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21H.421 Introduction to Environmental History
Spring 2004

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21H421 (HASS-D CI)
INTRODUCTION TO ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

Fall 2008
TR 2:30-4

Prof. H. Ritvo
Professor

Subject Description

A historical overview of the interactions between people and their environments. Focusing primarily on the experience of Europeans in the period after Columbus, the subject explores the influence of nature (climate, topography, plants, animals, and microorganisms) on human history and the reciprocal influence of people on nature. Topics include the biological consequences of the European encounter with the Americas, the environmental impact of technology, and the roots of the current environmental crisis.

CI CREDO

Communication intensive subjects in the humanities, arts, and social sciences should require at least 20 pages of writing divided among 3-5 assignments. Of these 3-5 assignments, at least one should be revised and resubmitted. HASS CI subjects should further offer students substantial opportunity for oral expression, through presentations, student-led discussion, or class participation.

Readings

The following books can be purchased at the MIT bookstore or through various online booksellers. They are also available on the ground floor of Building 14.

Rachel Carson, Silent Spring

James Cook, Journals of Captain Cook (Penguin edition)

William Cronon, Changes in the Land

Daniel Defoe, Journal of the Plague Year (Norton Critical Edition)

Friedrich Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England (Oxford World's Classics Edition)

Karl Jacoby, Crimes Against Nature

Peter C. Mancall, Envisioning America

J. R. McNeill and W. H. McNeill, The Human Web

Elinor Melville, A Plague of Sheep

Richard White, The Organic Machine

Written Assignments

There will be three papers, of at least 5, 5, and 10 pages, due in class on September 23, October 23, and December 9 respectively. Specific assignment sheets will be handed out later in the term. The last assignment will also include an oral presentation. Either assignment 1 or assignment 2 (your choice) must be revised and resubmitted for a new grade. If you like, you can revise and resubmit both assignment 1 and assignment 2.

In addition, a single page (not hand written) of informal reflections on each reading will be due in class on the day it is scheduled for discussion (normally the second class of each unit).

Exam

There will be an in-class exam on November 13, on the material covered up to that date in class and in the readings.

Schedule of Classes

September 4-11:	Introduction Reading: McNeill and McNeill, 25-40,75-81, 108-15, 137-54, 158-78, 186-9, 200-23, 230-52, 264-7, 279-88, 319-327
September 16-18:	The Columbian Exchange Reading: Melville, <u>Plague of Sheep</u> , 1-77, 151-166 Mancall, 45-61, 112-132, 140-148
September 23-25:	Wilderness and Garden Reading: Cronon, <u>Changes in the Land</u> PAPER 1 DUE IN CLASS SEPTEMBER 23
Sep 30-Oct 2	The Disease Environment Reading: Defoe, <u>Journal of the Plague Year</u> (6-66, 197-230)
October 7-16	Science and Nature Reading: Cook, <u>Journal</u> , 39-61, 125-134,335-339, 374-390, 530-547 Cook's Instructions October 14—preparation for research paper October 16—field trip to MIT Archives

October 21-23	Landscape and Agriculture Reading: Harriet Ritvo, "Possessing Mother Nature: Genetic Capital in 18 th -Century Britain" PAPER 2 DUE IN CLASS OCTOBER 23
October 28-30	Industry and Demography Reading: Friedrich Engels, <u>The Condition of the Working Class in England</u> , chs. 2 (The Great Towns), 5 (Results)
November 4-6	Conservation and Preservation Reading: Jacoby, <u>Crimes Against Nature</u> , Introduction, chs. 4-6 PAPER 3 PROPOSALS DUE IN CLASS NOVEMBER 4
November 11 November 13	NO CLASS: VETERAN'S DAY IN CLASS EXAM
November 18-20	Poisoning and Environmentalism Reading: Carson, <u>Silent Spring</u> , chs. 1, 7, 9, 10, 14, 16
Nov 25-Dec 2	Current Events Reading: White, <u>Organic Machine</u> NO CLASS NOV 27: THANKSGIVING
December 4-9	Oral presentation of research papers PAPER 3 DUE IN CLASS DECEMBER 9 ALL REVISIONS DUE IN CLASS DECEMBER 9

Things to remember

Written assignments should represent original and individual work. The following link to the MIT Online Writing and Communication Center gives some suggestions about how to recognize plagiarism and how to avoid it.

<http://web.mit.edu/writing/Citation/plagiarism.html>

All sources used in written assignments must be fully cited. This includes sources of information as well as direct quotations; it includes the assigned readings as well as other materials.

Assignments are to be handed in on time. If an extension becomes necessary it should be requested ahead of the due date. Otherwise, lateness will be penalized.

Attendance is important. Not all the material to be covered in class is included in the readings. Be sure to bring your copy of the readings to discussion classes.

Grading will be based on the three written assignments, the exam, and class participation (including informal reflections), weighted as follows: paper 1—10%; paper 2—15%; paper 3 (including final oral presentation)—30%; exam—30%; class participation (including response papers)—15%.