

HISTORY 205CS: The World Environment

Fall 2017

Dr. Brad Snow: bdsnow65@gmail.com.

Office: Wilson 2-150

Office Hours: Tuesdays: 5:00-6:00; Thursdays, 5:00-6:00, or by appointment.

Course Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6:10 – 7:25 in Wilson 1-130

Course Description: This course will center on the inextricable but ever-evolving relationship between global society and culture and non-human nature, with a primary concentration on roughly the past 600 years. We will explore the ways in which human societies have both shaped the natural environment and been shaped by it, with an eye to the ideas, attitudes and material and social conditions that have molded this relationship. Among the major themes that we, and the scholarly texts with which we will engage, will address in this course are: the relationship between the economic commodification of parts of the natural world and the survival or extinction of various species of flora and fauna (e.g., coffee beans, wolves, cod); the connection between insects, disease, medicine and attempts at imperial colonization; the relationship between modernity, industrial capitalism and environmental pollution; and the globalization of environmental risks and rewards in the 20th and 21st Centuries.

The reading and analysis of written materials lie at the heart of the study of history and both are central to this course. The course will be largely text-driven, meaning that the reading of the assigned course texts (11 books) will be absolutely central to everything else that happens in the course. I expect you to **closely read** all of the assigned texts, think critically about them, and come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned for that day. If you are not prepared to read the assigned course texts when they are due (i.e., before coming to class) and **attend the class regularly** (i.e., no more than two unexcused absences for the course), I would suggest that you drop the course now. Attendance and preparation are of critical importance both to your personal success in this course and to the success of the class as a group endeavor.

Course Requirements:

Group-Led Book Discussions (10%): In addition to our course textbook (Marks), we will read ten books in this course. Small groups of students (2-3) will be responsible for leading one class discussion of each of these books and for preparing a concise (1-2 pages) written summary and evaluation of the book. Every student will get a chance to participate in this fun-filled activity! It is worth 10% of your total course grade.

Papers (40%): There will be two short essay (4-6 page) assignments. They are due, respectively, in class on **Tuesday, 10/17** and **Tuesday, 11/28**. The essay assignments will require you to synthesize and analyze the readings and class discussions and make cogent, well-supported arguments about them. Late papers are accepted, but only up to five class days (Monday through Friday) following the due date of the assignment. Late papers lose 10% of their initial potential value for every day they are late (i.e., a paper that is five class days late would start with a grade of 50%). The essays each are worth 20% of your total course grade.

Class Participation (20%): Based upon your course attendance and the quantity and quality of your participation in class discussion, this is worth 20% of your total course grade. If, based upon a lack of satisfactory participation by the class in discussion of the readings, I deem it necessary, I will conduct unannounced ‘pop’ quizzes. Grades from such quizzes would make up a portion of the class participation grade.

Final Exam (30%): There is an essay-style, take-home final exam that will be given out in class during the week prior to finals. It will be due in class at the beginning of your scheduled final examination (**Tuesday, December 12th at 6:10 p.m.**) and is worth 30% of the total course grade.

Learning Objectives and Desired Outcomes:

- 1) Students will engage meaningfully with some of the major issues and problems in the fields of environmental and global history.
- 2) Students will further develop their reading comprehension, essay writing, class discussion, textual analysis and critical thinking skills.
- 3) Students will develop and/or build upon their understanding of the historical cultural factors that have shaped the non-human ‘natural’ world and of the principal ways in which the non-human ‘natural’ world has molded human culture and society.
- 4) Students will develop an understanding of the major ways in which first the Agricultural Revolution and then the still-ongoing Industrial Revolution have, each in turn, altered the relationship between the human and the non-human worlds, and wrought profound changes on both.
- 5) Students will develop an understanding of significant ways in which globalization has altered the relationship between human civilization and the non-human (‘natural’) world and of the principal ways in which globalization has altered human societies and cultures across the globe.
- 6) Students will develop a comprehension of how global environmental challenges that have been wrought by human civilization (e.g., species extinction, weather problems related to climate change) have come to affect not only non-human nature but also human civilization.

Plagiarism: Presenting the work of another as one’s own without proper acknowledgement – plagiarism – will not be tolerated. The same is true for other forms of cheating. Plagiarism, and other types of cheating, will result in an automatic zero for the assignment and will be turned over to the University for further action.

Assigned Books:

- 1) *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Environmental Narrative* (2015, 3rd edition), Robert B. Marks, Rowan & Littlefield, 978-1-4422-1240-4.
- 2) *The Lost Wolves of Japan* (2005 edition), Brett L. Walker, University of Washington Press, 13: 978-0-295-98814-6.
- 3) *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (2014 edition), Elizabeth Kolbert, Henry Holt & Company, 978-0-8050-9299-8.
- 4) *Mass Destruction: The Men and Giant Mines That Wired America and Scarred the Planet* (2009 hardcover edition), Timothy J. LeCain, Rutgers University Press, 978-0-8135-4529-5.
- 5) *The Anthropocene: The Human Era and How It Shapes Our Planet* (2014), Christian Schwarger, Synergetic Press, 978-0-9077-9155-3.
- 6) *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean* (2010), J. R. McNeill, Cambridge University Press, 978-0-521-45910-5.
- 7) *Seeking Refuge: Birds and Landscapes of the Pacific Flyway* (2010), Robert M. Wilson, University of Washington Press, 978-0-295-99002-6.
- 8) *Visit Sunny Chernobyl and Other Adventures in the World's Most Polluted Places* (2012), Andrew Blackwell, Rodale Books, 978-1-60529-445-2.
- 9) *Living with Lead: An Environmental History of Idaho's Coeur d'Alenes* (2017), Bradley D. Snow, University of Pittsburgh Press, 978-0-8229-6448-3.
- 10) *Cod: A Biography of the Fish That Changed the World* (1998), Mark Kurlansky, Penguin Books, 0-14-02.7501-0
- 11) *Uncommon Grounds: The History of Coffee and How It Transformed Our World* (2010), Mark Pendergrast, Basic Books, 978-0-465-01836-9.

Course Schedule:

Week 1 (8/28-9/1): Tuesday, hand out syllabus, course overview; Thursday, Marks, *ix-40*

Week 2 (9/4-8): Tuesday, Marks, 41-96; Thursday, no class

Week 3 (9/11-15): Tuesday, Pendergrast, *xi-214*; Thursday, finish Pendergrast (**Group 1**).

Week 4 (9/18-22): Tuesday, Kurlansky, 1-143; Thursday, Kurlansky, 144-233 (**Group 2**).

Week 5 (9/25-29): Tuesday, Marks, 97-125, Walker *xi-95*; Thursday, 96-157.

Week 6 (10/2-6): Tuesday, Walker, 158-234 (**Group 3**); Thursday, Wilson, *vii-98*.

Week 7 (10/9-13): Tuesday, Wilson, 99-172 (**Group 4**); Thursday, no class.

Week 8 (10/16-20): Tuesday, **first essay due**; Thursday, McNeill, xv-87.

Week 9 (10/23-27): Tuesday, McNeill, 89-191; Thursday, McNeill, 195-314 (**Group 5**).

Week 10 (10/30-11/3): Tuesday, LeCain, 1-107; Thursday, LeCain, 108-230 (**Group 6**).

Week 11 (11/6-10): Tuesday, Blackwell, xi-155; Thursday, Blackwell, 156-299 (**Group 7**).

Week 12 (11/13-11/17): Tuesday, Snow 3-110; Thursday, Snow, 111-198 (**Group 8**).

Week 13 (11/20-24): Tuesday, no class. Thursday, no class. Happy Thanksgiving!

Week 14 (11/27-12/1): Tuesday, **second essay due**, Kolbert, 1-147; Thursday, Kolbert, 148-270 (**Group 9**).

Week 15 (12/4-8): Tuesday, Schwagerl, vii-105; Thursday, Schwagerl, 106-227 (**Group 10**), **hand out take-home final exam**.

Week 16 (12/11-15): Final Exams Week. Your final exam essays are due in class **at 6:10 p.m. on Tuesday, December 12th**. **Late exams will not be accepted.**