

HIST 292 – History and the Environment
McGill University, Department of History and Classical Studies
Fall 2014

Course Director: Dr. Daniel Rueck
Email: daniel.rueck@mcgill.ca

Location: Trottier Building 1080
Class times: Mon, Wed, Fri | 10h35 – 11h25

Office Hours: Tuesday 12-1pm, Wednesday 2-3pm or by appointment.

Office Location: Ferrier Building 331 (moving to Room 332 in September)

Directions: Enter the Ferrier Building from Docteur-Penfield Avenue. Turn right and enter Ferrier 333 (Quebec Studies). Turn left and walk straight until you enter a room lined with books. You will find Ferrier 331 on your left. Important: The door to Ferrier 333 is unlocked only from 10am to 5pm.

TA: Monique Ulysses
Email: monique.ulysses@mail.mcgill.ca

Course Description

This course is an introduction to global environmental history. It draws from cross-disciplinary literatures on a number of regions and time periods and sketches the history of human interactions with non-human persons and the earth. The course is not a complete overview of world environmental history. It is instead an introduction to key readings, themes, and approaches to environmental history. Readings draw from the field of environmental history as well as historical geography, ecology, environmental anthropology, and Indigenous studies.

Format

Monday and Wednesday classes will involve lectures, films, and guest speakers. Most Friday classes will be conferences for which the class will be split into groups and meet at different times and places. The two major assignments are a group research project and presentation, and an individual research proposal.

MyCourses

The MyCourses site for this course will be used to provide links to required readings and access to other items related to the course. Material on MyCourses is provided for your personal use only.

Email Communication

Aside from consulting the MyCourses site, it is very important that you regularly check your McGill email account for course-related announcements. If you have simple questions feel free to send me an email, but for anything requiring more than a one-sentence response, please visit me during office hours. If you don't get an email response from me within a day or two you might want to check the syllabus to see if the answer to your question is there.

Evaluation

- 25% Group Presentation (Oct 20-31). This assignment involves a group of about four students who research and present the environmental history of an assigned plant, animal, or micro-organism. Students will sign up for available dates on the first week of class. **Important note:** Students will be responsible for material from presentations on the final exam.
- 30% Research Proposal (due Nov 17). A 2-3 page research proposal of an environmental history research project that draws on your personal knowledge of a particular place.
- 25% Final Exam (take home). The exam may draw from lectures, guest lectures, films, student presentations, and readings.
- 20% Conference Participation. Participating in your conference means arriving on time and having carefully read the assigned texts in advance. Once there, you are expected to engage with your classmates and conference leader in discussing the readings. Attempting to participate in the discussion without having done the readings will not result in high participation grades. If are anxious about speaking up in this context or if you have another reason for not engaging in this way, please let your conference leader know as soon as possible so you can find solutions. Those students who enjoy speaking and debating also have a responsibility to allow space for quieter students to be heard.

Assignment Submission

Assignments must be submitted in paper format at the beginning of class on the date due. An assignment will be considered late if it is submitted after the class has begun. I will not accept email submissions. Assignments will not be accepted after the last class.

Late Assignments

No extensions will be granted in advance. A penalty of 2% per working day will be deducted from late assignments. This penalty may be waived in the event of unforeseen emergencies such as illness (please note that a heavy work load for other classes or paid employment does not qualify as an unforeseen emergency). If your assignment is late and you believe you should not be penalized, please attach a note of explanation along with any supporting documentation you think appropriate. The late penalty will be waived, in part or in whole, as seems justified. You may submit your late assignment at the beginning of a following class or by slipping it under my office door. Assignments will not be accepted after the last class.

Disputed Grades

If you believe your mark for a particular assignment is incorrect you may resubmit the graded copy along with a written explanation for why you believe you should receive a different grade. The newly-assessed grade will replace the original grade. Please take into account that the newly-assessed grade may be higher, lower, or unchanged.

Liaison Librarian Office Hours

Liaison Librarian for History and Classical Studies, Eamon Duffy, is available to help students with library research. He will be in Leacock 632 (TA lounge) Mondays from 10am to 12pm.

Official McGill Policies

1. McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. For more information:

<http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/>

1. L'Université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires.

<http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/>

2. In accord with McGill University's Charter of Students' Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.

2. Conformément à la Charte des droits de l'étudiant de l'Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l'un des objets est la maîtrise d'une langue).

Course Readings

There is no textbook for this course. You are required to read a number of articles, book chapters and documents, all of which are available online. Links to certain texts are provided on mycourses.

Course Outline

Week 1 What is Environmental History?

1. **Wed Sept 3 Introduction**

2. **Fri Sept 5 What Is Environmental History?**

In-Class Film: Raccoon Nation

Required Readings

Worster, Donald. "Ice, Worms, and Dirt: The Power of Nature in North American History." In *Method and Meaning in Canadian Environmental History*, edited by Alan MacEachern and William J. Turkel, 24-33. Toronto: Nelson Education, 2009.

MacEachern, Alan. "An Introduction, In Theory and Practice." In *Method and Meaning in Canadian Environmental History*, edited by Alan MacEachern and William J. Turkel, ix-xv. Toronto: Nelson Education, 2009.

Cronon, William. "The Uses of Environmental History." *Environmental History Review* 17, no. 3 (1993): 1-22.

Week 2 Environmental History to 1500

3. **Mon Sept 8 The First 150,000 Years**

4. **Wed Sept 10 The Ancient World**

5. **Fri Sept 12 The Medieval World, 500-1500 AD**

Required Readings

Mann, Charles C. "Amazonia." In *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus*, 319-359. New York: Vintage Books, 2005.

Hoffmann, Richard C. "Economic Development and Aquatic Ecosystems in Medieval Europe." *American Historical Review* 101, no. 3 (1996): 631-669.

Week 3 Sources and Approaches

6. **Mon Sept 15 *Film Screening: Grizzly Man***

7. **Wed Sept 17 **Tour of the Redpath Museum****

8. Fri Sept 19 Conference: Methodologies and Primary Documents

Required Readings

Rackham, Oliver. "The Medieval Countryside of England: Botany and Archaeology." In *Inventing Medieval Landscapes: Sense of place in Western Europe*, edited by John Howe and Michael Wolfe, 13-32. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002.

Leopold, Aldo. "February." In *A Sand County Almanac*, 6-18, 1949.

Worster, Donald. "Doing Environmental History." In *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*, edited by David Freeland Duke. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

Week 4

9. Mon Sept 22 Library Research Presentation

10. Wed Sept 24 The Modern World, 1500-2000

11. Fri Sept 26 Conference: Wilderness

Required Readings and Film

Cronon, William. "The Trouble With Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." In *Uncommon Ground: Toward reinventing nature*, edited by William Cronon, 69-90. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1995.

White, Richard. "Discovering Nature in North America." *The Journal of American History* 79, no. 3 (1992): 874-91.

Film: The Enduring Wilderness http://www.nfb.ca/film/enduring_wilderness/

Week 5 World Regions

12. Mon Sept 29 North America

13. Wed Oct 1 South-East Asia

14. Fri Oct 3 Conference: The Columbian Exchange and Invasive Species

Readings

McGuire, Michaela, "The Eucalypt Invasion of Portugal"

<https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2013/june/1370181600/michaela-mcguire/eucalypt-invasion-portugal>

Crosby, Alfred. "Prologue," *Ecological Imperialism: The biological expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000 [1986].

Chew, Matthew K., and Andrew L. Hamilton. "The Rise and Fall of Biotic Nativeness: a Historical Perspective." In *Fifty Years of Invasion Ecology: The Legacy of Charles Elton*, edited by David M. Richardson, 35-47: Blackwell, 2011.

Richards, John F. "The Columbian Exchange: The West Indies." In *The Unending Frontier: An environmental history of the early modern world*, 309-333. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Week 6 World Regions

15. **Mon Oct 6 Middle East**
16. **Wed Oct 8 Arctic and Sub-Arctic**
17. **Fri Oct 10 Conference: Agriculture**

Required Readings:

Rosenberg, Gabriel N. "Where are animals in the history of sexuality?"

<http://notchesblog.com/2014/09/02/where-are-animals-in-the-history-of-sexuality/>

Henley, David. "Swidden Farming as an Agent of Environmental Change: Ecological Myth and Historical Reality in Indonesia." *Environment and History* 17, (2011): 525-554.

Stunden Bower, Shannon. "Watersheds: Conceptualizing Manitoba's drained landscape, 1895-1950." *Environmental History* 12, no. 4 (2007): 796-819.

Week 7

Mon Oct 13 Thanksgiving – No Class

18. **Wed Oct 15 War and Environments**
19. **Fri Oct 17 Conference: Collapse? Easter Island**

Required Readings

Diamond, Jared M. "Twilight at Easter" in *Collapse: How societies choose to fail or succeed*. New York: Viking, 2005.

Lynas, Mark, "The Myth of Easter Island's Ecocide"

<http://www.marklynas.org/2011/09/the-myth-of-easter-islands-ecocide/>

Jared Diamond Responds

<http://www.marklynas.org/2011/09/the-myths-of-easter-island-jared-diamond-responds/>

Lipo, Carl and Terry Hunt, "The Easter Island Ecocide Never Happened"

<http://www.marklynas.org/2011/10/the-easter-island-ecocide-never-happened-response-to-jared-diamond/>

Week 8 Group Presentations: Organism Histories

20. **Mon Oct 20 Group Presentations**
21. **Wed Oct 22 Group Presentations**
22. **Fri Oct 24 Group Presentations**

Week 9 Group Presentations: Organism Histories

23. **Mon Oct 27** Group Presentations
24. **Wed Oct 29** Group Presentations
25. **Fri Oct 31** Group Presentations

Week 10 Topics in Environmental History

26. **Mon Nov 3** **Grasslands**
27. **Wed Nov 5** **Rivers**
28. **Fri Nov 7** **Conference: Cities**

Required Readings

- Dagenais, Michèle. "The Urbanization of Nature: Water Networks and Green Spaces in Montreal." In *Method and Meaning in Canadian Environmental History*, edited by Alan MacEachern and William J. Turkel, 216-235. Toronto: Nelson Education, 2009.
Kheraj, Sean. "Restoring Nature: Ecology, Memory, and the Storm History of Vancouver's Stanley Park." *Canadian Historical Review* 88, no. 4 (2007): 577-612.

Week 11 Topics in Environmental History

29. **Mon Nov 10** **TBA**
30. **Wed Nov 12** **Climate**
31. **Fri Nov 14** **Conference: Climate**

Required Readings

- Degroot, Dagomar. "'Never such weather known in these seas': Climatic Fluctuations and the Anglo-Dutch Wars of the Seventeenth Century, 1652–1674." *Environment and History* 20 (2014): 239–273.
Pfister, Christian. "Climatic Extremes, Recurrent Crises and Witch Hunts: Strategies of European Societies in Coping with Exogenous Shocks in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *The Medieval History Journal* 10: 1&2 (2007): 33-73.

Week 12 Topics in Environmental History

32. Mon Nov 17 Fishing and Whaling

Research Proposal Assignment Due

33. Wed Nov 19 Science, Collecting, and Bioprospecting

In-Class Film: The White Diamond

34. Fri Nov 21 Conference: The Green Revolution and Environmental Justice

Required Readings

Edmund Russell, "Preface,"

Shiva, Vandana. "Special Report: Golden Rice and Neem: Biopatents and the Appropriation of Women's Environmental Knowledge." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 29, no. 1/2 (2001): 12-23.

Shiva, Vandana, "Chapter 4: Modern Landscapes and Ecological Bodies," in *Inescapable Ecologies: A history of environment, disease, and knowledge*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006 (ebook in the library)

Week 13 Topics in Environmental History

35. Mon Nov 24 The Industrial Revolution

36. Wed Nov 26 Environmentalism

In-Class Film: Greenpeace: From hippies to lobbyists

37. Fri Nov 28 Conference: Environmentalism, Conservation, and Indigenous Peoples

Required Readings

Leopold, Aldo. "Thinking Like a Mountain," in *A Sand County Almanac*, 129-133, 1949.

Scott, Colin H. "Spirit and Practical Knowledge in the Person of the Bear among Wemindji Cree Hunters." *Ethnos* 71, no. 1 (2006): 51-66.

Binnema, Theodore, and Melanie Niemi. "'Let the Line Be Drawn Now': Wilderness, conservation, and the exclusion of Aboriginal People from Banff National Park in Canada." *Environmental History* 11, (2006): 724-750.

Week 14 Topics in Environmental History

38. Mon Dec 1 Mining

39. Wed Dec 3 TBA

40. Thu Dec 4 Conclusions