

21H421 (HASS-D CI)
INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

Spring 2006
TR 2:30-4

Prof. H. Ritvo

Etienne Benson

Subject Description

A historical overview of the interactions between people and their environments. Focusing primarily on the experience of Europeans in the period after Columbus, the subject explores the influence of nature (climate, topography, plants, animals, and microorganisms) on human history and the reciprocal influence of people on nature. Topics include the biological consequences of the European encounter with the Americas, the environmental impact of technology, and the roots of the current environmental crisis.

CI CREDO

Communication intensive subjects in the humanities, arts, and social sciences should require at least 20 pages of writing divided among 3-5 assignments. Of these 3-5 assignments, at least one should be revised and resubmitted. HASS CI subjects should further offer students substantial opportunity for oral expression, through presentations, student-led discussion, or class participation.

Readings

The following books can be purchased at the MIT Bookstore or through various online booksellers. They are also available at the Reserve Library.

Rachel Carson, Silent Spring

James Cook, Journals of Captain Cook (Penguin edition)

William Cronon, Changes in the Land

Friedrich Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England
Elizabeth Fenn, Pox Americana
Karl Jacoby, Crimes Against Nature
J. R. McNeill and W. H. McNeill, The Human Web
Elinor Melville, A Plague of Sheep
Steven Stoll, Larding the Lean Earth
Richard White, The Organic Machine

Written Assignments

There will be three papers, of at least 5, 5, and 10 pages, due in class on March 7, April 6, and May 18 respectively. Specific assignment sheets will be handed out later in the term. The last assignment will also include an oral presentation. Either assignment 1 or assignment 2 (your choice) must be revised and resubmitted for a new grade. If you like, you can revise and resubmit both assignment 1 and assignment 2.

In addition, a single page (not hand written) of informal reflections on each reading will be due in class on the day it is scheduled for discussion (normally the second class of each unit).

Schedule of Classes

February 7-9:	Introduction Reading: McNeill and McNeill, 25-40,75-81, 108-15, 137-54, 158-78, 186-9, 200-23, 230- 52, 264-7, 279-88, 319-327
February 14-16:	The Columbian Exchange Reading: Melville, <u>Plague of Sheep</u> , 1-77, 151-166
February 21:	NO CLASS: Monday Schedule on Tuesday
February 23:	Field Trip to Burndy Library
February 28- March 2	The Disease Environment Reading: Fenn, <u>Pox Americana</u> (3-43, 135-277)
March 7-9	Discussion of research paper topics Visit to library computer lab PAPER 1 DUE IN CLASS MARCH 7
March 14-16	Wilderness and Garden Reading: Cronon, <u>Changes in the Land</u>

March 21-23	Science and Nature Reading: Cook, <u>Journal</u> , 39-61, 125-134, 335-339, 374-390, 530-547
March 28-30	NO CLASS: SPRING VACATION
April 4-6	Landscape and Agriculture Reading: Stoll, <u>Larding the Lean Earth</u> , 13-166 PAPER 2 DUE IN CLASS APRIL 6
April 11-13	Industry and Demography PAPER 3 PROPOSALS DUE IN CLASS ON APRIL 13 Reading: Friedrich Engels, <u>The Condition of the Working Class in England</u> , chs. 2, 5
April 18 April 20	NO CLASS: PATRIOT'S DAY NO CLASS: Individual Conferences on Paper 3
April 25-27	Conservation and Preservation Reading: Jacoby, <u>Crimes Against Nature</u> , Introduction, chs. 4-6
May 2-4	Poisoning and Environmentalism Reading: Carson, <u>Silent Spring</u> , chs. 1, 7, 9, 10, 14, 16
May 9-11	Current Events Reading: White, <u>Organic Machine</u>
May 16-18	Oral presentation of research papers PAPER 3 DUE IN CLASS MAY 18 ALL REVISIONS DUE IN CLASS MAY 18

Things to remember

Written assignments should represent original and individual work. The following link to the MIT Online Writing and Communication Center gives some suggestions about how to recognize plagiarism and how to avoid it.

<http://web.mit.edu/writing/Citation/plagiarism.html>

All sources used in written assignments must be fully cited. This includes sources of information as well as direct quotations; it includes the assigned readings as well as other materials.

Assignments are to be handed in on time. If an extension becomes necessary it should be requested ahead of the due date. Otherwise, lateness will be penalized.

Attendance is important. Not all the material to be covered in class is included in the readings. Be sure to bring your copy of the readings to discussion classes.

Grading will be based on the three written assignments, the oral presentation, and class participation (including informal reflections), weighted as follows: paper 1--1/6; paper 2--1/6; paper 3--1/3; final oral presentation--1/6; class participation (including response papers)--1/6.

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

21H.421 Introduction to Environmental History
Spring 2011

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.