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## HIST 207-01, Global Environmental History, Spring 2013

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RHODES COLLEGE  
SPRING 2013  
**GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY**  
HIST 207-01

Prof. Tait Keller  
kellert@rhodes.edu  
Office: Buckman Hall 211  
Office Hours: TR 12:30-2pm and by appointment

Class Days: TR 2:00-3:15  
Lab: R 3:30-5:00  
Classroom: Buckman Hall 212

### **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 four short reflections on our excursions. The third will be one place paper. The last components are a midterm exam and a 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. Participation will be graded as follows: You get 0 if you don't show up to class, 50 if you do, 70 if you open your mouth (yawning doesn't count), and more if you say something useful. Unexcused absences will negatively impact your final grade. To insure your mastery of the course material, I may give unannounced quizzes.

#### *II. Reflections*

Throughout the semester you will write four short (500-word) reflections on our field trips. The due dates for the reflections are listed on the syllabus. Topics and questions for each reflection piece are explained on the Lab section of the syllabus.

#### *III. Place Paper*

The place paper will give you the opportunity to put into practice some of the approaches that environmental historians use. The assignment 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 prompts for the paper. The papers will be 2000 words in length, double spaced, and follow the guidelines of Turabian's *A Manual for Writers*. In no event should your essay be longer than 2100 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 paper is due by **Thursday, April 25**.

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. Exams

The midterm exam and cumulative final exam will test your mastery of the course material. The exams will be a combination of identification, map, and essay questions. Review guides will be available on Moodle. The exams will be held on **Tuesday, February 19** and **Wednesday, May 1**.

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

Participation	30%
Reflections	15%
Place Paper	15%
Midterm exam	15%
Final exam	25%

Grading Scale:

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

A (93-100); A- (90-92); 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:** Grades are given solely at my discretion. All assignments must be completed to pass the course. Failure to complete any of the course requirements by **May 1** may result in a final course grade of F.

#### Required Texts (in order texts are read)

*Atlas of World History*

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*

Shepard Krech, *The Ecological Indian*

Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange*

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

Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*

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>	Thurs	Jan 10	A Walk in the Park <b>LAB: Overton Park Nature Hike</b>
WEEK 2 <i>Lay of the Land</i>	Tues	Jan 15	Giving Meaning to Nature <input type="checkbox"/> William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness" <input type="checkbox"/> Yi-Fu Tuan, "Discrepancies between Environmental Attitude and Behaviour: Examples from Europe and China"
	Thurs	Jan 17	<b>LAB: The Rhodes Arboretum</b>
<b>First Reflection due Tuesday, January 22</b>			
WEEK 3 <i>Neolithic Revolutions</i>	Tues	Jan 22	The Holocene Legacy <input type="checkbox"/> Jacob Weisdorf, "From Foraging to Farming"
	Thurs	Jan 24	A Harvest of Riches <input type="checkbox"/> Diamond, Parts One, Two, and chpt 11 <input type="checkbox"/> Atlas, pp. 6-33, 70-73 <b>LAB: The Memphis and Shelby County Room</b>
WEEK 4 <i>Pristine Places</i>	Tues	Jan 29	Primitive Harmony? <input type="checkbox"/> Krech, selections <input type="checkbox"/> William M. Denevan, "The Pristine Myth" <input type="checkbox"/> Atlas, pp. 50-51
	Thurs	Jan 31	<b>LAB: Memphis Mounds</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Neal Lopinot and Will Woods, "Wood Overexploitation and the Collapse of the Cahokia"
<b>Second Reflection due Tuesday, February 5</b>			
WEEK 5 <i>Weathering Change</i>	Tues	Feb 5	Early Modern Environments
	Thurs	Feb 7	Climate and Development <input type="checkbox"/> William Atwell, "Volcanism and Short-Term Climatic Change in East Asia and World History" <input type="checkbox"/> Jan de Vries, "Measuring the Impact of Climate on History" <input type="checkbox"/> <a href="#">Glaciers, Climate, and Society</a>
WEEK 6 <i>Ecological Invasions</i>	Tues	Feb 12	Imperialist Pigs
	Thurs	Feb 14	Transoceanic Transfers <input type="checkbox"/> Alfred Crosby, <i>The Columbian Exchange</i> , selections <input type="checkbox"/> Atlas, pp. 74-77, 84-85, 88-91
WEEK 7 <i>Organizing Animals</i>	Tues	Feb 19	<b>Midterm Exam</b>
	Thurs	Feb 21	Enlightenment and Disenchantment <b>LAB: Memphis Zoo Visit</b>
			Christopher Morris Lecture "The Big Muddy" Blount Auditorium 7pm

WEEK 8	Tues	Feb 26	Mountain Gloom, Mountain Glory
<i>Nature</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Romanticism materials: <a href="#">link1</a> <a href="#">link2</a> <a href="#">link3</a> <a href="#">link4</a>
<i>Sublime</i>	Thurs	Feb 28	<b>LAB: Elmwood Cemetery Visit</b>

**Third Reflection due Thursday, March 7**

WEEK 9	Tues	Mar 5	Industrial Energy Regimes
<i>Machine in the Garden</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Franz-Josef Bruggemeier, “A Nature Fit for Industry”
			<input type="checkbox"/> McNeill, chs. 1, 10
			<input type="checkbox"/> Atlas, p. 98
	Thurs	Mar 7	The Plight of Labor
			<input type="checkbox"/> Documentary: <i>Harlan County</i> (in class)

**SPRING BREAK!**

WEEK 10	Tues	Mar 19	Greening the City
<i>Urban Spaces</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Friedrich Engels, <i>The Condition of the Working Class in England</i> , selections
			<input type="checkbox"/> Steven Johnson, <i>Ghost Map</i> , selections
			<input type="checkbox"/> McNeill, ch. 3
	Thurs	Mar 21	<b>LAB: Water Treatment Plant</b>

**Fourth Reflection due Tuesday, March 26**

WEEK 11	Tues	Mar 26	Managing the World
<i>Imperial “Improvement”</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Richard Grove, “Conserving Eden”
			<input type="checkbox"/> Richard Tucker, “The Depletion of India’s Forests under British Imperialism”
			<input type="checkbox"/> Atlas, pp. 99-101, 106-109
	Thurs	Mar 28	<b>Easter Break</b>
WEEK 12	Tues	Apr 2	Controlling Rivers – Building States
<i>The Flow of Power</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Mikko Saikku, <i>This Delta, This Land</i> , ch.5
			<input type="checkbox"/> McNeill, chs. 5-6
	Thurs	Apr 4	<b>LAB: Wolf River Visit</b>
WEEK 13	Tues	Apr 9	Agrarian Transformations
<i>Seeing like States</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> McNeill, chs. 2, 7-8
	Thurs	Apr 11	<b>LAB: Meeman-Shelby Forest Hike</b>
WEEK 14	Tues	Apr 16	Consumption and Conservation
<i>Shades of Green</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> Aldo Leopold, <i>A Sand County Almanac</i>
	Thurs	Apr 18	<b>LAB: Shelby Farms Park Visit</b>
WEEK 15	Tues	Apr 23	Wars and Population Bombs
<i>Malthusian Prospects</i>			<input type="checkbox"/> McNeill, chs. 9, 11
			<input type="checkbox"/> Atlas, pp. 132-135
	Thurs	Apr 25	<b>Place Paper Due</b>

**Final Exam – Wednesday, May 1, 5:30 PM**

## 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 people and the natural world.

### Overton Park

Overton Park is a 342-acre public park that was established at the start of the twentieth century. Its creation helped lay the foundation for municipal park systems across Tennessee. The Park contains a nine-hole golf course, Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, Memphis College of Art, Memphis Zoo, Levitt Shell, Rainbow Lake, Veterans Plaza, the Greensward, two playgrounds, and a 126-acre Old Forest State Natural Area. 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.

For information on the Park see: <http://www.overtonpark.org/>

More information on CPOP can be found on its website: <http://www.overtonparkforever.org/>

### Rhodes College Arboretum

The Tennessee Urban Forestry Council (TUFC) has designated Rhodes College 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. In 2009, students, faculty and staff, 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.

For the recent news release see: <http://www.rhodes.edu/news/24267.asp>

#### First Reflection due Tuesday, January 22 (pick one):

- Head to Barret 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? Why are college campuses focused on manicured grounds? In other words, what values are being expressed?
- Using the brochure available on Moodle, explore the Rhodes arboretum. Pick a tree species and find out all that you can about it. For example: from where did it originate? Have humans used that tree for any particular purpose?

### 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 Poplar 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>

See also: <http://memphisroom.wordpress.com/>

### 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 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/>

### **Second Reflection due Tuesday, February 5:**

- Reflection: Primitive societies have been portrayed as ecologically conscious and environmentally sustainable. Why has the “pristine myth” proved so durable and attractive among people today? What factors (communal laws, market forces, cultural values, etc.) are most important in shaping people’s relationship with the natural world?

### **The Memphis Zoo**

Zoos have existed for centuries. Once known as menageries and the exclusive property of royalty, zoos became public spaces in the nineteenth century. Enlightenment ideas and romantic visions shaped the development of the modern zoo. 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](http://www.memphiszoo.org)

### **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. 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. 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? More information about the cemetery can be found on its website: [www.elmwoodcemetery.org](http://www.elmwoodcemetery.org)

### **Third Reflection due Thursday, March 7:**

- 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?

### **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?

### **Fourth Reflection due Tuesday, March 26:**

- Reflection: Engels and Johnson offer us two divergent views on urban development and its impact on the natural world. In what ways have cities shaped the environment? Who and what have benefited from the growth of cities? Who or what have suffered?

### **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 it 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 could or should humans undo the change caused by human action? For information on the Wolf River Conservancy see: [www.wolfriver.org](http://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://tennesseencyclopedia.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](http://www.shelbyfarmspark.org)