Global Environmental History
HIS 350L—Fall 2014
MEZ 1.102  MW 4:00-5:30

Instructor:  Dr. Megan Raby
meganraby@austin.utexas.edu
512-475-7925

Office Hours:  GAR 0.114
F 2:30-4:30PM
and by appointment

Course Description:
Global Environmental History explores how human societies and natural environments have shaped each other through world history. In order to tackle this formidable subject, the course is divided into three thematic units. We will begin by critically examining “bird’s eye views” of deep human and natural history, discussing historiographic controversies over the role of humans in the ancient extinctions; the origins of agriculture; the Columbian Exchange; and relationships among climate, society, and disease. Next, we delve into a series of comparative and transnational histories of societies’ ways of knowing and making a living in nature. We will survey cultural and economic encounters of colonialism and capitalism in the 19th the 20th centuries, tracing the global flows of commodities, “invasive species,” human migrations, and waste. Finally, we will take a closer look at the ideas that have historically shaped how we think about “the environment,” considering the emergence of ecology, climate science, environmentalist movements around the world.

This course is an upper-division, reading- and writing-intensive seminar. It acts as an introduction to the growing field of environmental history, as well as to a variety of approaches to understanding history at a scale beyond the nation-state. It carries Independent Inquiry and Writing Flag designations:

Independent Inquiry: Independent Inquiry courses are designed to engage you in the process of inquiry over the course of a semester, providing you with the opportunity for independent investigation of a question, problem, or project related to your major. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from the independent investigation and presentation of your own work.

Writing: Writing Flag courses are designed to give students experience with writing in an academic discipline. In this class, you can expect to write regularly during the semester, complete substantial writing projects, and receive feedback from your instructor to help you improve your writing. You will also have the opportunity to revise one or more assignments, and you may be asked to read and discuss your peers’ work. You should therefore expect a substantial portion of your grade to come from your written work.
**Readings:**
Four required textbooks are available for purchase at the Co-op:


Article and chapter-length readings listed in the schedule below will be posted on our course’s Canvas site ([http://canvas.utexas.edu](http://canvas.utexas.edu)). In addition to accessing course materials, you will also use Canvas to communicate and collaborate online, check grades, submit assignments, and complete online quizzes and surveys. Canvas support is available at the ITS Help Desk at 475-9400, M-F 8:00-6:00.

**Assignments and Evaluation:**
Your course grade will be based on the following:

- **Critical Essays** 60%
  - Essay 1 (10%)
  - Essay 2 (20%)
  - Essay 3 (30%)

- **Reflections** 20%
  - On readings, day you lead discussion (10%)
  - Others, periodic (10%)

- **Participation** 20%
  - Leading 2 discussions (10%)
  - Overall involvement in discussion (10%)

Essays: Each essay is an opportunity to explore questions raised by course material. Essay 2 and 3 will also require some outside research. All three essays allow a large amount of room for you to shape your own inquiry and delve deeper into problems of particular interest to you, as well as to develop your ideas in response to peer feedback. You will submit your essays on Canvas by the beginning of the class period at 4:00PM on the due date. Except under extreme circumstances, which you will negotiate with me at least one week in advance, one half-grade (5 percentage points) will be deducted for each day late. Please see the essay grading criteria attached to the back of this syllabus.
Reflections: You will sign up with a partner to lead two class discussions. For each of those days, you will write a 300-500 word reflection on the assigned readings. (Although you will lead group discussion in pairs, you should each write your own reflection paper.) This should involve a very brief summary of the authors’ key arguments and evidence, a larger discussion of what you see as the key issues at stake, and the directions you think the class should explore during discussion. The purpose of this reflection paper is to lay the foundations for class discussion, so the best reflections will treat the readings in connection to each other, and perhaps even link the day’s readings to questions and themes explored in previous weeks.

At several other points throughout the course, I will also ask the entire class to reflect on something we have discussed, seen, or read for class; brainstorm about a problem we will be examining over coming weeks; or bring relevant outside material to bear on the course through a short in-class or Canvas writing assignment.

Reflections submitted on Canvas will be due the day before you lead discussion, by midnight. Late reflections will earn half-credit.

Participation: This course is a seminar and discussion is at its heart. Everyone in class needs to assume the responsibility of an active participant and learner. Success in this class depends on the time, energy, and commitment you invest. You must arrive at class having read the material assigned for the day and prepared to engage in a thoughtful and constructive conversation that is respectful of others in the classroom and takes seriously the issues and themes presented in the readings. Participation will be evaluated based on your contribution to discussion of course material (including peer writing submissions), both on the days you are a designated discussion leader and on the days that you are not. Please see the participation guidelines attached to the back of this syllabus.

Grading System:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>0-59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-</td>
<td>60-62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63-66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67-70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>71-72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73-74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>75-76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>77-78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>79-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>81-82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>83-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>85-100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Office Hours
My office hours are open to all students. I encourage you to meet with me to discuss course material, any concerns you may have about your progress in this class, or strategies for effective studying and writing. If problems arise, either academic or personal, that might jeopardize your performance in this course, you must try to inform me of the problem at the next available office hour. If you wish to dispute a grade, be aware that re-grading may result in a lower grade. If my office hours conflict with your schedule, please ask me about scheduling an appointment at another time.
Documented Disability Accommodations
I strive to make my classroom accessible to everyone. Any student with a
documented disability who requires academic accommodations should contact
Services for Students with Disabilities (SSD) at 512-471-6259 (voice) or
1-866-329-3986 (video phone). Faculty are not required to provide accommodations
without an official accommodation letter from SSD.

Attendance
UT Austin policy requires you to notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen
days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class
or assignment in order to observe a religious holy day, I will give you an opportunity
to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence. If you miss
an in-class reflection for a University extracurricular activity, illness, or emergency, it
may also be considered an excused absence, and you should discuss with me the
possibility of making up the assignment at my office hours. If you miss a lecture, you
may consider borrowing notes from a classmate. Although I am always happy to
discuss course material with you at my office hours, there is no easy way to make up a
lecture; regular class attendance is imperative to success in this course.

Distractions
In order to be fully attentive in class and avoid distracting your classmates, refrain
from using electronic devices during class for purposes other than accessing assigned course
material. If you are found to be doing so, you may lose your privilege to use such
devices in our classroom. Using e-readers or a laptop to view assigned pdfs is
permitted, but taking notes on paper is a much more effective strategy for active
reading. Turn your phone off and disable wifi unless I explicitly state that accessing the
internet is part of a class activity. Looking material up or sharing ideas online is certainly
encouraged after class. If a classmate’s use of electronic devices or other behavior
becomes distracting to you, politely inform her or him of the problem or please bring
it to my attention after class.

Writing Center
Writers are made, not born. Good writers always strive to write better. The
Undergraduate Writing Center, located in the FAC 211, phone 471-6222, http://
uwc.utexas.edu offers individualized assistance to students who want to improve
their writing skills. There is no charge, and students may come in on a drop-in or
appointment basis.

Academic Integrity
Using the words and ideas of others without giving credit with an appropriate
citation is plagiarism and a violation of the University of Texas Honor Code.
Whether accidental or intentional, plagiarism will result in a failure of the
assignment and could lead to further disciplinary action. Before the first essay is due,
complete the plagiarism tutorial and quiz available on our Canvas site to be sure you
understand what plagiarism is and to minimize your risk of committing it. Please feel free to
come talk to me about strategies for effective citation.
Course Schedule

This syllabus represents my current plans. As we go through the semester, these plans may be adjusted to enhance class learning. I will communicate any such changes clearly in class and through Canvas.

Part 1: Grand Narratives

Week 1: Introductions
August 27


Week 2: Controversies
September 3


Week 3: Geographies

September 8
Libby, Sörlin, and Warde, “Part 3: Geographies: Are Human and Natural Futures Determined or Chosen?”

September 10
Crosby, “The Norse and the Crusaders,” “The Fortunate Isles, Winds”

Week 4: Circulation

September 15
Crosby, “Within Reach, Beyond Grasp; “Weeds.”

September 17
Crosby, “Animals.”

Week 5: Agency

September 22
Crosby, “ills.”

September 24
Crosby, “New Zealand,” “Explanations,” “Conclusions.”

Part 2: Landscapes and Flows

Week 6: Reading Global Landscapes

September 29
ESSAY 1 DUE.
Class activity TBA.
October 1


Week 7: Power and Space
October 6
Field trip: Racial Geography Tour with Professor Edmund Gordon. Meet in front of the Little Field House at our usual class meeting time.

October 8


Week 8: Global Cities
October 13


October 15
Field trip: Austin Ecology. Details and reading TBA.

Week 9: Cultures and Commodities
October 20
Soluri, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2.

October 22
Soluri, Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

Week 10: Cultures and Commodities, Continued.
October 27
Soluri, Chapters 6, 7, and 8.

October 29
Global Environmental History Roundtable.
**Part 3: Knowing the Environment**

**Week 11: What is Wilderness?**

*November 3*

**ESSAY 2 DUE.**


Guha, Part I: Chapters 1 and 2.

*November 5*

Guha, Part I: Chapters 3, 4, and Afterward.

Libby, Sörlin, and Warde, “Part 4: “The Environment”: How Did the Idea Emerge?”

**Week 12: Environmentalisms**

*November 10*

Guha, Part II.

*November 12*

Libby, Sörlin, and Warde, “Part 8: Diversity: Why Do We Need It, and Can We Conserve It?”

**Week 13: People and Planet**

*November 17*

Libby, Sörlin, and Warde, “Part 1: Population: Are We Too Many, or Are We Too Greedy?”

*November 19*

Libby, Sörlin, and Warde, “Part 7: Climate: How Can We Predict Change?”


**Week 14: People and Planet, Continued**

*November 24*

**ESSAY 3 DRAFT DUE.**


*November 26*

**PEER REVIEWS OF ESSAY 3 DUE.**
Week 15: History for the Future

December 1


December 3

**ESSAY 3 DUE.**