

HIST 598

Environmental History

Summer 2022: 6/6/22 - 7/29/22
Indiana State University

Course Information

Instructor: **Prof. James M. Gustafson**
Meeting Times: Asynchronous; June 6- July 29, 2022; via Canvas
Office Hours: By appointment, via Zoom
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Introduction

This graduate course is designed as a broad overview of modern environmental history, covering major works, debates, and methodologies in the field. At the heart of environmental history is the study of the reciprocal relationship between human societies and the rest of nature. This allows historians to view a diversity of influences from natural environments on human history while in turn recognizing how human processes continuously reshape and repurpose nature. Environmental History is especially valuable for attending to geographical, spatial, and ecological influences on human societies. We will read a selection of major works covering major themes in environmental history like biological exchange, climate change, epidemic disease, food, forestry, energy, and gendered conceptions of nature. By the end of this semester, you will have a firm foundation in approaches to environmental history, and be able to apply insights from these works into your own research and teaching.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this class, you will be able to:

1. Identify and explain foundational works in the study of modern environmental history.
2. Assess major works in the study of environmental history and compare their arguments, methodologies, and underlying assumptions.
3. Evaluate primary and secondary sources within the historical context of environmental history.
4. Write historiographical review essays or lesson plans in environmental history that conform to professional and disciplinary standards.

Required Books

We will cover one book per week in this course. We will work on strategies for reading efficiently for graduate courses and quickly identifying important features of texts.

A. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*
G. Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate, and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*
C. Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England*
J. McCann, *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop*
A. Afkhami, *A Modern Contagion: Imperialism and Public Health in Iran's Age of Cholera*
C. Boyer, *Political Landscapes: Forests, Conservation, and Community in Mexico*
W. Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*
J.R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the 20th Century World*

Course Policies

1. **Student Responsibilities.** My goal is to help each of you succeed in this course and develop strong study habits. However, you have the major responsibility for doing well. Achievement of course standards requires *you* to know what you need to do to improve your performance. You are expected to study carefully all reading material and the feedback returned to you, to note evaluation comments made to the entire class regarding assignments returned, and to participate in group and class activities.
2. **Participation and Attendance.** As an active community of learners, attendance and active participation are essential to your success. Attendance will be factored into students' participation grades. Showing up and passively completing the course materials is not enough to ensure success in this course either. You will be expected to come to class having read the assigned material on the syllabus for that day, prepared to engage in daily in-class discussion periods.
3. **Time-management** is crucial in graduate courses. Typical 3-credit-hour courses meet 3 hours every week, and you are expected to spend 2-3 hours on preparation at home per hour of class time. Therefore, in general you should expect to spend a total of **9-12 hours per week** on this class.
4. **Plagiarism:** Students are required to familiarize themselves with the Code of Student Conduct, which includes ISU's policies on academic integrity. www.indstate.edu/sci/docs/CodeConduct.pdf Students found to have plagiarized all or part of any assignment will receive an F in the course on the first offense, and the case will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Integrity. For further information and resources, visit www.indstate.edu/academicintegrity
5. **Formatting written work:** Word-process all submitted work using Microsoft Word (<http://downloads.indstate.edu>). We will use **Chicago formatting and citations**, the standard for the discipline of academic History, for all written assignments in this class. Please refer to [Online Writing Lab \(OWL\)](#) for assistance, and refer to the writing resources available within Blackboard > Start Here.
6. **Assignment Deadlines.** Students may submit ONE late assignment this semester, with written permission granted 24 hours in advance. All deadlines for written papers will be 11:59 p.m. EST/EDT. Written assignments must be submitted electronically via the course Blackboard site - not in class and not by email. If you are having trouble with Canvas, seek assistance early so that you can submit your work on time. It is strongly suggested that you make backup copies of your work in the event of a computer problem, as technical issues are not a valid excuse for late work.
7. **Be courteous and respectful** to your classmates and your instructor. The [ISU Code of Student Conduct](#) grants instructors authority to maintain classroom discipline, including asking disruptive students to leave the classroom. Maintain a formal, respectful, civil, and professional tone with all course communications.
8. **Accessibility:** If you need additional accommodations because of a documented disability, you are required to register with Disability Support Services within the first two weeks of the semester. Contact the Director of Student Support Services at 812-237-2301.

Grades

The following scale will be used to determine grades:

A+	97-100%	C+	77-79%
A	94-96%	C	74-76%
A-	90-93%	C-	70-73%
B+	87-89%	D+	67-69%
B	84-86 %	D	64-66%
B-	80-83%	D-	60-63%
		F	0-59%

The work you do this semester will be weighted as follows:

Discussion Board	15%
Exams	30%
Book Reviews	25%
Seminar Paper	30%

You can expect to receive grades and feedback on each task within two weeks of the due date. Progress reports will be posted on Blackboard in Weeks 7 and 12. You can [set up your Blackboard notifications](#) so that you are emailed each time your instructor has updated a grade.

Graded Projects

There are four main components of student evaluation:

Discussion Board (150 pts):

Your participation grade will be calculated through active participation on a **weekly discussion board** (10 pts for week #1, then 20pts x 7 weeks= **150 pts**). Students are expected to read required materials, view the lectures, and participate in discussion board conversations each week.

Exams (300 pts):

A **mid-term exam (100)** and **final exam (200)** will be used for assessment in this class. A detailed study guide will be provided roughly one week in advance of all exams.

Book Reviews (250 pts):

Students will prepare three short book reviews related to select secondary sources.

- Week #2: Ecological Change in the Early Modern World (**50 pts**)
- Week #4: Reorganizing Nature (**75 pts**)
- Week #6: Nature and the Nation State (**125 pts**)

Historiographical Research or Annotated Lesson Plan (300 pts)

At the end of the semester, students will prepare a 10-12 page **historiographical research project** or an **annotated lesson plan (300 pts)** on a theme in modern environmental history. Students will evaluate the state of the field on a select topic related to the modern environmental history with input and guidance from the instructor.

SCHEDULE AND READINGS

Part One: Ecological Change in the Early Modern World

Week 1: Biological Exchange June 6-10, 2022

J.R. McNeill, "The State of the Field of Environmental History"

A. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*

Weekly Discussion Board (10 pts)

Week 2: Climate Change in the Early Modern World June 13-17, 2022

G. Parker, *Global Crisis: War, Climate, and Catastrophe in the Seventeenth Century*

Selected Primary Sources

Weekly Discussion Board (15 pts)

Review Essay #1 Due (50 pts)

Part Two: Reorganizing Nature

Week 3: Gendered Nature June 20-13, 2022

C. Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England*

Selected Primary Sources

Weekly Discussion Board (25 pts)

Week 4: Food History June 27-13, 2022

J. McCann, *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop*

Selected Primary Sources

Weekly Discussion Board (25 pts)

Review Essay #2 Due (75 pts)

Part Three: Nature and the Nation State

Week 5: Disease and the Modern State July 5-8, 2022

A. Afkhami, *A Modern Contagion: Imperialism and Public Health in Iran's Age of Cholera*

Selected Primary Sources

Weekly Discussion Board (25 pts)

Midterm Exam Due (100 pts)

Week 6: Political Landscapes: The Case of Forestry July 11-15, 2022

C. Boyer, *Political Landscapes: Forests, Conservation, and Community in Mexico*

Selected Primary Sources

Weekly Discussion Board (25 pts)

Review Essay #3 Due (125 pts)

Part Four: The Industrial Age

Week 7: Second Nature: Cities in Environmental History July 18-22, 2022

W. Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*

Selected Primary Sources

Weekly Discussion Board (25 pts)

Week 8: Energy History July 25-29, 2022

J.R. McNeill, *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the 20th Century World*

Selected Primary Sources

Final Exam Due (200 pts)

Historiographical Review Essay or Annotated Lesson Plan Due (300 pts)