

Dr. Jenny Leigh Smith  
Old CE G20  
jenny.smith@hts.gatech.edu  
(404) 894-1819

## **THE ENVIRONMENT IN WORLD HISTORY : HTS 6116**

### **Course Objectives:**

This graduate seminar will provide students with a survey of some of the literature in the rapidly expanding field of global environmental history. While focusing primarily on how historians research and write about natural histories, there will also be focus on how non-historians write environmental stories about the past, with examples taken from biology, geography, sociology and anthropology.

The objective of this course is to introduce students to the intellectual debates and fields of inquiry within the discipline of environmental history and to further familiarize graduate students with the skills of critical text analysis and historical research and writing that will be necessary to designing and completing a dissertation research project in the field of history, technology and society.

### **Course Requirements:**

Students will read 12-15 books and selections of books over the course of 14 weeks. Grading for the course will be based on participation in seminars (20%), short response papers that will be due every week (10%) discussion leading once during the semester (20%), and a final research paper that explores an original topic within global environmental history (50%). Attendance at all seminars is mandatory and repeated absences will have a serious negative impact upon final grades.

### **Course Readings:**

John McNeill. *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century*. W.W. Norton, 2000

Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha. *This Fissured Land: An Ecological History of India* 2005

Lucien Febvre *A Geographical Introduction to History*, 1925

Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs and Steel*. W.W. Norton, 1999

Richard White *The Organic Machine*

Mark Cioc: *The Rhine, An Eco-Biography* 2002 University of Washington Press, 2006

Arthur McEvoy *The fisherman's problem: ecology and law in the California fisheries, 1850-1980* Cambridge University Press, 1986

**Dr. Jenny Leigh Smith**  
Old CE G20  
jenny.smith@hts.gatech.edu  
(404) 894-1819

Elinor Melville *A Plague of Sheep* environmental consequences of the conquest of Mexico, 1997

Peter Boomgaard - *Frontiers of Fear: Tigers and People in the Malay World, 1600-1950* Yale University Press, 2001

Mark Elvin. *The Retreat of the Elephants: An Environmental History of China* Yale University Press, 2004

Judith Carney, *Black Rice, the African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* Harvard University Press, 2001.

James McCann *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop, 1500-2000* Harvard University press, 2005

Hugh Brody *Maps and Dreams: Indians and The British Colombian Frontier* Waveland Press, 1988

Piers Vitebsky *The Reindeer People: Living With Animals and Spirits in Siberia*

Greg Mitman *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Film* 2009

### **Important Due Dates:**

Week 10: Final Paper Proposal

Week 12: Bibliography and outline due for the final paper

Week 14: Students will give a 15-20 minute power point presentation of final paper.

Week 15: (exam period): final paper is due

### **Weekly Topics**

**Week 1:** Class Introduction, Syllabus hand out. Read a short article by Richard White "Are You an Environmentalist or do you Work for a Living?" in *Down to Earth* ed. Steinberg

**Homework for week #2:** selections from McNeill *Something New Under the Sun* and Gadgil & Guha *This Fissured Land*

**Week 2:** Global Environmental History Overviews

**Homework for next week:** Selections from Febvre *Geography in History* and Diamond *Guns, Germs and Steel*

**Dr. Jenny Leigh Smith**  
Old CE G20  
jenny.smith@hts.gatech.edu  
(404) 894-1819

**Week 3:** Old School EH and Geographic Determinism

**Homework for next week:** Cioc *The Rhine* and White *The Organic Machine*

**Week 4:** River Histories

**Homework for next week:** McEvoy, *The Fisherman's Problem*

**Week 5:** Fish and overfishing

**Homework for next week:** Melville *A Plague of Sheep*

**Week 6:** Ungulates and overgrazing

**Homework for next week:** Elvin: *The Retreat of the Elephants*

**Week 7:** Pachyderms and extinction

**Homework for next week:** Boomgaard: *Frontiers of Fear*

**Week 8:** Panthera and extinction

**Homework for next week:** Carney *Black Rice*, selections from Mintz  
*Sweetness and Power*

**Week 9:** Food and power in the New World

**Homework for next week:** McCann *Maize and Grace*

**Week 10:** Food and Power in the Old World

**Homework for next week:** Brody, *Maps and Dreams*

**Week 11:** Landscape and History in Canada

**Homework for next week:** Vitebsky: *The Reindeer People*

**Week 12:** Landscape and History in Siberia

**Homework for next week:** selections from Mitman, *Reel Nature*

**Week 13:** Environment in Film: Clips from Cousteau, Stouffer, Jane Goodall, etc....

**Week 14:** Class Presentations of Final Projects