

# Environmental History, S23

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Mondays/Wednesdays 2:00 PM - 3:20 PM Hickman-131

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Office hour, Wed. 10:30-11:30 am: [Ofc. hr.](#)

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Please see information about STUDENT WELLNESS SERVICES link on the Canvas page.

**Course purpose:** If you want to change how people treat the environment, you have to understand how those practices came about and how things could have been different.

**Learning objectives for the EPIB curriculum:** By the end of this course, students should be able to *analyze the historical development of:*

- 1.1 major patterns and drivers of natural resource use, pollution, and climate and environmental change.
- 1.2 the governance and management of human activities that affect the environment, both in the US and abroad, including institutions, property relations, management regimes, politics, and policies.
- 1.6 economic development and globalization, including historical antecedents, current trends and pathways, and local responses to global forces.
- 1.7 social forces, cultural values, and behavior that affect human-environmental interactions.

## **Additional course learning objectives:**

Students should be able to

- *assess the credibility of documents and other sources, and the validity of the evidence they present.*
- *evaluate and compare theories of environmental change.*
- *create historical accounts of local environmental conditions.*

**Topics and themes:** We will study a) how we know what we think we know about past conditions, and b) how we can identify sequences of events (causation, or historical processes) that produced an outcome.

We also want to recognize how groups use and abuse history to support their claims to resources or their policy demands (e.g., settlers who ignore indigenous land claims).

Readings from archaeologists, historians, ecologists, and social scientists show human adaptability over time. They also trace institutions like pre-capitalist mercantilism, religion, and the modern state that changed the ways people used and thought about the environment. Our approach is impressionistic, not comprehensive. We will learn how to ask good questions about history and how to investigate specific conditions that we want to understand.

We will always ask why historical records were created, who created them, and what information is missing. For instance, colonists' reports are often racist and may miss activities that the colonized people managed to hide. Another problem is building evidence about eras where no written records exist. With improved methods for collecting and analyzing social and physical data, we are learning much more about how humans can use their environment sustainably.

### **Assignments (details below)**

Students must complete all assignments to pass the course:

- 40% Project on the history of the Lower Raritan watershed  
(32 points for your final narrative, memo, & log of hours; 1 point for turning in your draft for your peer; 4 points for comments on peer's draft; 3 points for interim logs)
- 10% seminar Reading Leader (sign up for a date on Canvas)
- 20% exam 1
- 20% exam 2
- 10% class engagement (e.g., reading quizzes)

**CANVAS: All required readings and videos are posted to Canvas. You will submit most assignments there:** <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/>.

Canvas works best on the Chrome browser (best to avoid Internet Explorer). You can also install the Canvas app on your mobile devices. Access Canvas on your phone or tablet using a browser app, such as Safari or Chrome.

Log in using your NetID. For more information go to <https://canvas.rutgers.edu/canvas-help/>. Request help via email at [help@canvas.rutgers.edu](mailto:help@canvas.rutgers.edu) or call 877-361-1134.

**COMMUNICATING WITH YOU:** I will post general updates and reminders to **Canvas Announcements**. You can set your Canvas account to forward all Canvas Announcements to your email account (notification preferences; see the "Let's get started" Module on Canvas site).

**TEACHING APPROACH:** Environmental history is human history. We cannot aim to cover it comprehensively. So, we will use **case studies** of understand why humans have been able to adapt to so many conditions over time and across environments. Perhaps you have become more aware of historical changes as we've adapted to the novel coronavirus?

**INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES:** I aim to answer your emails within 24 hours. Please put “Environmental History” in the subject line of your emails.

**YOUR SUCCESS IN THIS COURSE** depends on completing readings and videos before the scheduled class time, participating in discussions, and working steadily on our class research project.

In addition to the time scheduled for course meetings, plan to spend three to four hours each week reading and watching course materials, additional time in class sessions, and 15 hours total over the semester doing research for the class project plus a few hours after you finish the research writing the results for the class project.

**GRADING:** I will provide rubrics for key assignments. Quizzes and exams are open-note, open book and will be curved. Curving means that I will analyze scores for each of these tests and boost scores upward if students scored consistently low on a test.

## **ACCOMMODATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

If you have accessibility problems with materials posted to Canvas, please tell me. Videos will have captioning. Live/synchronous sessions will be recorded and posted with captions within 48 hours. Contact me if the technology is not suiting your needs.

To request accommodations, please follow the procedures outlined at <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>. Full policies and procedures are at <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>.

## **ABSENCE POLICY**

Attendance and participation are part of your grade. *If you expect to miss one or two classes for an emergency, please tell me as soon as possible.* Contact me to arrange for alternative assignments if you are unable to regularly join online meetings at the course meeting times.

## **ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Integrity means wholeness. Think about your scholarly ethics as a way of preserving your own wholeness. The university's policy on Academic Integrity is available at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy/>. The principles of academic integrity require that a student:

- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others.
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.
- make sure that all work submitted as his or her own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of impermissible materials or impermissible collaboration.
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions.
- **treat all other students in an ethical manner**, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.

- uphold the canons of the ethical or professional code of the profession for which he or she is preparing.

Adherence to these principles is necessary in order to ensure that

- everyone is given proper credit for his or her ideas, words, results, and other scholarly accomplishments.
- all student work is fairly evaluated, and no student has an inappropriate advantage over others.
- the academic and ethical development of all students is fostered.
- the reputation of the University for integrity in its teaching, research, and scholarship is maintained and enhanced.

Failure to uphold these principles of academic integrity threatens both the reputation of the University and the value of the degrees awarded to its students. Every member of the University community therefore bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld.

## Topics Calendar

See Canvas Modules for our course for details.

Complete the readings and any assignments **before** the class dates listed at these links [NOTE, subject to change. Please check announcements regularly or have them forwarded to your email address.]

## ASSIGNMENTS OVERVIEW

The major assignments will have rubrics posted on Canvas. Please contact me for further information.

### 1. Seminar reading leader

Each student will prepare questions and comments about one or two readings and help discussion in a live session. See Canvas, “Welcome,” “Reading Leader instructions”

### 2. Exams

Exams are **open book, open-note** and cover the readings. Exam 2 will test material since Exam 1 (if I include a reading from Exam 1, I will tell you). You may study together but cannot collaborate during the exams. I will give you a list of provisional questions before each exam. Sample rubrics are posted with Exam 1.

### 3. Classroom engagement assignments

- Attendance, constructive engagement in discussions, responding to student reading leaders
- In-class exercises

- Assignments submitted online

## 4. CLASS PROJECT

You will log 20 hours total over the semester checking sources or editing work submitted by previous students. We will have one session with a guest speaker and one session covering sources of historical information. On Canvas, see the project assignment page for details, including rubric.

### Class sessions:

landscape

putting history to work

guest speaker, project

data sources

history of soils

land degradation

prehistory, people on the move

prehistory, Indus Valley Civ.

agrarians, Mexico pre-conquest

agrarians, fisheries, medieval W. Europe

Republic of Venice, forests

USA environmentalism video to watch on your own, no class meeting

Malthus and Smith

disease, Caribbean

Exam 1

Nationalism and env., Marx

Brazil industrialization & conservation

Victoria Falls, colonization, heritage

Flint, structural inequality

Toms River, document analysis

Deep ecology, ecofeminism

Three Mile Island, comparing documentary accounts

Palm economy, postcolonial theory

Surat plague

aquaculture, late capitalism

Indigenous peoples in western hemisphere, sovereignty

Using history, 3 cases

Consumerism

Exam 2