

HIS 209-01

World Environmental History

Fall 2012



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DESCRIPTION:

This course will use an environmental history approach to better understand the past 500 years of human history around the planet. We will read and discuss books, see films, and discuss selected topics in order to better understand the relationship between humans and nature. Humans have always been limited by the natural resources at their disposal while simultaneously developing new techniques and technologies to exploit nature. Nature has impacted the general direction of human history more than any other single factor, while humans have altered and impacted nature more than any other species. It is impossible to fully understand human history without including the role of nature.

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Upon successful completion of this course students should be able to:

1. Describe broad knowledge of world environmental history, especially after 1500.
2. Analyze, critique, and synthesize the writings of modern scholars (historiography)
3. Synthesize material read from a variety of sources to produce a larger analytical conclusion

In addition, the History Department identifies the following goals for all undergraduate history courses:

1. Analyze historical duration, succession, and change in terms of human agency and larger systems or structures in a wide variety of places and periods. [Historical Comprehension]
2. Conduct original research by investigating and interpreting primary and secondary sources. [Historical Research]
3. Use evidence-based reasoning to interpret the past coherently while developing and presenting an original argument, orally and in writing. [Historical Interpretation]

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:

Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World* (2nd ed., 2007)

Mark Kurlansky, *Salt: A World History* (2002)

Henrik Svensen, *The End is Nigh: A History of Natural Disasters* (paperback, 2012)

Jack Temple Kirby, *Mockingbird Song: Ecological Landscapes of the South* (2006)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Class meetings are devoted primarily to lecture, with periodic discussions of readings and videos seen in class. I use PowerPoint to supplement my lectures with outlines and images, but they are not posted on Blackboard nor online; you must take notes in class. My lectures will provide different material than is presented in the readings. Nearly every week (see schedule) there will be a quiz on the book readings and videos shown in class. Students are expected to attend all classes and to keep up with the reading assignments which will serve as the basis for quizzes. Attendance will be taken, and each absence above three (3) that is not excused by the Athletic Dept., Dean of Students, or medical doctor will result in one-half letter grade subtracted from the final course grade. ALL assignments must be completed; late assignments are NOT accepted. **Laptop computers are NOT allowed in class.**

PAPER ASSIGNMENT: BOOK REVIEW: Due Date: November 15

Choose a book from the appended list and write a critical and analytical book review of that book, using the following format:

Important: You are required to use this format, not any other. Please read it carefully before you write your report. You may write your report on any book on the list. You may need to use the Inter-Library Loan (ILL) service of the library if the book you want to review is not available in the library, or choose a different book. Please use double space and include word count.

I. Heading. Give your name, the date, and the complete standard bibliographic entry for the book (Author, Title, Place of Publication, Publisher, Year of Publication).

II. Summary. Write a short summary of what the author(s) said, giving the major ideas or points presented in the book. What is the argument of the author(s); what case is the author (or authors) making? The length of this summary should be about 600-700 words.

III. Comments. Make three or four distinct comments about the ideas raised or subjects discussed by the author(s). These must be written with complete sentences and paragraphs, and must be *numbered and titled*. The comments may be critical or appreciative; they may involve comparison with other works you have read or knowledge gained from sources other than the book being reviewed. Please do *not* comment on whether you liked the book or found it boring, and do not comment on purely literary points such as an author's style of writing. Comment and give your opinions on what the author(s) actually said; deal with the substance of the ideas. Each comment should average about 300-400 words. Please note: **The average length of the report would be about 2000 words.** *Please check your word count and note it at the end of the report.*

GRADING SUMMARY:

Weekly Quizzes on Readings and Films 5% each =	45%
Writing Assignment: Book Review	20%
Final Exam	<u>35%</u>
	100%

LETTER GRADES assigned as follows:

97-100	A+
93-96	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
<60	F

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY: Each student is required to sign the Academic Integrity Policy on all major work submitted for the course. Refer to the UNCG *Undergraduate Bulletin*. Plagiarism (to take the work of another and present it as your own) is absolutely not allowed and will be punished according to UNCG guidelines.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

UNCG Writing Center

Location: 3211 MHRA

<http://www.uncg.edu/eng/writingcenter/>

From the Writing Center website: “The purpose of the Writing Center is to enhance the confidence and competence of student writers by providing free, individual assistance at any stage of any writing project. Staff consultants are experienced writers and alert readers, prepared to offer feedback and suggestions on drafts of papers, help students find answers to their questions about writing, and provide one-on-one instruction as needed.”

SCHEDULE:

WEEK ONE: Big Pictures

(8/21-8/23)

Course introduction

What does nature have to do with human history?

The Role of Climate & the Rise of Agriculture

Reading: Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, Preface & Introduction

WEEK TWO: Origins of the Modern World & Trade

(8/28-8/30)

The World ca. 1400

The Indian Ocean and China

Reading: Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, Chapters 1 & 2

Film Clip: China's Greatest Fleet & Biggest Blunder:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7NzWPH5FioY&feature=related>

9/4: Quiz on Week 2 Readings and Films

WEEK THREE: The Columbian Exchange

(9/4-9/6)

Impacts in the Americas, Europe, and Beyond

Reading: Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, Chapter 3

Film: America Before Columbus

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brSPQ7sUE84>

9/11: Quiz on Week 3 Readings and Films

WEEK FOUR: The Industrial Revolution & Energy

(9/11-9/13)

Reading: Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, Chapters 4 & 5

Film: The Factory and Marketplace Revolution

9/18: Quiz on Week 4 Readings and Films

WEEK FIVE: Urban Environments and Industrialization

(9/18-9/20)

Reading: Kurlansky, *Salt*, Part 1

Film: The Urban Explosion

9/25: Quiz on Week 5 Readings and Films

WEEK SIX: Colonialism and Environmental Exploitation
(9/25-9/27)

Case Studies such as the Irish Potato Famine, Opium Wars, and more
Reading: Kurlansky, *Salt*, Part 2

10/2: Quiz on Week 6 Reading

WEEK SEVEN: 20th Century Issues, part 1
(10/2-10/4)

Massive Development Projects
Agriculture
Reading: Kurlansky, *Salt*, Part 3
Film: Food Inc.

10/9: Quiz on Week 7 Readings and Films

WEEK EIGHT: 20th Century Issues, part 2
(10/9-10/11)

Over-consumption
Pollution

Reading: Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, Chapter 6 & Conclusion

Film: The End of the Line (excerpts)

Film Clip: The Minamata Disaster (Japan): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ihFkyPv1jtU>

Film Clip: Chernobyl Disaster (Russia):

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rvAJ_u3Q0Hw&feature=fvwrel

(10/16) **No class – Fall Break**

(10/18) Invasive Plant & Animal Species

Start reading Svensen, *The End is Nigh: A History of Natural Disasters*

Film Clips: Darwin's Nightmare (Tanzania): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VK9v3ioiYBU> &

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JVMILU0Hmw>

WEEK NINE: "Natural" Disasters
(10/23-10/25)

What is Natural about a Natural Disaster?

Case Studies

Reading: Svensen, *The End is Nigh: A History of Natural Disasters* Preface - Chapter 5

Film Clip: Worst Natural Disasters of the Past 100 Years:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fW2qCK0I6cw>

10/30: Quiz on Week 8 & 9 Readings and Films

WEEK TEN: The Case of New Orleans
(10/30-11/1)

The Flood of 1849

Hurricane Katrina

Reading: Svendsen, *The End is Nigh: A History of Natural Disasters* Chapter 6 – Epilogue

Film: Drowning New Orleans

11/6: Quiz on Week 10 Readings and Films

WEEK ELEVEN: The Rise of Environmentalism
(11/6-11/8)

The United States and Worldwide

Guest Lecture: Dr. William Markham, Director of Environmental Studies at UNCG, on environmental organizations in Germany and Cameroon

Start Reading: Kirby, *Mockingbird Song*

WEEK TWELVE: Bringing It Home: The South, environmentally speaking
(11/13-11/15)

Examples from Southern History

Reading: Kirby, *Mockingbird Song*, Prologue – Chapter 3

11/15: Paper Due Date

WEEK THIRTEEN
(11/20-11/22) **No class – Thanksgiving Break**

Reading: Kirby, *Mockingbird Song*

11/27: Quiz on *Mockingbird Song*

WEEK FOURTEEN: Saving Earth
(11/27-11/29)

Further Discussion of the South

Is Sustainability Possible?

Film: Dirty Business (on the coal industry & alternative energy)

Reading: Kirby, *Mockingbird Song*, Chapter 4 – Epilogue

December 6 @ 12:00 noon: Final Exam