

# HIS 209-02: World Environmental History

Spring 2015

M,W 2:00-3:15 / BRYN 111



Professor Greg O'Brien

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Office Hours: By appointment – email me to set up a meeting

## **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 and articles, see films, and lecture on 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.

**GRADUATE ASSISTANT:** Ms. Melanie Staley, MA student in History, will be the graduate assistant in this course and will help with grading, lecturing and other class duties. Her email address is: [mastaley@uncg.edu](mailto:mastaley@uncg.edu).

**STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES:**

This course satisfies a number of UNCG curriculum markers (ENV, GHP, GMO, GN, and IGS), some of which require specific learning outcomes.

**Historical Perspectives (GHP)** Students use an historical approach to a specific region and period to explore the context of events (social structure, economics, political systems, culture, or beliefs), evaluate evidence and divergent interpretations, and communicate historical ideas in writing. All GHP courses must address the following Student Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Use a historical approach to analyze and contextualize primary and secondary sources representing divergent perspectives. (GHP1)
2. Use evidence to interpret the past coherently, orally and/or in writing. (GHP2)

**Global Non-Western (GN)** In a course in any subject, students focus on the interconnections among regions of the world other than North America, Great Britain, and continental Europe, interpret and evaluate information on diverse ecologies, human societies, artistic achievements, or political systems, and gain sensitivity to cultural differences on a global scale. All GN courses must address the following Student Learning Outcomes.

At the completion of this course, the student will be able to:

1. Find, interpret, and evaluate information on diverse cultures. (GN1)
2. Describe interconnections among regions of the world. (GN2)
3. Use diverse cultural frames of reference and alternative perspectives to analyze issues. (GN3)

The History Department identifies the following **learning goals for all history majors**:

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] (HIS1)
2. Conduct original research by investigating and interpreting primary and secondary sources. [Historical Research] (HIS2)
3. Use evidence-based reasoning to interpret the past coherently while developing and presenting an original argument, orally and in writing. [Historical Interpretation] (HIS3)

**REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS:**

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

Marco Armiero and Lise Sedrez, eds., *A History of Environmentalism: Local Struggles, Global Histories* (Bloomsbury, 2014)

**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; take notes in class. My lectures will sometimes overlap with the materials you are reading about at that point in the course, but they also provide different material than is presented in the readings. Students are expected to attend all classes and to keep up with the reading assignments. Reading assignments will provide the basis for short summary papers throughout the semester and for the mid-term and final exams.

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, tablets, phones, and any other electronic devices are NOT allowed in class – see me if you have a medical or other exception.**

**SUMMARY OF GRADED ASSIGNMENTS:**

Map Quizzes (4)	(2.5% each)	= 10%
Summary Papers (4)	(5% each)	= 20%
Comparative Environmentalisms Paper		= 20%
Mid-term Exam		= 20%
<u>Final Exam</u>		<u>= 30%</u>
TOTAL		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

**MAP QUIZZES:** You will complete four map quizzes on various areas of the world. Geography is a key component of both historical understanding and environmental awareness; therefore you will learn at least the basics of world geography as part of this course. A study guide of place terms and study maps will be provided. (GN1, HIS1)

**SUMMARY PAPERS:** For the first two-thirds of the semester you will see at least one article listed among the readings for each week. Choose four of these readings and provide a 1-2 page, double-spaced summary of the article. Your summary should include: your name, the date you finish the paper, the title and author of the article, the main thesis of the article and at least two examples that the author used to support his/her thesis. In other words, what is the article about and what argument is the author making? What does the author want you to learn from his/her article? Each article is available through the online academic article databases of the UNCG Library, especially the J-Stor database. As a UNCG student, you can access the articles

online at any time to read or print. The papers you choose to summarize are due at the start of class on the Wednesday of the week for which that article is assigned reading. No late papers are accepted. I recommend that you complete these four papers early in the semester. Consult the grading rubric. (GHP1, GHP2)

**COMPARATIVE ENVIRONMENTALISMS PAPER:** This paper is based on the essays in Marco Armiero and Lise Sedrez, eds., *A History of Environmentalism: Local Struggles, Global Histories*. Choose three of the nine chapters and write a paper comparing the environmental issues/problems in each of your three chosen locations and how citizens there are attempting to deal with the issues. Your paper should have introductory and concluding paragraphs, full explanations of the environmental problems and attempts to solve them in each area, and analysis by you comparing and contrasting each of your three case studies. Are different countries experiencing similar environmental problems - why (or why not)? Could a solution being pursued in one country be applicable to helping solve an environmental problem in another country, for example? Or is each country experiencing a unique problem that will require a unique solution, and if so why? The paper should be around 5-7 double-spaced pages. Consult the grading rubric. (GN1, GN2, GN3, HIS2, HIS3)

**EXAMS:** Exams will consist of Identifications and short essay questions. Any material you encounter as part of this class—lectures, book and article readings, and films—will appear in some fashion on the exam. The final exam is not cumulative but is longer than the midterm exam. A study guide will be provided for each exam. (GHP1, GHGP2, HIS1, HIS3)

**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* (<http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/academic-integrity-policy/>). 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: Introduction

(1/12-1/14)

What does nature have to do with human history?

The Rise of Agriculture

Reading: Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, Preface & IntroductionArticle: J. R. McNeill, "Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History," *History and Theory* Vol. 42, No. 4, (Dec., 2003), pp. 5-43.

WEEK TWO: The Role of Climate

**No class on 1/19 for MLK, Jr. Day – UNCG Holiday**

(1/21)

Reading: Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, Chapter 1Article: Wallace S. Broecker, "Was the Medieval Warm Period Global?" *Science* Vol. 291, No. 5508 (Feb. 23, 2001), pp. 1497-1499

WEEK THREE: Origins of the Modern World &amp; Trade

(1/26-1/28)

The Indian Ocean and China &amp; the Impact of Global Trade, ca. 1400

Reading: Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, Chapter 2Article: William D. Phillips Jr., "Africa and the Atlantic Islands Meet the Garden of Eden: Christopher Columbus's View of America," *Journal of World History* Vol. 3, No. 2 (Fall, 1992), pp. 149-164.**1/28 Map Quiz #1 on Major Land Masses and Bodies of Water**

WEEK FOUR: The Columbian Exchange

(2/2-2/4)

Impacts in the Americas, Europe, and Beyond

Reading: Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, Chapter 3Article: Paula De Vos, "The Science of Spices: Empiricism and Economic Botany in the Early Spanish Empire," *Journal of World History*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Dec., 2006), pp. 399-427.

Related Film: America Before Columbus

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=brSPQ7sUE84>**2/4 Map Quiz #2 on Atlantic Basin**

WEEK FIVE: The Industrial Revolution &amp; Energy

(2/9-2/11)

Reading: Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, Chapter 4Article: Matthew Osborn, "The Weirdest of All Undertakings": The Land and the Early Industrial Revolution in Oldham, England," *Environmental History* vol. 8, no. 2 (2003): 246-269.

Film: The Factory and Marketplace Revolution

WEEK SIX: Urban Environments and Industrialization  
(2/16-2/18)

Reading: Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, Chapter 5

Article: Joel A. Tarr, "Searching for a "Sink" for an Industrial Waste: Iron-Making Fuels and the Environment," *Environmental History Review*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (Spring, 1994), pp. 9-34

Film: The Urban Explosion

### **2/18 Map Quiz #3 on Major Cities of the World**

WEEK SEVEN: Colonialism and Environmental Exploitation  
(2/23-2/25)

Case Studies such as the Irish Potato Famine & the Opium Wars

Reading: Articles:

1. Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert and David Schecter, "The Environmental Dynamics of a Colonial Fuel-Rush: Silver Mining and Deforestation in New Spain, 1522 to 1810," *Environmental History*, vol. 15, no. 1 (2010): 94-119.
2. Thaddeus Sunseri, "Reinterpreting a Colonial Rebellion: Forestry and Social Control in German East Africa, 1874-1915," *Environmental History*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Jul., 2003), pp. 430-451.

### **2/25 Map Quiz #4 on Asia & Middle East Countries**

WEEK EIGHT: Review & Mid-term Exam  
(3/2-3/4)

### **3/4 Mid-term Exam**

### **3/9-3/13 UNCG Spring Break**

SECOND HALF OF COURSE: 20<sup>th</sup> Century

WEEK NINE: Massive Development Projects & Agriculture  
(3/16-3/18)

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

Article: David A. Sonnenfeld, "Mexico's "Green Revolution," 1940-1980: Towards an Environmental History," *Environmental History Review*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Winter, 1992), pp. 28-52.

Film: Food Inc.

WEEK TEN: Over-Consumption & Pollution  
(3/23-3/25)

Reading: Armiero and Sedrez, eds., *A History of Environmentalism*, Chapters 6 & 9

Article: Gaim Kibreab, "Property Rights, Development Policy and Depletion of Resources: The Case of the Central Rainlands of Sudan, 1940s-1980s," *Environment and History*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (February 2001), pp. 57-108

WEEK ELEVEN: "Natural" Disasters  
(3/30-4/1)

What is Natural about a Natural Disaster?

Case Studies

Reading: Armiero and Sedrez, eds., *A History of Environmentalism*, Introduction & Chapter 1

Article: Shujh Cao, Yushang Li, and Bin Yang, "Mt. Tambora, Climatic Changes, and China's Decline in the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of World History* vol. 23, no. 3 (Sept. 2012), pp. 587-607

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

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

WEEK TWELVE: Invasive Plant & Animal Species / The Rise of Environmentalism  
(4/6-4/8)

Reading: Armiero and Sedrez, eds., *A History of Environmentalism*, Chapters 2 & 7

Article: James Boyce, "Canine Revolution: The Social and Environmental Impact of the Introduction of the Dog to Tasmania," *Environmental History*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Jan., 2006), pp. 102-129.

WEEK THIRTEEN: Conservation & National Parks & Eco-tourism  
(4/13-4/15)

Reading: Armiero and Sedrez, eds., *A History of Environmentalism*, Chapters 4 & 5

WEEK FOURTEEN: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Concerns: Global Warming & more  
(4/20-4/22)

Reading Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World*, Conclusion

Armiero and Sedrez, eds., *A History of Environmentalism*, Chapters 3 & 8

WEEK FIFTEEN

**4/27 Comparative Environmentalisms Papers Due**

**Wednesday, May 6, 12pm-3pm: FINAL EXAM**