

History 6910 (CRN 35867)
Tulane University

Latin America's Environmental History
Spring 2017

Instruction: Prof. Kris Lane, Office Hours: 9:30-10:30 am, T/Th (and by appt.)
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Humans have inhabited the Americas for at least 15,000 years, and not without considerable effect on what many call the natural environment, yet it is only in the last 500 years or so - following the arrival of Europeans, Africans, and Asians - that the most drastic human-caused changes have occurred in this hemisphere. This course examines core themes in Latin America's environmental history, including deforestation, mining, monoculture, epidemic disease, water control, the disappearance of glaciers, and the rise of conservationism. What does the environmental history of the last five centuries tell us as nearly half a billion Latin Americans face a warmer, less-forested, and more urban future?

Learning Outcomes: You will leave this course able to identify the main features and contours of environmental history in Latin America; to calculate the costs and benefits of environmental policies or choices in the Americas across the centuries; to compare and contrast the experiences of, for example, deforestation in Brazil vs. Cuba; to analyze primary and secondary sources; to differentiate between reliable and spurious claims; to write clearly and succinctly about environmental history, and to read critically several types of texts with opposing viewpoints. These outcomes will be assessed through written assignments, including response papers, reviews, and a research essay, plus maps. They will also be assessed by in-class discussions each week.

Assignments

In addition to participating in class discussion of readings, which will include one assigned book report beyond the core list (10%), you will be writing two film critiques (10% combined), drawing three maps (10% combined), writing two book reviews (10% combined), and writing a ca.15pp. research paper (60%). I am happy to review a paper draft. Good work will be generously rewarded. Late work will be promptly recycled.

Sample Paper Themes (in need of a compelling research question):

Mexico's conservation movement	Chico Mendes
Draining colonial New Orleans	Peru's national parks
Oil palm cultivation	Banana blights
Mosquito-borne diseases	Chile's copper rush
Hydroelectricity	Glacial recession
Tropical ranching	The soy boom
Draining Mexico City	Argentine railroads
Rio's garbage	Brazilian charcoal
Colonial quicksilver	The 1980s gold rush
Venezuelan petroleum	Amazon rubber

Core Readings (those with a * are required):

Ali, Saleem H. *Mining, the Environment, and Indigenous Development Conflicts*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2003.

*Boyer, Christopher. *Political Landscapes: Forests, Conservation, and Community in Mexico*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015.

*Brown, Kendall. *A History of Mining in Latin America from the Colonial Era to the Present*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012.

*Carey, Mark. *In the Shadow of Melting Glaciers: Climate Change and Andean Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.

*Crosby, Alfred. *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492*. 2d. ed. New York: Praeger, 2003.

Crosby, Alfred. *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986.

Carney, Judith, and Richard Rosomoff. *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009.

Dean, Warren. *With Broadax and Firebrand: The Destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

Cushman, Gregory T. *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Funes Monzote, Reinaldo. *From Rainforest to Cane Field in Cuba: An Environmental History Since 1492*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008.

Hoelle, Jeffrey. *Rainforest Cowboys: The Rise of Ranching and Cattle Culture in Western Amazonia*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

Klubock, Thomas. *La Frontera: Forests and Ecological Conflict in Chile's Frontier Territory*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

*McCook, Stuart. *States of Nature: Science, Agriculture, and Environment in the Spanish Caribbean, 1760-1940*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002.

McNeill, J.R. *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Melville, Elinor. *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

*Miller, Shawn W. *An Environmental History of Latin America*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Rogers, Thomas D. *The Deepest Wounds: A Labor and Environmental History of Sugar in Northeast Brazil*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010.

Schwartz, Stuart B. *Sea of Storms: A History of Hurricanes in the Greater Caribbean from Columbus to Katrina*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015.

*Soluri, John. *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005.

Walkild, Emily. *Revolutionary Parks: Conservation, Social Justice, and Mexico's National Parks, 1910-1940*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2011.

Discussion Topics

Week 1: Conquest of Eden?

Readings: Miller to p.48, Studnicki-Gizbert & Schechter (on Canvas)

Week 2: The Columbian Exchange I: Big Stuff

Readings: Miller to p.87, Crosby to p.121

Map 1, "The Pre-Columbian Environmental Footprint"

Week 3: The Columbian Exchange II: Small Stuff

Readings: Finish Crosby

Week 4: American Silver, American Gold

Readings: Brown, all

Week 5: A Plague of Sheep

Readings: Selections from Melville; Miller pp.87-104

Week 6: The Big Dig in Colonial Mexico

Map 2, "The Colonial Environmental Footprint"

Readings: Selections from Candiani

Week 7: The Other Brazilian Forest

Readings: Selections from Dean

Week 8: Guano Smells Like Money

Readings: selections from Cushman

Week 9: The Price of Sugar

Readings: McCook, all; Selections from Mozote, Miller pp.105-66

Week 10: Bananas is our business

Readings: Soluri

Week 11: Goodbye to Glaciers

Readings: Carey

Week 12: The Forest for the Trees

Readings: Boyer, selections from Klubock

Week 13: Parks & Recreation

Map 3, "The Modern Environmental Footprint, 1810-2010"

Readings: Web Selections, including constitutions

Week 14: Reflections/New Voices

final papers due last day of regular classes