

HIST260 / HIST 297Z: Environmental History

Spring, 2011 Moravian College
W 6:30-9:30 Comenius 305

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Topics:

Environmental history explores the changing relationship between human agency and the environment over the course of world history. Themes include the agricultural and industrial revolutions, the integration of world ecozones, historical epidemiology, and the impact of technological change on the environment.

Goals for students:

- *Identify and discuss the major themes and issues in the interrelationships between humans and the natural environment over the last fifteen thousand years
- *Provide a variety of examples of and details on how societies interacted with their environment in the pre-agricultural, early agricultural, agricultural, early modern, and modern eras
- *Locate on a map selected basic features of the physical environment
- *Utilize appropriate historical skills to prepare an historiographical essay on a specific example of the interaction of humans with their environment
- *Effectively engage in presentation and discussion of daily readings and effectively communicate historical research

Texts:

J. Donald Hughes, *An Environmental History of the World. Humankind's Changing Role in the Community of Life*, 2nd edition (New York: Routledge, 2009)

J. R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun. An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World* (New York: WW Norton, 2000)

Additional readings will be available on Ebscohost and as handouts.

Class:

Reading assigned for a class is to be completed before that class. Reading the material before the class is essential for understanding and for useful discussions. I recommend taking notes and outlining (rather than highlighting or underlining). I also recommend spending time at every study session quickly reviewing class and reading notes.

Students are encouraged to speak to me about academic or other subjects. Office hours will be announced and they are posted on my office door. You may also make an appointment. If you try to call me in my office and there is no answer during weekdays, let my phone ring for voice mail. Or, call me evenings or weekends at home. I check my e-mail often during most weekdays.

Participation in class is an important part of this course and of college education; attendance will be taken regularly and your speaking in class is required.

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

Evaluation:

Evaluation will be based on a map quiz (5%), thesis statement and reading question preparation (20%; 10 out of 11 at 2% each), a paper (including bibliography, drafts, and presentation, 25%), class participation (including preparation, engagement, presentations, and leading a class discussion, 20%), and two examinations (15%, 15%). The second examination is not cumulative, except as it assumes general knowledge of the first half of the course. Late papers will be penalized. I do not accept late thesis statements and reading questions.

Attendance does not receive a grade. You are allowed absence from one full class or two halves of a class. After that, each absence from a half of a class will result in 2 points being subtracted from your final grade. That means that after missing the first full class, missing a second class will cost 4 points. Work missed during unexcused absences cannot be made up, although work related to your papers may still be turned in. Please keep in close communication with me about your absences.

Plagiarism (and other academic dishonesty) will be treated consistent with the Student Handbook and may result in failure in the course. As with all courses, you are expected to keep all notes and drafts until the final grade is assigned.

While I intend to follow the syllabus closely, it is sometimes helpful or necessary to change schedules, assignments, or evaluation procedures. Thus I reserve the right to do so.

Paper:

Your task is to write a 10-12 page (at least) historiographical research paper. What is a historiographical research paper? Unlike high school papers, which tend to *describe* a topic using secondary sources, professional historians generally write narratives that use primary sources and *analyze* secondary sources. One way to think about this in general is that high school history papers tend to report on what historians are saying while historians themselves are engaged in conversations about what we can know and what it means. An historiographical paper focuses on that conversation and 1) *identifies* the speakers (authors) in the conversation and what they are saying and 2) *analyzes* the various points of view represented. In addition, the historiographical essay frequently *judges* the points of view of secondary sources by telling readers which are best supported by facts and most plausible. The essay can be organized by considering authors one at a time, but generally it is more useful (and more challenging and elegant) to organize the narrative by the topics that the conversation covers.

Are the conversations of historians actual face-to-face conversations? Sometimes yes, especially at conferences, and such face-to-face conversations are occasionally provided verbatim in, for example, the proceedings of symposia where historians have gathered to

talk about one topic. More frequently, a historian writes about the points of view of other historians while presenting his or her own point of view. Generally, the historian's own point of view is supported by facts from primary sources that add new perspectives on the past and thus advance the conversation. (Note that each of the "conversants" except the writer might, in fact, be long dead.) But sometimes the conversation is not readily apparent. Sometimes historians do not specifically say how their interpretations differ from those of other historians. Nonetheless, it is still a conversation, with each historian contributing a point of view. Your task as the author of an historiographical essay is to discern the topics of the conversation, the gist of each conversant's contribution, and the meaning of the contributions in the conversation. To some extent you might actually reveal a conversation where the conversants do not know that they are speaking about the same topic.

In preparing your paper it will be tempting to spend a great deal of time just describing the history of your topic. Watch out. An historiographical essay can be partially descriptive, especially where the audience needs background information to understand the conversation. But excellent historiography quickly moves to focus on the conversation itself. Here, for example, is an outline that might fit a paper on the domestication and effect of domestication of horses: 1) Find a thesis that describes what you intend to argue in your paper. 2) Describe the background to the topic. If, for example, there are scientific studies of when, where, and how horses were domesticated, let the reader know basic facts. If facts disagree, tell the reader. If horses were important in a few or in many societies, let the reader know which ones. 3) Lay out the various questions that historians focus on in their discussions of the impact of domestication. 4) Consider the questions one by one i) noting what different historians have to say about the topic, ii) how interpretations develop over time, iii) and which interpretations seem to be better supported and more plausible. 5) Discuss where you think the conversation is moving or needs to move. Are historians investigating new topics or looking at new evidence? Are there topics that aren't discussed but should be? Are there topics that need to be investigated with more study? What kind of scholar (chemist, biologist, ecologist, geographer, anthropologist, historian, ...) might undertake that study? 6) Provide a conclusion that summarizes your discussion and points to your overall thesis/conclusion.

The sources for your paper will consist of peer-reviewed books and articles. What you need is a collection of secondary sources that discuss (rather than merely describe) your topic. If, for example, you are researching the historiography of the impact of the domestication of horses on human and environmental history, you will need some scientific sources that date and describe the process of domestication, the spread of horses, and different technologies related to horses (such as saddles, harnesses, and plows). But what you need to focus on is different interpretations of the impact of horses on societies and environments. You will find that over time interpretations have changed. You will probably also find that in recent years there are scholarly debates over when, why, and how horses became important to humans and over their impacts on the environments where they are found.

How many sources? For most general topics such as those we will study you could find hundreds of sources if you spent enough time (and learned enough languages), but you're not writing a book or a dissertation and you don't have many months or years. What you need to do is demonstrate that you have taken your topic seriously and have come to understand its basic issues. Most good papers will need about fifteen *substantial peer-reviewed* sources that are woven into your narrative. Of these, six or seven need to be substantial interpretive sources.

What if you start researching a topic and don't find this many sources? Two possibilities: One is that you aren't looking in the right way or right place; there are tricks to bibliographic searches that you may not know. The other is that you need a different topic; some topics just don't lend themselves to historiographical papers at our level of skill. If your search just doesn't seem to be working, you should contact me as soon as possible so we can figure out what to do.

In the early part of the term we'll spend time talking about bibliographic searches. It is very important that you quickly settle on a topic and complete an adequate preliminary bibliography. You don't want to be at the end of the term with an impossible topic, with inadequate sources, or with sources that take too long to acquire from other libraries.

Historians use a number of citation styles, but the most common is the Chicago style, found in the *Chicago Manual of Style*, and that is the one to use in this course. The whole manual is in the library, but here are simpler versions in the text used for Writing 100 or for History 270, and online. Please use footnotes, not endnotes, and include a Works Cited list at the end of your paper.

Potential Paper Topics:

Domestication and effect of domestication of a major staple crop in multiple regions: maize, wheat, rice, or potatoes

Origins of agriculture and effects in a major region with multiple crops: Africa, Europe, China, India, South America (but not North America)

Domestication and effect of domestication of a major animal in multiple regions: cattle, sheep, pigs, or horses

The appearance and global effect of a major disease (but not a recently emergent disease and not bubonic plague): cholera, measles, malaria, syphilis, and yellow fever

Environmental history of a continent, subcontinent, or major region: China, India, Africa, the Mediterranean (but not North America)

It might be that when you begin to investigate one of these topics you find that the interpretive sources are too numerous to cover. You might, then, need to limit your study further. For example, if there are too many sources on the impact of horse domestication on environments and societies, you might need to focus on horses in Europe and Asia or in just Europe or the Eurasian steppes. Please consult with me.

It might be possible to research additional topics such as other important domesticated plants and animals (e.g., bananas or goats), the environmental history of specific

environments (e.g., forests in Europe, deserts in Africa, the Amazon, the Atlantic Ocean), or the environmental histories of a very specific city or region (outside of North America, such as London or the Nile Delta). The limiting factor here will likely be whether you have access to a sufficient number of interpretive sources. There are, for example, hundreds of scientific studies on the ecology and ecological history of the Sahara Desert. But are there enough other sources that provide varying interpretations of the meaning of those cycles for humans over, say, the last 6,000 years? I know of several, but we'd need to do some investigation to be sure that a competent historiographical paper is feasible in the time we have this semester. One of the major limitations of environmental history for this kind of project is that it is a relatively new field and thus multiple interpretive sources are available for the biggest (most obvious) topics, but not for narrower topics.

Thesis Statements Plus Reading Questions:

For most classes I ask that you bring thesis statements for each reading plus five reading questions. These statements and questions should be word-processed and will be collected.

In working with secondary sources (all of our readings are from secondary sources) it is sometimes challenging to find thesis statements. The thesis statement is the author's (s') argument (or point, or contribution) in an historical conversation. It may be an argument about facts, or interpretation, or methodology...or all three...and it may be found in one or several places in a book, chapter, or article. In addition, of course, the author might present others' points of view and will almost always provide support for his or her (or their) own thesis. In class, we'll be thinking about theses, other points of view, and support/evidence, but we'll always start with theses.

The author(s) thesis statement might be as simple as a sentence. Write the thesis in your own words and indicate the page on which the author provides this. But don't stop with one sentence. Provide a description of the thesis that includes the categories of evidence or argument that the author provides.

For reading questions, what I would like to see are questions that demonstrate what are known as higher order thinking skills. Perhaps the simplest way to understand higher order thinking skills is to look at Bloom's Taxonomy. In its current version, the taxonomy includes six levels, from lowest to highest: knowledge, understanding, application, analysis, evaluation, and creativity/synthesis. The first three are considered lower order skills and the last three higher order skills. A reading question that asks, "What crops were domesticated in Asia?" is a knowledge question. A question that asks for examples of menus based on Asian crops might demonstrate understanding or, if you had to search for recipes, application.

If you do ask a question in the lower order category, it should be a clarifying or exploring one. For example, "The book didn't list Asian crops. What are they?" or "I don't understand the point the author is making on page X. Please clarify." Or "Would it be possible to make a complete meal (meat, starch, vegetable) composed entirely of

recognizable crops domesticated in Asia?” Such questions can be useful and interesting for our discussions.

How could you ask reading questions related to crop domestication in Asia that required analysis, evaluation, and creativity/synthesis? The answer partially depends on what is in the text already? If the reading already analyses a situation and you ask for a description of that analysis, the question may appear to ask for analysis while it really requires a description. If the reading does provide such an analysis, your question might be to question the analysis. You might also ask to compare the reading’s point of view to other points of view in other readings or in other parts of the same reading. You might further ask whether a new point of view, one you create, seems to be valid. There are lots of other possibilities.

Higher order questions often have open-ended answers. In this sense they are both less and more satisfying than lower order questions. Less satisfying in the sense that they leave you hanging and more in the sense that they leave a lot of room for thinking and discussion. Usually you need to be able to do lower level thinking before you can engage in higher level thinking. How can we talk about the relative merits of Asian and European crops if we don’t know what they are? And in some jobs and professions it is not a good idea for practitioners to do too much higher order thinking. I really don’t want my phlebotomist, banker, or even my dentist to be too creative. But ultimately, educated folks tend to think toward the higher end of the taxonomy and thus I’d like you to gain more practice doing so.

You might ask questions that frame the “essential questions” of the work we are studying or that stretch the class to look at new topics and evidence. Some questions, however, are beyond us. An extreme example might be a question that asks us to compare the influence of plant domestication on Earth with that on a hypothetical planet. That might be interesting in some contexts (creative writing, for example), but won’t help us much in this course. In general, therefore, asking us to compare what we are reading with something we don’t or can’t know will not take us very far in thinking about our overall topic.

Making a presentation:

Twice during the term you will read a chapter in a book and present it to the class. Since the rest of us will not necessarily read the same chapter, your task will be to inform us about the chapter. Remember that we’re interested in the thesis, the evidence, and the implications of your reading. And since we haven’t read the chapter, we’d like a one-page abstract (and maybe a map) that we can use for examinations, papers, and subsequent discussions.

Leading a class discussion:

Toward the end of the semester you will lead a short discussion of one of our textbook chapters. Because we read about five chapters a class period, prepare to lead a discussion of your reading that lasts about fifteen minutes. Your discussion should help our class colleagues to clarify your reading’s thesis or theses, locate the reading’s support, and

investigate questions that might be suggested by the reading. To do this well, you'll need to have your chapter "down cold." Thus I suggest that you prepare a detailed outline of the chapter for yourself. You'll also need to prepare a number of discussion questions because if other students (or I) don't have good questions to keep the discussion going you'll need to supply them. You might consider preparing other materials such as charts, maps, photos, and timelines to help the discussion, but your task is to lead a discussion not to make presentation. Please submit the materials you use to prepare for the discussion.

The rest of us, as participants in the discussion, will help you keep the discussion going and make it meaningful. Thus the burden of the conversation is not entirely on you, but you must prepare to lead us.

Class Schedule:

January			
19	-Introduction -What is historiography? -What is environmental history?	EHW chap 1 – “History and Ecology” *J. R. McNeill, “Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History,” <i>History and Theory</i> 42 (December 2003), 5-43 *J. Donald Hughes “Issues and Directions in Environmental History” <i>What is Environmental History?</i> (Malden MA: Polity, 2006) 94-113 *Alfred W. Crosby, “A Good Try at Organizing World History Environmentally,” <i>History and Theory</i> , 41, 2 (May, 2002) 218-224	Syllabus Map Reading Thesis statements plus reading questions
26	-Hunters and gatherers -Domestication -Small-Scale Agricultural Societies	EHW chap 2 – “Primal Harmony” *Jared Diamond, “Apples or Indians,” in <i>Guns, Germs, and Steel</i> (New York: Norton, 1977), 131-156 *Jared Diamond, “Zebras, Unhappy Marriages, and the <i>Anna Karenina</i> Principle,” in <i>Guns, Germs, and Steel</i> (New York: Norton, 1977), 157-175	-Organize presentations for next class -Thesis statements plus reading questions (5 questions, at least one from each reading) +Paxton: Native Americans and the environment +If time, video: “Guns, Germs, and Steel”
February			
2	-Domestication -Projects – topic choice -Bibliographic search information	~C. Wesley Cowan and Patty Jo Watson, <i>The Origins of Agriculture: An International Perspective</i> (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama, 2006) [Go to MOSYS. Search	-Meet at 6:30 at the Reference Desk in the Library – Then class presentations of eight chapters from <i>The Origins of</i>

		<p>for title of book. Find e-version. Connect to Moravian ebook – ebrary. Log in with your college password. You can drag the screen up, but with a small screen you'll need to move the text around to read...or you can print your chapter.]</p> <p>*Jared Diamond, "Spacious Skies and Tilted Axes," in <i>Guns, Germs, and Steel</i> (New York: Norton, 1977), 176-191</p> <p>*J. R. McNeill, "The World According to Jared Diamond," <i>The History Teacher</i> 34, 2 (February 2001), 165-174; available in JSTOR</p>	<p><i>Agriculture</i>. Prepare and submit a one-page abstract of your chapter.</p> <p>-Thesis statements plus reading questions (on the readings other than Cowan and Watson; 5 questions, at least one from each reading)</p>
9	-Early Urban Societies -Staple crops; large-scale herding	<p>EHW Chap 3 – "The Great Divorce of Culture and Nature"</p> <p>*James M. Blaut, "Environmentalism and Eurocentrism," <i>Geographical Review</i>, 89, 3 (July 1999), 391-408; available in JSTOR</p>	<p>-Map Quiz</p> <p>-Thesis statements plus reading questions (5 questions, at least one from each reading)</p> <p>+Agilar: humans and the environment in Mexico; pre- and post- Colombian agriculture</p>
16	-Early Empires and their Systems of Ideas	<p>EHW Chap 4 – "Ideas and Impacts"</p> <p>*Jared Diamond, "Lethal gift of Livestock," in <i>Guns, Germs, and Steel</i> (New York: Norton, 1977), 195-214</p>	<p>--Thesis statements plus reading questions (5 questions, at least two from each reading)</p> <p>-Bibliography draft due</p>
23	-Middle Ages – The Ends of the Earth	<p>EHW Chap 5 – "The Middle Ages"</p> <p>*Ferdinand Braudel, <i>Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century. Volume 1: The Structures of Everyday Life</i> (New York: Harper and Row, 1981 (1979)) 31-51, 71-103</p>	<p>-Thesis statements plus reading questions (5 questions, at least two from each reading)</p> <p>+Bardsley: impact of plague on Europe</p> <p>-Citation and footnoting discussion</p>
March			
2	-Intensified Transformations	EHW Chap 6 – "The Transformation of the	-Midterm examination

	to the Late 19 th Century Midterm examination	Biosphere”	- Thesis statement plus reading questions (5 questions) -Organize presentations for next class +Burt Wolf, “What We Eat”
9	Spring break		
16	-Early Modern extension of agriculture	Foods from all over: A varied menu John F. Richards, “Climate and Early Modern World Environmental History,” in <i>The Unending Frontier. An Environmental History of the Early Modern World</i> (Berkeley: University of California, 2003), 58-85 *Also, individual Richards’ chapters divided among us	- Class presentations of chapters of <i>The Unending Frontier</i> . Prepare and submit a one-page abstract of your chapter. -Organize “Leading a class discussion” +guest speaker?
23	-Late 19 th and 20 th Century Transformations	EHW Chap 7 – “Exploitation and Conservation” 154-186 SNUS Preface – xxi-xxvi SNUS Chap 1 – “Prologue: Peculiarities of a Prodigal Century” 3-17 SNUS Chap 2 – “The Lithosphere and Pedosphere: The Crust of the Earth” – 21-49 SNUS Chap 3 – “The Atmosphere: Urban History” 50-83	- Leading a class discussion Please submit the materials you use to prepare. - Thesis statements plus reading questions (5 questions, one from each reading) - Paper Outline
30	-20 th Century Transformations	SNUS Chap 4 – “The Atmosphere: Regional and Global History” 84-117 SNUS Chap 5 – “The Hydrosphere: The History of Water Use and Water Pollution” 118-148 SNUS Chap 6 – “The Hydrosphere: Depletions, Dams, and Diversions” 149-191 SNUS Chap 7 – “The Biosphere: Eat and Be Eaten” 192-227	- Leading a class discussion - Thesis statements plus reading questions (5 questions, at least one from each reading) - Paper background section due -Determine order for presentations

April			
6	-20 th Century Transformations	SNUS Chap 8 – “The Biosphere: Forests, Fish and Invasions” 228-266 SNUS Chap 9 – “More People, Bigger Cities” 269-295 SNUS Chap 10 – “Fuels, Tools, and Economics” 296-324	- Leading a class discussion - Thesis statements plus reading questions (5 questions, at least one from each reading) - Paper historiography descriptive outline of questions/sections
13	-20 th Century Engines of Change	SNUS Chap 11 – “Ideas and Politics” 325-356 SNUS Chap 12 – “Epilogue: So What?” 357-362 EWH Chap 9 – “Present and Future” 225-268 EWH Chap 10 – “A General Conclusion” 269-272	- Leading a class discussion - Thesis statements plus reading questions (5 questions, at least one from each reading)
20		Project presentations *Matthew W. Klinge, “Spaces of Consumption in Environmental History,” <i>History and Theory. Theme Issue 42</i> (December 2003) Conclusion only: pp 107-110 *In class reading: Judith Shapiro, “Introduction,” <i>Mao’s War Against Nature. Politics and the Environment in Revolutionary China</i> (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University, 2001) 1-19	- Papers due
27		Project presentations *William Cronon, “The Uses of Environmental History,” <i>Environmental History Review</i> 17, 3 (Autumn 1993) 1-22 *Donald Worster, “Nature and the Disorder of History,” <i>Environmental History Review</i> 18, 2 (Summer 1994) 1-15	- Thesis statements plus reading questions (5 questions, at least one from each reading)

	Final examination		
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Map Quiz:

We need to know the basics of world physical geography to have good discussions of environmental history. Therefore, I'd like you to familiarize yourselves with the following and be able to locate them correctly on a blank map:

Major Biomes: The concepts of biomes and ecosystems are difficult to define because scientists themselves disagree on exact definitions or schemes of delineation. In general, what the concepts attempt to do is categorize climates, physical features, and biologic communities (plants and animals that live in one place and interact) so that we can think and talk about them. For the map quiz, we'll use a general system with only eight categories (nine if we count polar ice caps). We could get *much* more specific and detailed, but that would be more appropriate in another course. So, learn the simple map at this location:

<http://www.physicalgeography.net/fundamentals/9k.html>

Rivers:

Europe: Rhine, Danube

North America: Mississippi, Ohio, Colorado, St. Lawrence

Middle and South America: Amazon (Rio Amazonas)

Africa: Niger, Congo/Zaire, Nile, Zambezi

Southwest Asia: Tigris, Euphrates

Southeast Asia: Mekong

South Asia: Ganga (Ganges), Indus, Brahmaputra

Western Pacific: Huang/Yellow, Yangtze/Chang

Russia: Volga

Mountains:

Europe: Alps, Pyrenees, Balkans

North America: Rocky Mountains, Appalachians, Sierra Nevadas, Mt. McKinley

Middle and South America: Andes, Sierra Madres

Africa: Kilimanjaro

Asia: Himalayas

Russia and NIS: Urals (divide Europe and Asia), Caucasus

Bodies of water:

Europe: North Sea, Baltic Sea, Adriatic Sea, Mediterranean Sea, English Channel, Straits of Gibraltar

North America: Lake Michigan, Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, Chesapeake Bay, Gulf of Mexico

Middle and South America: Panama Canal, Caribbean Sea, Magellan Straits (Estrecho de Magallanes)

Africa: Lake Victoria, Lake Tanganyika (second deepest in world)

Western Pacific: Straits of Malacca

Southwest Asia: Persian Gulf, Straits of Hormuz, Red Sea, Suez Canal

South Asia: Indian Ocean

Russia and NIS: Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Lake Baikal (deepest in world),
Baltic Sea

Other:

North America: Mojave Desert, Sonoran Desert, Great Plains

Middle and South America: Tierra del Fuego, Galapagos Islands, Yucatan
Peninsula

Africa: Sahara Desert

Asia: Eurasian Steppe, Gobi Desert