

HISTORY OF THE AMAZON
HIST1978Z, FALL 2013
Monday from 3pm to 5:20pm
Sayles Hall 205

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Course Description:

This course traces the history of human interactions and understandings of the Amazon, a tropical rainforest of continental dimensions. It has provided an environment for diverse encounters between outsiders and indigenous peoples, some of whom remain uncontacted to this day. The focus of the seminar will be on the Brazilian Amazon, but we will incorporate comparative perspectives from further afield. From indigenous beginnings and early visions of European environmentalism to the late nineteenth-century “Scramble for the Amazon” and the contemporary gaze on the rainforest, the region and its people have not only inhabited their own space but also the minds of others. Yet, the Amazons of Greek legends would soon have to give way to reality, which, in turn, would be incorporated into hybrid narratives.

We begin with pre-Columbian indigenous history and outside visions and arrive at present-day debates between preservation and development. The course balances between local, indigenous experience and histories of European interaction with the Amazon and the wider world. In addition to retelling the more chronological history of the Amazon, the course examines how memories linger in place. The sources range from a New York Times Bestseller – a mystery with which we begin and end our seminar – to analysis of the archeological evidence. We will use the tools of environmental, cultural, intellectual, social, and political history as well as those of biography and the history of science. In the end, we may not have a complete history of the Amazon but at least one of many perspectives.

Aims: This course has two inter-related aims:

- to introduce the general history of the Amazon;
- to develop the ability to consume and learn from different modes of history-writing from critical biography to the history of science.

Learning Outcomes: Through active participation in the seminar, you should be able to

- Determine the relevance of different approaches and themes to the history of the Amazon;
- Situate current debates concerning the future of the Amazon in a broader context;
- Write a piece of historical scholarship on the Amazon.

Requirements:

1. When required by the syllabus, you should upload **a response paper of c. 500 words** onto Canvas by noon on the day of the seminar. A total of three thoughtful response papers will help assess progress throughout the semester.
2. **Seminar introductions of 8-10 minutes** will be assigned during the second session.
3. **A literature review of five to seven pages**, double-spaced, in a field of your choice is due by 7 pm on Wednesday, October 16, 2013 on Canvas. Please email the topic to the instructor or visit office hours at least two weeks in advance. This review can be used as preparation for your research paper. However, if you discover that you would rather write your final paper on another topic that is fine, too, but it may require some additional research.
4. **A fifteen-page** (double-spaced) **research paper** is due by 9am on Monday, December 17, 2013 on Canvas. Paper topics should be discussed in advance during office hours.

Assessment: The course will be assessed based on

- Seminar participation 15%
- Seminar introduction 5%
- Response papers 15%
- Literature review 20%
- Final research paper 45%

Note on seminar participation: Although seminar participation necessarily entails presence at the seminar, more importantly it requires both regular and insightful contributions to weekly topics. One excused absence is allowed, if the instructor is notified before class time via email. For any absence beyond this for a medical reason, you must provide a note from University Health Services.

Please inform the instructor if you have a disability that might require some modification of any of these course procedures. You may speak with me after class or during office hours. For more information contact Student and Employee Accessibility Services at 401-863-9588 or SEAS@brown.edu.

Note on late papers: Late response papers will not be assessed and you will not receive credit for them. The literature review and the final research paper will be knocked down a third of a letter grade per twenty-four hour period, if submitted late.

Note on academic integrity and style: You, and solely you, are responsible for your written work. You must properly cite any source that you have consulted in preparing your paper. Be sure to make it clear whether you are quoting an author directly or building upon her thoughts. Footnotes should be used for the literature review and the final research paper, but are not necessary for weekly response papers. For guidance use *Chicago Manual of Style* or other standard academic style guides. In case of doubt, please raise concerns in class or with the instructor.

Office hours:

I will be holding office hours on Tuesdays from 10.15am to noon. Please sign up at <http://bit.ly/14bHgov> to confirm a slot. If you cannot regularly make this time, let me know and we can schedule another time.

Email policy:

When sending questions concerning the course, please use the prefix HIST1978Z in the subject line. Otherwise, your questions or concerns may be misdirected. Email is best left to administrative and scheduling matters or quick queries. More substantive questions should be raised during office hours, which I encourage you to attend. They are there for you, so please do.

Required readings:

These are the required works for the course. The rest will either include web links or be available on Canvas.

- Euclides da Cunha, *The Amazon: Land without History*
- Susanna B. Hecht, *The Scramble for the Amazon and the "Lost Paradise" of Euclides da Cunha*.
- David Grann, *The Lost City of Z: A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon*
- John Hemming, *Tree of Rivers: The Story of the Amazon*
- Hugh Raffles, *In Amazonia: A Natural History*

Recommended readings:

These works can provide useful background.

- Greg Grandin, *Fordlandia: The Rise and fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City*

- Barbara Weinstein, *The Amazon Rubber Boom, 1850-1920*

Weekly topics:

Section 1. Discoveries and recoveries

Week I – September 9: **What Once Was**

- “From The Stone Age To The Digital Age In One Big Leap”, NPR, <http://n.pr/11TTjy>
- “Google Earth helps find El Dorado”, *The Sunday Times of London*, 10 January 2010.
- David Grann, *The Lost City of Z: A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon*, Chapters 1-11.

Week II – September 16: **Edens and Amazons**

- Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1800*, pp. 1-55
- John Hemming, *Tree of Rivers*, Ch. 1.

Week III – September 23 – **Occupying the River *Response paper due at noon***

- Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900*, ch. 2
- John Hemming, *Tree of Rivers*, Ch. 2.
- Kenneth Maxwell, “The Spark: Pombal, the Amazon and the Jesuits”. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41105166>
- Walter Raleigh, *The Discovery of Guiana* (selections on Canvas).

Section 2. Perspectives on the Amazon

Week IV – September 30: **Travel**

- Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Ch. 1 “Introduction: Criticism in the Contact Zone”. <http://bit.ly/17AeAR2>
- John Hemming, *Tree of Rivers*, Chs. 3-4.
- Claude Levi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, Ch. 1 and 35.
- Percy Alvin Martin, “The Influence of the United States on the Opening of the Amazon to the World’s Commerce”. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2506100>

Week V – October 7: **Science**

- Neil Safier, “The Confines of the Colony”.
- Neil Safier, *Measuring the New World*, ch. 2 “An Enlightened Amazon”.
- John Hemming, *Tree of Rivers*, Chs. 5.

Literature review is due by 7 pm on Wednesday, October 16, 2013 on Canvas.

Week VI – October 21: **Nature**

- Hugh Raffles, *In Amazonia*, Chs. 1-2.
- John Hemming, *Tree of Rivers*, Ch. 8-9.
- Pärssinen et al., “Pre-Columbian geometric earthworks in the upper Purús: a complex society in western Amazonia”
<http://antiquity.ac.uk/ant/083/ant0831084.htm>
- Heckenberger et al., “The legacy of cultural landscapes in the Brazilian Amazon: implications for biodiversity”
<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2311456/>

Stuart B. Schwartz will deliver his keynote address at 5.30pm, Thursday, October 24th at the “Beyond Sweetness” conference at the John Carter Brown Library. <http://blogs.brown.edu/sugarandbeyond/> Please mark this date in your calendar to be sure to attend the lecture. You should also familiarize yourself with the JCB’s fall 2013 exhibition *Sugar and the Visual Imagination in the Atlantic*. Sugar created the original Brazilian “boom” while rubber had the largest impact on the Amazon, a topic to be assessed in Section 3. After attending the lecture and visiting the exhibition, please post at least two questions or comments concerning each onto the dedicated Canvas discussion board.

Week VII – October 28: **Memory** - *Response paper due at noon*

- Hugh Raffles, *In Amazonia*, Chs. 3-7.

Section 3. The scramble for the Amazon -

Visit with Professor Neil Safier, incoming Director of John Carter Brown Library – exact date to be determined.

Week VIII – November 4: **With or without History**

- Euclides da Cunha, *The Amazon: Land without History*.
- Susanna B. Hecht, *The Scramble for the Amazon and the “Lost Paradise” of Euclides da Cunha*, Chapter 1.

Please sign up for individual research paper meetings with the course instructor during weeks IX and X. Additional meeting times will be posted on Google Calendar <http://bit.ly/14bHgov>.

Week IX – November 11: **The Other Scramble**

- Susanna B. Hecht, *The Scramble for the Amazon and the “Lost Paradise” of Euclides da Cunha*, Part 2.
- John Hemming, *Tree of Rivers*, Ch. 6-7.

Week X – November 18: **The Empire of Rubber** *Response paper due at noon*

- Susanna B. Hecht, *The Scramble for the Amazon and the “Lost Paradise” of Euclides da Cunha*. Parts 3 & 4.

Section 4. The twentieth century and beyond and back

Week XI – November 25: **The March of Development**

- Viewing of *Bye Bye Brazil* (1980)
- Seth Garfield, “A Nationalist Environment: Indians, Nature, and the Construction of the Xingu National Park in Brazil”
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/3513749>
- Seth Garfield, “The Environment of Wartime Migration: Labor Transfers from the Brazilian Northeast to the Amazon During World War II”, *Journal of Social History*, vol. 43, no. 4 (Summer 2010): 989-1019. <http://bit.ly/15zccqF>

Please post circa five observations, comments and questions concerning *Bye Bye Brazil* (and touching upon Garfield in at least one, too) under the discussion section on Canvas by 9am on Monday, December 2. This may also take the form of a more formal response piece of a couple of paragraphs.

Week XII – December 2: **Reimagining the Amazon**

- John Hemming, *Tree of Rivers*, Chs. 10-11
- Candace Slater, *Entangled Edens: Visions of the Amazon*, chapters to be assigned according to seminar interest. <http://bit.ly/18mLlkI>

Week XIII – December 9: **The Past and the Future**

- Working groups on individual research papers
- Concluding discussion on David Grann, *The Lost City of Z: A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon*, Chapters 12-25.