History 805: Proto-syllabus

Environmental and Transregional History Research Seminar

Mondays 6:30 to 9pm in ICC 216 mcneillj@georgetown.edu (in ICC 614)

This class is intended to serve the needs of students for a PhD research seminar in both environmental history and transregional history. It is a two-semester class, the second half of which will be taught by Prof. Alison Games. However, with permission, students may take only the fall semester. The primary goal of the course, for most students, will be to produce a high-quality research paper.

In the fall, we will read a handful of recent and classic works in environmental history chosen to reflect interests of students in the class and in most cases chosen because they are reasonably transregional too. Only four of these are set; the rest we will determine on 31 August at our first meeting.

We meet once weekly and will use that time to discuss our core readings. At our meetings, aim to show engagement with, and curiosity about, our readings, and consideration for your peers. For each meeting, except the final ones involving presentations, one member of the class will produce a 500-1,000 word paper sketching out some of the interesting points and implications raised in the reading, posing questions perhaps, taking issue perhaps. The schedule indicating who will prepare the short paper which week will be created on 31 August.

**REQUIREMENTS**

1) Research Prospectus: In the fall semester, those students who will be the class both semesters will prepare a detailed prospectus for their research paper, due for distribution to the class on Friday 2 December. This should be roughly 3,000 words in length, plus a bibliography. The prospectus should explain the topic, its context(s), the primary sources to be used, perhaps a tentative hypothesis or two. Students will present their prospectus to the class on 28 November, after having read everyone else’s prospectus. (Note: this is the Monday after Thanksgiving, so you might wish to prepare it earlier). The first step it to speak with me about what you might wish to research and we will shape the project together -- but you will do all the work!

The bulk of the research and the writing will take place in the spring semester.

2) Alternative Project: Those students who do not expect to be in the class for both semesters will prepare a different paper. This too will require negotiation with me at the outset. Possibilities include historiographical papers, small research papers, and the like. These should be roughly 6,000 words in length.

For any and all research projects in environmental history, it is prudent to consult the Forest History Society’s annotated bibliography at:

<http://www.foresthistory.org/dbtw-wpd/textbase/EHWebQuery.htm>

3) Short seminar paper: as noted above, each student will write a brief framing paper at some point in the semester.

4) Class participation: ours is a discussion class in which you will hone your skills at oral expression, at offering your thoughts concisely and clearly, at criticizing without irritating – in short building useful life skills.

**GRADES**

Big paper or prospectus (i.e 1 or 2 above): 50%

Class participation: 40%

Short paper: 10%

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

Aug 31 Introduction

Sept 12 Russell, *Evolutionary History* [Matt J]

Sept 19 Cushman, *Guano* [Hilary M]

Sept 26 Ford, *Natural Interests* [Lydia E]

Oct 3 Scott, untitled new book [Matthew L]

Oct 10 NO CLASS (FALL HOLIDAY)

Oct 17 Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis* [José P]

Oct 24 Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*  [Rob C]

Oct 31 Hoag, *Developing the Rivers* [Andrew S]

Nov 7 Worster, *Dust Bowl* [Preston L]

Nov 14 Ryan Jones’s piece on whaling [Abi N]

Nov 21 senior grad student dissertation presentations (likely Denning, Husain)

Nov 28 student presentations of research prospectuses

Dec 5 student presentations of research prospectuses