

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

REVISED SYLLABUS

Spring 2005
TR 2:30-4

Prof. H. Ritvo

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
Daniel Defoe, Journal of the Plague Year (Norton edition)
Friedrich Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England
David Herlihy, The Black Death and the Transformation of the West
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 February 24, March 17, and May 12 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 sheet 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 1-3:	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 8-10:	The Disease Environment Reading: Herlihy, <u>Black Death</u> Daniel Defoe, <u>Journal of the Plague Year</u> , 5-51
February 15-17:	The Columbian Exchange Reading: Melville, <u>Plague of Sheep</u> , 1-77, 151-166
February 22	NO CLASS: Monday Schedule on Tuesday
February 24	PAPER 1 DUE IN CLASS FEBRUARY 24

FIELD TRIP TO BURNDY LIBRARY

March 1 FIELD TRIP TO LIBRARY COMPUTER LAB, 14N-132

March 3-10 Wilderness and Garden
 Reading: Cronon, Changes in the Land

March 15-17	Science and Nature Reading: Cook, <u>Journal</u> , 39-61, 125-134, 335-339, 374-390, 530-547
March 22-24	NO CLASS: Spring Vacation
March 29-31	Landscape and Agriculture Reading: Stoll, <u>Larding the Lean Earth</u> , 13-166 PAPER 2 DUE IN CLASS MARCH 17
April 5-7	Industry and Demography PAPER 3 PROPOSALS DUE IN CLASS ON APRIL 5 Reading: Friedrich Engels, <u>The Condition of the Working Class in England</u> , chs. 2, 5
April 12-14	Conservation and Preservation Reading: Jacoby, <u>Crimes Against Nature</u> , Introduction, chs. 4-6
April 19	NO CLASS: Patriot's Day
April 22	NO CLASS: Individual Conferences on Paper 3
April 26-28	Poisoning and Environmentalism Reading: Carson, <u>Silent Spring</u> , chs. 1, 7, 9, 10, 14, 16
May 3-5	Current Events Reading: White, <u>Organic Machine</u>
May 10-12	Oral presentation of final projects PAPER 3 DUE IN CLASS MAY 12 ALL REVISIONS DUE IN CLASS MAY 12

Things to remember

Written assignments should represent original and individual work.
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.

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