became public spaces in the late nineteenth century. This development is linked closely to the expansion of European empires in the 1800s, whose imperial governments used scientific principles to organize nature in their dominions. Zoos came to exemplify the scientific approach to nature preservation, as well displaying the “exotic creatures” from far-flung lands. Today, zoos stand at the forefront of wildlife conservation. As we walk around the property, think about how is zoo organized and designed. How do you think endangered species should be preserved? Some conservationists focus on scientific principles of resource management and others on spiritual, more romantic reverence for the natural world? Which approach has better served environmental protection? For more on the zoo see: www.memphiszoo.org

M C Stiles Treatment Plant

Like all major cities, Memphis produces a lot of waste. Our tour of the water treatment plant will give us an inside look at how cities address issues of waste management. How does Memphis handle its waste? As we increasingly become an urban world, what environmental changes and challenges do we face? Are cities, as Steven Johnson contends in *Ghost Map*, in fact better for the environment?

The Wolf River Wildlife Area

Shaping rivers is closely connected to the increased power of the state in the modern era. This conquest of nature carried unintentional environmental consequences. The Wolf River is a prime example of such change. Until its water became too foul, the Wolf River once served as Memphis’ principle source of drinking water. The river’s acquired stench of sewage led engineers to divert it north of the city. Its channelization led to diminished wetlands along some sections and rapid erosion along others. We will visit the [Lucius Burch State Natural Area](#) for a channelized example, then head to the [William B. Clark Preserve](#) for an un-channelized example. As we hike through the various nature areas what differences do you see in the river? What connection is there between the river and suburban development? To what extent can humans undo the damage caused by human action? For information on the Wolf River Conservancy see: www.wolfriver.org

Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park

Containing 13,467 acres, Meeman-Shelby Forest State Park near Memphis is one of the most visited state parks in Tennessee. Initially known as Shelby Forest State Park, it began as a New Deal recreation demonstration area of the National Park Service during the 1930s. Edward J. Meeman, avid conservationist and editor of the Memphis Press-Scimitar, had visited Germany and was apparently impressed with the country's forest reclamation projects, finding similarities between the land there and eroded southern land. In a series of newspaper editorials and private conversations with public officials, Meeman insisted that forests in his region could be made to prosper once again. He worked with State Forester James O. Hazard to identify a potential park area in Shelby County, and in 1933 the National Park Service provided Shelby County money and Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) labor for the park's initial development. Land clearing came in 1935, and officials focused on establishing a wildlife reserve, replanting the forests, reclaiming eroded land, and building recreational facilities. The CCC planted trees, built trails and cabins, and dammed a lake. As we hike around the park, pay attention to how humans have shaped and used the land. What role do politics play in environmental change? For more information on the park see: <http://www.tn.gov/environment/parks/MeemanShelby/>
For a brief biography on Edward J. Meeman see: <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=883>

Shelby Farms Park

Shelby Farms is among the largest urban parks in the United States, more than five times larger than Central Park in New York City. Shelby Farms evolved from private property in the 1800s, home to a commune that sought to educate and emancipate slaves, to a penal colony in the early 1900s whose inmates provided agricultural labor, and finally to a recreational park today. This transformation typifies crucial land-use changes taking place in many communities during the modern era. Currently Shelby Farms has adopted a Master Plan to redesign the park. One of the key elements to the plan is to blend consumption with conservation. As we discussed in the class, this is not an easy balance to strike. When we tour park, ask yourself how its design compares with Overton Park. Other than size, what differences do you see? How should we balance consumption and conservation? Or, to put the Park's Master Plan in a broader context, why have some environmental initiatives succeeded while others have failed? For more information on the Shelby Farms Park Conservancy see: www.shelbyfarmspark.org