

HIST 2283: Environmental History

Term: Fall 2013

Wednesdays 7:00 – 10:00

Location: Beveridge Arts Centre (BAC) 241

Instructor: Thomas Peace

Office Hours: Tuesdays/Thursdays 11:30-1:00; Wednesdays 5:30-6:30

Office Location: BAC 408

e-mail: tpeace@acadiu.ca (always use HIST 2283 in the subject line)

Phone: 585-1924

Contact Info: I encourage students to visit me during office hours, and will make appointments with those who have scheduling conflicts.

Course Description: This course investigates the relationships between humans and their environment, and how and why these relationships have changed over time. Topics of study include: theoretical and methodological approaches to environmental history; differing conceptions of the environment; the impact of industrialization; the spread of settlement, and resource exploitation; the changing nature of environmentalism; and other new directions.

Course Goal: To understand the environment as an object for historical study, balancing how humans have shaped and understood the natural world and how ecosystems (and built environments) have made an impact on human societies.

Learning Outcomes: At the end of this course students will be able to...

- Understand the basic philosophy of environmental history and become conversant with its basic themes and debates
- Evaluate primary and secondary sources through the lens of the environmental historian
- Discuss the historical roots of major environmental issues facing human society today

If you are a student with a documented disability who anticipates needing accommodations in this course, please inform me after you meet Jill Davies (902-585-1127) or Kathy O'Rourke (902-585-1823) in Disability Access Services, Student Resource Centre, lower floor of the Old SUB (Old Student Union Building).

Textbook:

Clive Ponting, *A New Green History of the World: The Environment and the Collapse of Great Civilizations*, (New York: Penguin, 2007).

Robert B. Marks, *The Origins of the Modern World: A Global and Ecological Narrative from the Fifteenth to the Twenty-First Century*, (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002)

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, 2nd ed. (New York: Hill & Wang, 2003)

Course Structure:

- i. **Reading Groups:** On the first day of class you will be asked to get into groups of six. Each week before class you will be responsible for meeting with your group to discuss that week's readings. We will begin each class with brief presentations

summarizing your discussions. It is expected that a different member of your group will provide a summary of your group's activities each week. This presentation will factor into your participation grade.

- ii. Technology:** Please bring a laptop computer (with Ethernet Cord) as well as a pen and paper to every class. Although we may not use the computer during every course, it will be helpful from time to time. This course will use ACORN on a regular basis. There you will find links to useful resources for the course as well as the additional readings. You will be introduced to this web-based resource on the first day of class.
- a. **Top Hat Monocle** – This course will use an interactive clicker system both in class and in preparation for class. You will need to purchase a \$20 subscription from Top Hat Monocle for access to this system. In class questions can be answered using your computer or cell phone through text messaging. Our classroom is not wireless. If using your computer, it is important that you bring an ethernet cord.
- i. The URL to subscribe: <https://www.tophatmonocle.com/register/student/>
 - ii. The URL to use for this course is <https://app.tophat.com/e/531189>
 - iii. The phone number to send text messages is: (647) 931-6504
- b. **A warning about using a laptop regularly in class (i.e. for note taking).** In university we focus on making evidence-based decisions. While you are welcome to use a laptop to take notes, please consider the following information *before* doing so. A recent study conducted by researchers at McMaster University suggests that multi-tasking in class can lower your mark by a full letter grade. Importantly, sitting near someone multi-tasking on a laptop has a similar effect, whether you consciously realize it or not! The issue here seems to be multi-tasking, not the computers themselves (an important difference). Nonetheless, if you are going to take notes on your laptop, I ask that you sit in the back to rows of the lecture hall. To read about this study visit: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/technology/story/2013/08/14/technology-laptop-grades.html?cmp=rss>

iii. Creating a safe and equitable classroom

This class has been designed to spread the workload over the term and provide a variety of options for students to contribute and participate. Challenges, however, can arise. Below are two structures that will hopefully help us address any problems quickly and efficiently:

- a. **Extenuating Circumstances:** As a course based on lecture and readings, regular attendance, completion of the assigned readings and submission of assignments is critically important for obtaining a good grade. If there is any reason that you think you will not be able to meet the requirements of the course please visit me during my office hours to discuss possible strategies that will help you succeed. Any requests for extended deadlines, or consideration for absences of over two weeks, should be accompanied by written documentation (i.e. a doctor's note, a letter from University Counselling & Disability Services, etc...).
- b. **Omsbudspeople:** This course will have a male and female omsbudsperson. These people will bring forward to the course director concerns from the class that students do not feel comfortable addressing directly. The omsbudspeople

will meet with the course director twice during each term to discuss how students are feeling in the course, issues that need to be addressed, and any other concerns that have been addressed to them. Ombudspeople can also e-mail the course director as concerns arise. Interested students should visit me before September 11th during my office hours. If there are more than one person for each position, candidates will submit a short 100-word biography indicating why they think that they would serve the class well in this capacity. These biographies will be circulated to the class. During the second week the ombudspeople will be selected by secret ballot voting.

iv. Assignments and grading: There are two assignments for the course:

1) Writing assignment 1: Reading the local environment

- **Goal:**
 1. To understand the complex interaction between humans and the environment around the Minas Basin and how this relationship has been historically constructed.
 2. To ensure that students have the basic written communication skills to succeed in this class.
- **Task:** From either the windows overlooking the Minas Basin in Wheelock Hall or Wolfville's waterfront park, spend some time examining and considering the local landscape. In what ways have humans shaped this environment? In what ways has our community been shaped by the environment?
 - i. After studying our local landscape, write a **700-word essay** answering the following question: How would an environmental historian approach the history of the eastern Annapolis Valley?
 - ii. All essays should have a thesis statement and draw on the content from the assigned readings for Sept 11 and the introductory lecture given on Sept 4 as well as draw on specific examples from your study of the local landscape.

2) Writing Assignment: An Environmental History of...

- **Goal:**
 - i. To develop and implement a research plan
 - ii. To develop an expertise about the historical implications of a specific environmental issue.
- **Task:**
 - i. **Part 1:** Annotated bibliography: Create an annotated bibliography outlining the sources you intend to use in writing your research paper. At the top of your bibliography you should clearly indicate a paper's working title, three research questions guiding your selection of source material, and a 250-word abstract.

An annotated bibliography is a list of sources (cited using the guidelines below) that includes short paragraphs (at least five sentences) below each entry explaining why each source is relevant to the topic being studied. The bibliography should include one archive where you might find

primary documents related to this subject; one book, two journal articles, and one reputable website.

ii. **Part 2: Research paper:** Write a **1500-word essay** on the history of an environmental issue that interests you. Be careful in picking your subject. This is a history assignment and should not be focused on public policy or science/mechanics behind an environmental issue (though both may relate to your work). Your papers should look at how the past has shaped your topic and how people may have approached your subject differently in the past. You should also be careful to pick a manageable topic. A history of climate change is not possible in 1,500 words, though a paper on the Little Ice Age is manageable. I also encourage you to consider local topics and to come in and discuss your plans during my office hours (that's what they are for).

iii. **IMPORTANT: Essays will not be marked if an annotated bibliography has not been submitted and received a passing grade (i.e. failures will be required to re-do the assignment).**

3) Mid-term Exam

- This will be an hour-long in-class test designed to evaluate your grasp of the course's content. It will include multiple choice and word identification in addition to a handful of short answer questions. It will draw on both the lectures and readings.

4) Final Exam

- The final exam will take place during the exam period. The first half of the exam will be similar to the mid-term, focusing on the content from the second half of the course. This will be followed by a single essay question that links together the course's themes and content, drawing heavily from the required texts.

iv. Key Due Dates:

- Writing Assignment 1: **September 17 (midnight)**
- Writing Assignment 2 Proposal: **Oct 1 (midnight)**
- Mid-term Exam: **October 16**
- Writing Assignment 2: **November 27**
- Final Exam: **TBA**

v. Overall Grade Breakdown:

- Attendance and participation: **15%**
- Writing Assignment 1: **10%**
- Writing Assignment 2: **30% (10% Proposal/20% Paper)**
- Mid-term Exam: **15%**
- Final Exam: **30%**

vi. *****Late Assignments:** Assignments will only be accepted one week after their due date. A paper will receive a 5% deduction for being less than 48 hours late and a 10%

deduction will be given after that. Extenuating circumstances can arise. If you need an extension, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor *well in advance of the due date* in order to make accommodation. If an emergency arises, please come prepared with documentation demonstrating your need for an exemption (i.e. a doctor's note). Generally, extensions will only be granted for health-related issues and other circumstances beyond your control.

- vii. **Format for Assignments:** All assignments should be submitted electronically as a file attachment via ACORN. *Use the course code, your student number and the due date separated by dashes as the file name* (i.e. HIST2283 - 1234567 - Aug 31 2012.doc). Papers should include a title page with your name, student number, title, course information and due date. The paper's content should be formatted to have one inch margins on all four sides and the text should be double spaced using 12 pt Times New Roman font. Please consult the **Turabian Manual of Style** for information about how to properly cite the primary and secondary sources used in your assignments.

Acadia's Academic Integrity Policy

(https://central.acadiau.ca/registrar/faculty_information/academic_integrity/)

Academic integrity demands responsible use of the work of other scholars. It is compromised by such practices as plagiarism and cheating.

Cheating is the copying or the use of unauthorized aids or the intentional falsification or invention of information in any academic exercise or the presentation of a single work in more than one course without the permission of the instructors involved. Plagiarism is the act of presenting the ideas or words of another as one's own. While it may be argued that few ideas are original, *instructors expect students to acknowledge the sources of ideas and expressions that they use in essays*. To represent them as self-created is dishonest and academically reprehensible. One may quote or paraphrase other writers if they have stated an idea strikingly, as evidence to support one's arguments or conclusions, or as a point against which to argue, but such borrowing should be used sparingly and always indicated in a footnote.

The aim of scholarship is to develop one's own ideas and research and only by trying to develop one's own thoughts and arguments will one mature academically. To provide adequate documentation is not only an indication of academic honesty, but also a courtesy enabling the instructor to consult sources with ease. Failure to do so constitutes plagiarism.

Furthermore, a student who knowingly helps another to commit an act of academic dishonesty is equally guilty. *A student who is uncertain whether or not a course of action might constitute plagiarism or cheating should seek in advance the advice of the instructor involved*.

Penalties are levied in relation to the degree of infraction of academic honesty. They range from requiring the student to re-do the piece of work, through failure on that piece of work, to failure in the course, and to dismissal from the University.

Procedures concerning infractions of academic integrity: Faculty members, following consultation with their director/head and dean, and the student involved, shall attempt to

determine the personal responsibility of the student and impose any penalties where appropriate. If the matter cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of both parties involved in the initial step, then the issue shall be referred to the Vice-President (Academic) who shall inform the student of his/her decision as to the student's personal responsibility.; If the student is found culpable, or admits culpability, then the Vice-President (Academic) shall inform the student of the penalty imposed. A student has the right to appeal the decision of the Vice-President (Academic) to the Senate Committee on Academic Discipline. Students have the right to have legal counsel when appearing before Senate Committee on Academic Discipline

Computing Services publishes policies for the use of university computer facilities, both hardware and software. Violation of these policies, or other abuse of university computer facilities, will be dealt with in the same manner of other forms of cheating or as a non-academic offence. Some violations may also lead to criminal prosecution. It is the students' responsibility to familiarize themselves with the Computing Services policies.

Procedures on complaints in other academic matters: The complainant should first attempt to resolve the matter with the instructor. If it cannot be so resolved, the complaint, preferable in writing, must be presented to the appropriate head of department or director of the school who will conduct an investigation and attempt a resolution. If the matter cannot be settled by the head/director, it shall be referred to the appropriate dean of faculty. Any complainant may at any time have the assistance of the academic commissioner of the Students' Union.

How to read this schedule:

Week #: General Topic for the Two Classes during the Week

- Readings to be completed in preparation for the week's lectures

Date of Tuesday Class: Lecture Subject

Date of Thursday Class: Lecture Subject

Course Schedule:

WEEK 1: September 4th: Course Introduction – What is Environmental History?

- Film: The Age of Stupid (2009)

WEEK 2: September 11th: Visit to the Library and Archives – Landscape Assignment

- David Lowenthal, 'Environmental History: from genesis to apocalypse', *History Today*, Volume 51, No.4, April 2001, pp 36-42.
- John McNeill, 'Observations on the nature and culture of environmental history', *History and Theory*, Theme Issue 42, December 2003, pp 5-43.

WEEK 3: September 18th: Approaches to Environment History

- Ponting, chapters 1 and 2
- Marks, introduction

***Opportunity for bonus marks: On Friday September 20th, Dr. Ian Mosby will be giving a public lecture in the KCIC auditorium on nutritional testing in residential schools. Attending this lecture will earn you a 1% bonus mark. To get the mark, you will need to e-mail me an answer to this question: Should we consider Dr. Mosby's lecture environmental history? Answers must be at least two sentences. Please use the subject heading: 'HIST 2283: Bonus Mark' in the subject line.

WEEK 4: September 25th: The Agricultural Revolution

- Ponting, chapters 3 and 4
- Marks, chapter 1

WEEK 5: October 2nd: Climate History

- Ponting, chapters 5 and 6

WEEK 6: October 9th: Migration, Empire and Colonization

- Ponting, chapters 7, 8, 9
- Marks, chapter 3

WEEK 7: October 16th: Midterm and Film: The Little Ice Age, Big Chill

WEEK 8: October 23rd: Ecological Imperialism I: Landscape

- Cronon, Preface - chapter 4

WEEK 9: October 30th: Ecological Imperialism II: Capitalism

- Cronon, chapters 5-8

WEEK 10: November 6th: Industrialization

- Ponting, chapters 11 and 12
- Marks, chapter 4

WEEK 11: November 13th: Urbanization

- Ponting, chapters 13 and 14

WEEK 12: November 20th: The Environmental Movement and Ecological Justice

- Ponting, chapters, 15 and 16
- Marks, chapter 5, conclusion

WEEK 13: November 27th: Course Summary and Review for Final Exam

- Ponting, chapter 17