

**HISTORY 258**  
**NATURE'S WORLD: TOPICS IN GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY**

Davidson College, Fall 2004  
TR 10:00-11:15, Chambers 2196

Prof. Chris Wells

Office: Chambers 2257  
Office Hours: MWF 1-2:20, TR 11:20-12:30, and by appointment  
Phone: x2891  
Email: chwells@davidson.edu

**Course Description:**

People have always had to contend with nature, but only recently have historians begun to explore the changing relationships between people and the environment over time. This course takes a global view of human interactions with the natural world, mixing broad themes with detailed case studies in an effort to understand the complicated ways that people and the environment have mutually shaped one another in different places and at different times. The course also emphasizes the historical discipline's methodological tools and analytical techniques as ways of exploring key issues in people's evolving interrelationships with the natural world.

**Required Readings:**

The following books are available for purchase at the college book store:

Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*  
Donald Worster, ed., *The Ends of the Earth*  
Paul Josephson, *Industrialized Nature*  
Michael Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*  
William Zinsser, *On Writing Well*

**Grading:** Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

|                                     |           |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1-Page Critical Response Papers (5) | 15% total |
| Historiographical Essay (4-6 pgs)   | 15%       |
| Primary Documents Assignment        | 15%       |
| Research Paper (10-12 pgs)          | 30%       |
| Participation                       | 25%       |

**The reading for this Thursday, 8/26**, is available both at the library reserve desk and through the e-reserves. To access e-reserves, go to <http://library.davidson.edu/reserves.asp>. Click on "Connect to Course Reserves" and sign in with your Davidson user name and password. You will only be able to access these readings if you are registered for the course.

## The Assignments

*Critical Response Papers:* Five times during the semester, you should submit a one-page, single-spaced paper in which you respond to the ideas, arguments, and effectiveness of the day's reading assignment. What is the author's argument? What makes that argument significant? What types of evidence does the author marshal to support it? What are the reading's strengths and weaknesses as a piece of history?

*The Historiographical Essay:* In a 4-6 page paper, you should survey and assess five significant scholarly sources that bear directly on the topic of your research paper. How does each source contribute to a larger scholarly discussion? How has our general understanding of your research subject changed over time as different scholars have studied it? What questions for future research do they open or suggest? At least three of your five sources should be scholarly essays, and at least one should be a scholarly book. (For our purposes, "scholarly" means a footnote-bearing manuscript written by a professional historian or published by an academic press. If you are in doubt about the nature of a source, please have me approve it ahead of time. If you would like to substitute an extra book for an article, please run this by me first.)

*The Primary Documents Assignment:* This assignment consists of an annotated collection of primary documents that you have uncovered in the course of conducting research for your research paper. In no more than 3-4 sentences for each document, you should annotate 10-12 primary documents that shed light on your subject, along with a photocopy of 1-3 pages of selected text from each source. Your annotation should include a full citation for the source, a brief summary of its contents, and a short analysis of its relative usefulness to you as a historian.

*The Research Paper:* Research papers should be on a topic of your own choosing within the field of environmental history, and should be 10-12 pages in length. Balancing an awareness of scholarly debates against your own research using primary source materials, papers should reflect your best effort to explore one of the themes, subjects, or questions raised within the general field of environmental history. *Be sure to check out the course research guide at <http://www.davidson.edu/library/refer/his258.asp>.*

**Participation grades** will be based on class attendance and participation in discussions. Discussions are the driving force in this class, so it is particularly important that everyone comes to class prepared to discuss the day's material. Our project in class meetings will be to explore connections between events, to answer questions, to clear up any confusion, to discuss the major themes of the course, and above all to engage with the readings. For those who are less comfortable than others speaking in class, remember that asking a good question is often as valuable a means of participation as delivering a long-winded oration. If you are having trouble speaking, however, please talk to me outside of class so that we can develop a strategy for improvement.

**Regular attendance** is required in order to receive a passing grade for the course, regardless of how well you do on your written assignments.

**Academic dishonesty** will not be tolerated, and all work for this course should be done in accordance with the Davidson Honor Code.

## Class Schedule

### UNIT ONE: THEMATIC EXPLORATIONS

#### WEEK 1: What is Environmental History?

- T 8/24 Introductions  
R 8/26 Cronon, "Kennecott Journey" (**reserve / e-reserve item**)  
Worster, "Doing Environmental History," 289-307 in *The Ends of the Earth*

#### WEEK 2: The Columbian Exchange

- T 8/31 Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 1-69.  
R 9/2 Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 70-144.

#### WEEK 3: Ecological Imperialism

- T 9/7 Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 145-216.  
R 9/9 Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*, 217-308.

#### WEEK 4: Driving Forces

- T 9/14 *The Ends of the Earth*, chs. 2-3.  
R 9/16 *The Ends of the Earth*, ch. 4.

**MEET AT THE LIBRARY FOR OUR RESEARCH ORIENTATION**

### UNIT TWO: CASE STUDIES

#### WEEK 5: Brute-Force Technologies

- T 9/21 Josephson, *Industrialized Nature*, Prologue and chs. 1-2.  
R 9/23 Josephson, *Industrialized Nature*, chs. 3-4 and epilogue.

#### WEEK 6: Humans as Bumblebees?

- T 9/28 Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*, xiii-58  
R 9/30 Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*, 59-110

#### WEEK 7: The Natural History of Pot ... and Genetically Engineered Crops

- T 10/5 Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*, 111-179.  
R 10/7 Pollan, *The Botany of Desire*, 181-245.

#### WEEK 8: Case Studies of Invasion

- T 10/12 NO CLASS: FALL BREAK.  
R 10/14 *The Ends of the Earth*, chs. 6-7.

#### WEEK 9: Case Studies of Conservation

- T 10/19 *The Ends of the Earth*, ch. 9.  
R 10/21 *The Ends of the Earth*, ch. 10.

### UNIT THREE: DOING ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

#### WEEK 10: Preparatory Presentations, Part I

- T 10/26 Historiographical presentations, Group 1  
**GROUP 1: HISTORIOGRAPHY PAPERS DUE IN CLASS**  
R 10/28 Documentary presentations, Group 2  
**GROUP 2: PRIMARY DOCUMENT PACKETS DUE IN CLASS**

WEEK 11: Preparatory Presentations, Part II

- T 11/2 Documentary presentations, Group 1  
**GROUP 1: PRIMARY DOCUMENT PACKETS DUE IN CLASS**
- R 11/4 Historiographical presentations, Group 2  
**GROUP 2: HISTORIOGRAPHY PAPERS DUE IN CLASS**

WEEK 12: On Writing Well

- T 11/9 Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, chs. 1-10
- R 11/11 Zinsser, *On Writing Well*, chs. 11, 13, 15, and 20-24.

WEEK 13: Peer Review, Part I

- T 11/16 Group strategy session and peer-group coordination  
**TWO COPIES OF ROUGH DRAFT DUE IN CLASS**
- R 11/18 Group 2: Peer reports

WEEK 14: Peer Review, Part II

- T 11/23 Group 1: Peer reports
- R 11/25 NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 15: Conference Presentations

- T 11/30 Final presentations
- R 12/2 Final presentations

WEEK 16: Conference Presentations

- T 12/7 Final presentations
- W 12/8 **FINAL DRAFTS DUE by 2:30 p.m., my office** (no class)