

HIST 407/507: ENVIRONMENT AND COLONIALISM

Winter Term 2014 – T 2:00-4:50pm – McKenzie 240B – CRN 24028/24051

Version 1.00, 4 Jan 2014

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Overview and Objectives

Environmental history has, in the last few decades, become one of the most vibrant new research fields. At the same time, the term “environment” has broadened greatly, in part because it is impossible to define that term in a truly exclusive manner against the backdrop of this globalizing age and our recognition of humanity’s ecological and environmental footprint around the world. Where does the “human” end and the “natural” begin? How do we understand, categorize, and interact with the non-human features of our world? What effect do we have on those features, and they on us? Why and how have these processes changed over time? Can we divide them by era or category meaningfully?

All of those questions have special resonance if we consider the context of colonialism, primarily from Europe and the US, between the 16th and 20th centuries. The advent of colonial domination led to global integration and inequity of a breadth and depth unknown before, with dramatic effects on the landscapes and people that integration touched. From the reckless integration of biological zones to attempts at “conservation,” not to mention the use and promotion of certain resources with the denial of resources to others, the exercise of colonial power and the expansion of a globalizing, and industrializing, order were indelibly written on environments. All over the world, and even at empire’s metropolitan centers, the arrival of colonial rule or its proxies had vast effects. Colonialism was a global and globalizing process, so our primary organization is really thematic despite the weight the British empire exerts in the literature. The permutations in the relationship between environments and colonial power varied widely around the world, which permits seminar members great freedom to pursue their interests and share their knowledge.

The primary purpose of this course, as with all HIST 407/507 seminars, is for you to learn how to craft a major analytical research paper (5000-7500 words, not including notes and bibliography, but a bit longer for 507 seminarians) that makes central use of primary sources. Our seminar schedule is therefore geared towards giving us a balance between common readings, methodological tutelage, and writing with critical discussion of our ongoing work. We cannot cover everything, but completing this course will give you an understanding of general themes at the intersection of colonial and environmental histories, knowledge of the particular case you choose to write about, and the skills necessary to research and write analytical papers on further historical subjects. In addition, this course can meet the 50% threshold for the African Studies minor and may serve as credit towards an Africa concentration in the History major, though in either case you must write your major paper on an African topic and let me know about this at the outset.

A Note About This Syllabus

Everything on this syllabus is important; you need to read it carefully and refer to it frequently. You are solely responsible for knowing and understanding its contents. The paper copy you receive at the beginning of the course is, ideally, the final version, but the unexpected can intrude and changes may be made. The version posted on Blackboard at any given time should be the latest version.

Requirements and Grading

Participation is about 40% of your grade. This includes discussion in class and Blackboard questions as well as group work connected to your paper drafts (see the schedule and the assignment list at the end of this syllabus, pp. 8-9). If you are silent and/or unengaged with the seminar, or disregard these exercises, you can receive a low or even failing grade no matter how inspired your other work may be.

The proposal for the major paper, due in the third week of classes, comprises about 10% of your final grade. This proposal is expected to identify a topic, propose a basic thesis, and identify at least ten sources (three primary), in proper style as per Rampolla (see **page 9** of this syllabus). Although only a small part of the grade in itself, failure to tender this proposal on time will result in a failing grade for the seminar. Failure to tender the rough draft for comment in week 9 on time will also result in a failing mark.

The biggest piece of your grade (~50%) is the major research paper based on primary sources. This paper must be a polished piece of writing that is correct in grammar and style (formatting) to Rampolla's *Pocket Guide* or the *Chicago Manual of Style* (16th edition) on which it is based, using footnotes/endnotes and a bibliography. MLA, APA, and other styles will not be accepted from undergraduate members. Style will constitute 1/3 of the paper grade. **Your seminar grade however will not exceed your final paper grade.**

Unless you are prevented from completing coursework because of verified emergency or illness, no excuses or extensions will be given, and no late work will be accepted. The due dates in this course are set out on day one, so you have all term to prepare for them. **Plan ahead.** Note: if you email your work, you alone are responsible for my receipt of it; if the email gets lost or you send the wrong file, I will grade what I receive accordingly.

Course Texts and Reading Suggestions

There is only one "required text," a general overview to writing history and Chicago Manual style:

- Rampolla, Mary Lynn. *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*. 7th ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012. ISBN 978-0-3126-1041-8.

Our thematic interest and broad scope suggests that chapters and articles will serve us best. These are given on the following pages in connection with the relevant week. **All of these readings will be available on Blackboard**, and should be obtainable electronically at the requisite time via links in the "syllabus" section of the course site; let me know as soon as possible if you have any problems. **Printing out these selections and bringing them to seminar is your responsibility, and is your "book cost."**

Each "reading week" has three distinct (albeit relatively short) readings, and it is likely to be confusing if you simply read them in rapid succession. Therefore I would strongly recommend schematizing your reading. Structure your personal summary around these questions, or some variation, for each selection:

- What is the main point of this article or chapter? What is the author's central thesis?
- Does the author situate her or his work within a broader discussion among historians? How?
- What are the author's assumptions, and what evidence do they use or omit?
- What things are missing? What is weighted or slighted? (Does the author convince you?)
- How does this relate, directly or abstractly, with the other readings for the week? With other weeks' themes and readings?

Considering these questions as you read will raise questions in your own mind that will interest the seminar as a whole, and they can help you to refine your own writing later.

Graduate Students in History 507 (CRN 24051)

Graduate students enrolled in History 507 will have modified requirements, most notably a longer paper (7000-9000 words) that deals more heavily with a particular subject's historiography or that engages in comparative or broader contextual analysis. The finished paper should be nearly publishable in quality. There will also be additional readings and meetings that we will arrange at relevant times and tailor to your own research strengths and interests. Graduate students are still beholden to all 407 assigned work.

Other Policy Statements:

100% Attendance: Because this is a participatory seminar that depends on your input, attendance is required at all class meetings and events; the standard penalty for absence works out to about one full letter grade for each instance. We meet only once per week, so even one absence affects the whole seminar; naturally if you are missing for reasons beyond your control (health, weather, family emergency) UO policy covers you. Please inform me immediately if you anticipate an absence, not so much to ameliorate any penalties, but to allow me to keep you abreast of developments in the course and assure that I receive any work that is due. Late arrival and early departure also have a detrimental effect on the seminar.

Special Needs and Gizmos: Although I'm otherwise a technophile, some gadgets are annoying and distracting not only for the user but for the people around her or him. They also create a physical barrier that stifles conversation. Therefore I request that you leave laptop computers in their bags (print out your notes) and turn off or silence your phones. Of course the rule is not absolute. If you wish to show images or play music from a laptop, or look something up, just ask me. I am however OK with tablets or flat e-readers on a trial basis, should you prefer to use those for your readings instead of paper.

If you do have physical or learning differences that require special accommodations such as a laptop for general use, official notice from the Accessible Education Center (see <http://aec.uoregon.edu>) is required. I will do everything in my power to address all documented needs, but I cannot make exceptions without it.

Academic Honesty: The information in this subsection should go without saying, but unfortunate recent experience and surprising unfamiliarity with issues of academic honesty among students has prompted me to include it in all of my syllabi. I refer you, for your information, to Student Conduct and Community Standards at the Office of Student Life:

<http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/tabid/68/Default.aspx>

You will find there a number of relevant headings to policies on academic honesty and conduct. In our case, inadvertent plagiarism will be the greatest source of peril. If you are unsure of what plagiarism is, you can consult Rampolla's relevant selections (ch. 6, 98-105), or the UO's own particular guide to the subject:

<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>

It is a gross understatement to say that academic dishonesty will adversely affect your grade. At the very least, you will receive an automatic failing mark for the course. However, my personal view of the matter is that plagiarists have no place in an institution of higher learning. Therefore I always press for the *maximum* penalty for offenses of this nature, which means suspension or expulsion from the University. If you have any concerns or you're not sure whether something is plagiarism, ask me as soon as possible, *before* you turn it in for a grade. At the seminar level, there is no margin even for unintentional error on this point.

Everything Else: In all other matters, I default to the Duck Guide or the relevant Departmental policy. If you're not sure of something, please ask sooner rather than later!