History 508:364

Environmental History of Latin America

Fall 2008

Monday & Wednesday 7:40–9:00 pm

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Office Hours:
Monday 6:00–7:00 p.m.
Wednesday 6:30–7:30 p.m.
or by appointment

The mutual re-shaping of physical environment and human society in Latin America as a result of their continual interaction is the focus of this course. With an ambitious chronological framework, the course spans the relationship of pre-Colombian societies with their environments, and continues through contemporary considerations of globalization and “sustainable development.”

European contact with the Americas was the most dramatic man-made environmental event in human history. This course explores the role of environment in many inter-cultural clashes. It examines the perceptions that early European arrivals developed of the indigenous populations as falling within a continuum between the “animal” and “human” worlds, rather than clearly in either category. The impact of a new – European – population on the natural environment is also a subject of the course. Additional topics include the role of physical setting in defining racial categorization and national identity. We will consider the concepts at issue with each of these topics and explore specific historic experience in various settings throughout Latin America.

The course is organized chronologically, in three sections: the pre-colonial and colonial eras, the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century. At the conclusion of each section, there will be an essay examination, and a final exam will conclude the course.

Class sessions will include lectures, discussions, and visual materials. The readings and lectures for this course draw upon a very wide diversity of sources. Because the topic of the course covers a very long time period and large geography we will investigate selective themes in a variety of settings. Grades will be based on a take-home mid-term, a take final exam, two short papers and class participation.

A day or two before each class session, I will post a highly summarized outline of the issues that I expect each class to cover on the web page for this class. (You can get to this site by going through the links on my home page, see address above.) I intend for these very broad outlines to help you begin thinking about the issues that we will cover in class. (Or, if you miss class, give you some indication of what you miss.) You should not rely on these outlines as exhaustive descriptions for classes. And you should, especially, not rely on them as a substitute for class attendance. Depending on how any class session actually progresses, we may not cover the issues in the order that they appear; and we may use different words and phrases to cover the concepts.

Course Requirements

The requirements for the course (with their respective proportion of the final grade) are:

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<th>%grade</th>
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<tr>
<td>20%</td>
<td>2 Take-home mid-semester essays</td>
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<td>35%</td>
<td>Take-home final essays</td>
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<td>25%</td>
<td>Class participation – based on</td>
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<td>• participation in class discussions</td>
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<td>• short, unannounced, in-class writing exercises, based on readings assigned for the class session</td>
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<td>• participation in small group discussion sessions</td>
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Readings
No textbook has yet been written for this class. The following books are available at the Rutgers University Bookstore and the short readings are available through the on-line version of the syllabus.

Books:
Cook, D.N. *Born to Die*
Kane, J.; *Savages.*

Short Readings (articles and chapters available through direct links on my website):
Castro Herrera, C. *Environmental History (Made) in Latin America*
New York Times, 11 December 05 “A Record Amazon Drought”
d’Altroy, T.; “Andean Land Use at the Cusp of History” from Lentz (ed.) *Imperfect Balance* Ch. 13 (pp 357-391).

Cabeza de Vaca; *Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America*; Chs. 21-30 (pp. 60-81, of hard copy.)
de Léry, J.; *History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil*; Chs. 9 and 13 (pp. 69-77 and 100-111).
Cook, D.N. *Born to Die*; Introduction, Ch. 2 and Conclusion (pp. 1-14, 60-94 and 201-216).
Coe, S.D. & Coe M. D. *The True History of Chocolate* Ch. 4, “Encounter and Transformation” (pp. 107-124).
Melville, E. *A Plague of Sheep*; Chs. 4 and 6 (pp. 78-115; 151-166).
Fagan, B.; “Guano Happens” from *Floods, Famines and Emperors*; Ch.2 (pp. 23-38).
Slatta, R.; “The Pampa and Frontier Abundance” and “Man to Myth” from *Gauchos and the Vanishing Frontier*; Chs. 2 and 11 (pp, 17-30 and 180-192).
Sarmiento, D.F.; *Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrants; or Civilization and Barbarism*; Ch. 1 (pp. 25-39).
Darwin, Charles; *Voyage of the Beagle*; Chapters 4 and 8.
Peard, J.G.; “Race, Climate, Medicine: Framing Tropical Disorders” from *Race, Place and Medicine: The Idea of the Tropics in Nineteenth Century Brazilian Medicine*; Ch. 3 (pp. 81-108).
McCook, S.; “Giving Plants a Civil Status” and “Building Creole Science” from *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture and Environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940*; Chs. 2 and 3 (pp. 26-76).
Pérez. L.A.; “A Time of Tempests” and “Between the Storms” from *Hurricanes and the Transformation of Nineteenth Century Cuba*; Chs. 3 and 6 (pp. 57-82 and 139-155).
J. Hellman “Agricultural and Rural Development” and “The Countryside” from *Mexican Lives*, Chs. 5 and 6 (pp. 113-151.)
Wright, A. *The Death of Ramón González* Ch. 1 “The Death of Ramón González” pp.1-9.
Place, S.E. and Chase, J. “The Environment, Population and Urbanization” in Hillman (ed.) *Understanding Contemporary Latin America*, Ch. 8 (pp 209-235.)
Simon, J.; “The Sinking City” from *Endangered Mexico*; Introduction and Ch. 3 (pp. 1-6 and 60-90).
Ribeyro; *Marginal Voices*
Borges; “The Mythical Founding of Buenos Aires”
Sevcenko; “Peregrinations, Visions and the City”
Gates, M.; “Eco-Imperialism? Environmental Policy versus Everyday Practice in Mexico” from Phillips (ed.) *The Third Wave of Modernization*; Ch. 9 (pp 155-174).

On-line
History of Mexican environmental policy action (on-line)
Electronic resources

Students enrolled in the Environmental History of Latin America can access the class syllabus and class session outlines through the course website. Links to the on-line readings are inserted into the syllabus. I will post any changes to the syllabus as the semester progresses. I will also keep the outline updated.

You will submit your essays to my e-mail; they will be due before the due date’s scheduled class-time. I will insert any comments on your paper, and grade your essay from the file that you send, and then return it to you by e-mail as soon as I am finished. Remember that e-mail also records the time that you submit your file; I use that time-stamp to determine that you have submitted your paper on time.

This information is also available through the course site on Sakai. When you register for the course, you automatically receive access to the Sakai site. The syllabus is available through the “syllabus” link on the course site (on the left side of the page); you can get to the outline through the “web content” link. Through the semester, additional materials will appear on the Sakai site. These will include the mid-term and final essay assignments. Once in a while, I may alter assignments and readings. If that happens, I will post the new material to the course site and send an e-mail notice.

If you are unfamiliar with Sakai, go to the “Quick Guide for Site Members” for an introduction.

Please let me know about any problems you have with Sakai, and any suggestions that you have about how additional uses of the course site.
Note: link to class session outline

Introduction (2 classes; 8&10 Sept.)

Read: Price, M. “Latin America: A Geographic Preface” Understanding Contemporary Latin America, Ch. 2 [pp. 13-40])

Environmental History (Made) in Latin America Guillermo Castro Herrera;

A Record Amazon Drought

1. Contact: Pre-colonial and colonial experience (1 class; 15 Sept.)

Amerindian use of environment

Read: d’Altroy, T.; “Andean Land Use at the Cusp of History” from Lentz (ed.) Imperfect Balance Ch. 13 (pp 357-391).

Film clip from Legacy of the Incas

“European-ized” view of indigenous peoples and the natural world (2 classes; 17&22 Sept.)

Read: 1st class:

Cabeza de Vaca; Adventures in the Unknown Interior of America; Chs 21-30 (pp 60-81, of hard copy edition..) Note that if you use the on-line version, you can easily read more of the work – or you can page down to the assigned chapters.

De Léry; History of a Voyage to the Land of Brazil, Chs 9 & 13 (pp 69-77 and 100-111.)

2nd class:

J. Kane; Savages Part 1, “East” pp. 13-78

Environmental contact (2 classes; 24&29 Sept.)

Read

Cook, D.N. Born to Die; Introduction, Ch. 2 and Conclusion (pp. 1-14, 60-94 and 201-216).

Coe, S.D. and Coe M. D. The True History of Chocolate Ch. 4, “Encounter and Transformation” (pp. 107-124).

Use of environment for enrichment (1 class; 1 Oct.)

I will post questions for 1st paper after class.

Read: Melville, E. A Plague of Sheep; Chs. 4 and 6 (pp. 78-115; 151-166).

Class session for review/questions (1 class; 6 Oct.)

1st paper (based on 7 class sessions)
History 508:364  
Environmental History of Latin America  
Class Sessions


**Guano Happens**  
(1 Class; 8 Oct.)

**First paper is due by the beginning of class-time.**  
Read: B. Fagan; “Guano Happens” from *Floods, Famines and Emperors*, Ch. 2 (pp. 23-38.)  

**Frontiers**  
(1 class; 13 Oct.)

Read: R. Slatta; “The Pampa and Frontier Abundance” and “Man to Myth” from *Gauchos and the Vanishing Frontier*, Chs. 2 & 11 (pp. 17-30 and 180-192.)  
D.F. Sarmiento; *Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrants; or Civilization and Barbarism*; Ch. 1 (pp. 25-39).  
Darwin, Charles; *Voyage of the Beagle*; Chapters 4 and 8.

**Race, place & medicine**  
(2 classes; 15&20 Oct.)

Read: J. Peard; “Race, Climate, Medicine: Framing Tropical Disorders” from *Race Place and Medicine: The Idea of the Tropics in Nineteenth Century Brazilian Medicine* Ch. 3 (pp. 81-108.)

**Natural disasters**  
(1 class; 22 Oct.)

Read: Pérez. L.A.; “A Time of Tempests” and “Between the Storms” from *Hurricanes and the Transformation of Nineteenth Century Cuba*; Chs. 3 and 6 (pp. 57-82 and 139-155).

**Nature and State**  
(1 class; 27 Oct.)

Read: McCook, S.; “Giving Plants a Civil Status” and “Building Creole Science” from *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture and Environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940*; Chs. 2 and 3 (pp. 26-76).

I will post questions for 2nd paper after class.

Class session for review/questions  
(1 class; 29 Oct.)

2nd paper (based on 6 class sessions)
3. **Industry, Growth & Environment: Twentieth century**

**20th Century Problems**
Readings will be posted. **Second paper is due at the beginning of class time.**

**Industrial & Urban Environmental Degradation**
(2 classes; 5 & 10 Nov.)
Read: Industrialization & environment
Place, S.E. and Chase, J. “The Environment, Population and Urbanization” in Hillman (ed.) *Understanding Contemporary Latin America*, Ch. 8 (pp 209-235.)
J.Simon; *The Sinking City* from *Endangered Mexico*, Introduction and Ch. 3 (pp. 1-6 and 60-90.)
Urban Environment in Literature 10 Nov.

Read Ribeyro; *Marginal Voices*
Borges; “The Mythical Founding of Buenos Aires”
Sevcenko; “Peregrinations, Visions and the City”

**Environment, Development & Government**
(3 classes 12-19 Nov.)

**Agro-industry**
(1 Class; 12 Nov.)
Read: J. Hellman “Agricultural and Rural Development” and “The Countryside” from *Mexican Lives*, Chs. 5 and 6 (pp. 113-151.)
A.Wright *The Death of Ramón González* Ch 1. (pp. 1-9)

**Environment, Development & Government**
(1 class; 17 Nov.)
Read: J.A. Lutzberger; “Who is Destroying the Amazon Rainforest?” and Valderes, T. “Deforestation: A Brazilian Perspective” from S. Place (ed.) *Tropical Rainforests* (pp. 123-135.)

**Environment & Commodities at the Beginning of the 21st Century**
(2 classes, 19 & 24 November)
Read: I have added these readings on 8 November 2008
http://earth2tech.com/2008/05/07/primer-brazilian-biofuels/
US News & World Report; Ethanol: The View from Brazil, June 2008
Institute of Science in Society,” Biofuels Republic Brazil
NYTimes Rondonia

Happy Thanksgiving – no class on 26 November.

**Environmentalism, Indigenous Peoples and other debates**
(2 classes; l & 3 Dec.)

**Film:** *Amazon Journal*

Read: J. Kane *Savages*; Part III, “Among the Cannibals” pp 163-249

Whose environment? Whose environmentalism?
(1 class; 8 Dec.)

Read M. Gates; “Eco-Imperialism? Environmental Policy versus Everyday Practice in Mexico” from Phillips (ed.) *The Third Wave of Modernization*, Ch. 9
Sustainable development & the UN (on-line)
History 508:364
Environmental History of Latin America

Class Sessions
I will post questions for the final paper after class.

Conclusion

(1 class; 10 Dec.)