Syllabus

HIST 805 Environmental History Seminar

Spring 2021

Via zoom Wednesdays 6:30 to 9:00pm

Prof. John McNeill mcneillj@georgetown.edu

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 one member of the class will offer a 5-10 minute oral assessment of the reading which comments on sources, argument, questions answered, questions left unanswered, and whatever else strikes you as worthy of comment.

The books have been chosen to coincide with stated preferences to the maximum extent possible, while including a sprinkling of dissertation books. I’ve also tried to choose books for which access is easy and cheap in most cases.

**SCHEDULE OF CLASSES**

Jan 25 Introduction

Feb 3 Kate Brown*, Plutopia* (2014)

Feb 10 Tim LeCain, *Matter of History* (2017)

Feb 17 Erin Mauldin, *Unredeemed Land: Environmental History of Civil War and Emancipation in the Cotton South* (2018) **N.B.: the author will join us for an hour starting at 6:30.**

Feb 24 we read the abstracts of dissertations by Jackson Perry and Matt Johnson and ask them how they did it

Mar 3 Micah Muscolino, *The Ecology of War in China: Henan Province, the Yellow River, and Beyond, 1938-1950* (2014) [Guanran]

Mar 10 On Barak, *Powering Empire: How Coal Made the Middle East and Sparked Global Carbonization* (2020)

Mar 17 Judith Carney and Nicholas Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa’s Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (2011) [Loren]

Mar 24 Al Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism* (1986) [Francisco]

**Mar 31 SPRING BREAK**

Apr 7 Chris Morris, *Big Muddy* (2012) [Ishmael]

Apr 14 grasslands book TBD

Apr 21 maritime/coastal book TBD [Emma]

Apr 28 student presentations on semester projects (read drafts)

May 5 student presentations on semester projects (read drafts)

**REQUIREMENTS**

1) Semester Project: The format and content is negotiable and I expect you to be in touch with me in January and February to discuss possibilities. Ideally this will contribute to your education and progress within your degree program. But less utilitarian approaches are also welcome. Possibilities include historiographical papers, small research papers, and the like. These should be roughly 8,000 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>

But possibilities extend to all manner of non-traditional work provided I agree in advance.

2) One short oral report: as noted above, each student will offer a brief spoken introduction to our core readings twice during the semester.

3) 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**

Semester Project: 50%

Class participation: 40%

Oral reports: 10%