

**ENVI 343/HIST 343
IMPERIAL NATURE:
THE UNITED STATES AND THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT**

Macalester College, Spring 2009
Olin-Rice 243, M 7:00-10:00

Prof. Chris Wells

Office: Olin Rice 249c
Email: wells@macalester.edu
Phone: 651-696-6803
Office Hours:
and by appointment

Course Description:

Although the United States accounts for just five percent of the world's population, it consumes roughly twenty-five percent of the world's total energy, has the world's largest economy, and is the world's largest consumer and generator of waste. Relative to its size, its policies and actions have had a significantly disproportionate impact on global economic development and environmental health. Mixing broad themes and detailed case studies, this course will focus on the complex historical relationship between American actions and changes to the global environment.

Required Readings:

The following books are available for purchase at the College Bookstore:

John Soluri, *Banana Cultures*
Vandana Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution*
Paul Roberts, *The End of Oil*

Copies of all other readings, marked with an **X**, are available as e-reserves through the library. Access them at <http://www.macalester.edu/library/resources/reserves/index.html>, or through the course's Moodle website (see below). A hard copy of each reserve reading is also available at the library circulation desk.

Be advised that this course has an appropriately heavy reading load for a history seminar. I have chosen readings for readability and interest, but please plan ahead—particularly when assignments are due—so that you are able to complete the readings for the day they are listed in this syllabus. *Completing the readings is vital to the success of this course.*

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

Book review (1,000 words)	10%
Research proposal (3-4 pages)	10%
“State of the field” essay (3-4 pages)	20%
Research paper (12-15 pages)	35%
Class participation	25%

Assignments

The Book Review: Identify and read a book that addresses some aspect of the relationship between the United States and global environmental change and assess it in a 1,000-word review essay. (I will distribute a list of pre-approved titles in class; run books not on this list by me first.) What is its argument? What are its greatest strengths and weaknesses? I strongly suggest that you read Schrag, “How to Write a Review” (available at <http://www.schrag.info/teaching/review.html>) before you tackle this assignment.

The Research Proposal: Your 3-4 page research proposal should concisely explain your research paper topic, why it is valuable, and your intended methodology. (Re-read the section on crafting a proposal on p. 13 of Storey, “Getting Started,” one of our reading assignments on 2/16. Be sure to answer all six questions in your proposal, and to address what you see as the biggest problems you still need to overcome to before you can complete your project.)

The “State of the Field” Essay: This short essay (3-4 pages) should critically assess what you think are the 3-4 most important existing scholarly sources that are relevant to your topic. (No more than one of these should come from our course syllabus.) Your goal is to identify and assess the major approaches, themes, and historical questions that have motivated other scholars who are interested in your topic. What are the most important lessons that we have already learned? What do we still not know that you might try to investigate in your paper? Do you see any weak points or holes in the literature that you might fill? At the end of your essay, please include an annotated bibliography with another 6-7 important sources, so that between your essay and the annotated bibliography you have identified and summarized ten relevant sources altogether. (See Storey, “Getting Started,” pp. 13-14, for specific instructions on putting together your annotated bibliography, which is not included in your page limit for this assignment.)

The Research Paper: Research papers should be on a topic of your own choosing that deals with some aspect of the historical relationship between the United States and global environmental change, and should be 12-15 pages in length. This paper should be based on a mixture of primary and secondary sources, should address historical questions and utilize historical methodologies, and should represent your best efforts to think through the issues involved in polished, carefully edited, well-crafted prose. Due Friday, May 8.

The Peer-Review Draft of the Research Paper: Fully completed drafts of your research paper—with the same level of polish and completeness that you would typically reserve for a final draft—are due on Monday, April 27, at the beginning of class. Of the 35% of your total grade allocated to your research paper, 5% will reflect the completeness and formal characteristics (e.g., footnotes, full sentences, etc.) of the review draft, according to a set of clearly defined criteria that will be distributed later in the semester. (Note that this assessment will *not* focus on the quality of the ideas or argumentation in the review draft.) The remaining 30% allocated to your research paper will assess the overall quality of the final version of your paper, including its ideas and argumentation.

The Peer-Review Process: All students will meet with their peer-review groups between Wednesday 4/29 and Friday 5/1, to provide feedback on the peer-review drafts submitted by your group members on April 27. (Review tips will be distributed later in the semester.)

Participation grades will be based on class attendance, participation in discussions, and your leadership of an “issues discussion” (described below). Discussions are the driving force in this class, so it is vital that everyone arrive prepared to discuss the day’s material. Our goal will be to analyze issues revolving around the U.S. and its relationship with the global environment, to explore connections between events, to answer questions, to clear up confusion, to discuss major themes, and above all to engage with the readings. For those 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.

The “Researching the Issues” Discussion: Once this semester, you will lead a class discussion fifteen to twenty minutes in length. In preparing for this discussion, you must identify two primary documents. Your first document should be a primary source that is cited in that day’s assigned reading. You may have to request this source through interlibrary loan, which can sometimes take awhile to arrive, so plan ahead! If you absolutely cannot get any of the primary sources cited in one of the day’s readings, confer with me in advance to make other arrangements. Your second primary document should be from the recent past, and should connect explicitly to one of the themes in the assigned reading. You should excerpt these two documents so that they are a combined maximum length of three pages or less. (Please do *not* shrink the text to microscopic proportions to remain within length—excerpt instead.) You must upload these documents as an attachment posted to the Primary Documents Discussion Forum on our course Moodle site by 6 p.m. the day before class, and you will take charge of the discussion that ensues.

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. All of your written work should reflect your own ideas, and should properly attribute the work of others that you engage. On avoiding plagiarism, see <http://www.macalester.edu/max/writinghandbook/plagiarism.html>.

Our course’s Moodle website duplicates much of the information in this syllabus, including the reading schedule and assignment due dates. It also provides a direct link to our course’s e-reserves. Go to <http://moodle.macalester.edu/>, and login using your email account’s username and password. After logging in, click on the link to Imperial Nature in the My Courses section. Anything posted to the Primary Documents Discussion Forum will automatically be emailed to everyone registered for the course.

Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Please meet with the Associate Dean of Students, Lisa Landreman (coordinator for services for students with disabilities) at the beginning of the semester to ensure that your accommodations are approved and in place. She can be reached in the Office of Student Affairs, 119 Weyerhaeuser, by phone at 651-696-6220, or email llandrem@macalester.edu.

Class Schedule

All **reserve items** are marked **X**

NOTE: You are also responsible for reading “issues” documents on our Moodle website.

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTIONS

M 1/26 Lecture & Discussion: Imperialism, Ecological and Otherwise

UNIT I. YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT

WEEK 2: THE AGROECOLOGY OF EMPIRE (175)

M 2/2 Soluri, *Banana Cultures*, chs. 1-6.

WEEK 3: FROM FARM TO PASTURE AND FOREST (119)

M 2/9 Soluri, *Banana Cultures*, chs. 7-8.
Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite*, 151-216. **X**

WEEK 4: DOING HISTORY (78)

M 2/16 Storey, “Getting Started,” 3-15. **X**
Schrag, “How to Research a History Paper,” and “How to Write an Essay”^{***}
Booth, Colomb, and Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 29-84. **X**
Zinsser, “The Tyranny of the Final Product,” 255-264. **X**
Lamott, *Bird by Bird*, 16-27. **X**

Book Review (hard copy) due at the beginning of class

WEEK 5: THE GREEN REVOLUTION (274)

M 2/23 Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution*, entire.
Doyle, *Altered Harvest*, 255-281. **X**

UNIT II. GLOBAL MARKETS, GLOBAL POLITICS

WEEK 6: GREEN NEOLIBERALISM AT THE WORLD BANK (94)

M 3/2 Goldman, *Imperial Nature*, 46-99 and 181-220. **X**

WEEK 7: RECYCLING AND HEGEMONY (29)

M 3/9 Grossman, “Not in Our Backyard,” 182-210. **X**
Research Proposals (hard copy) due at the beginning of class

WEEK 8: SPRING BREAK

M 3/16 NO CLASS (Note: I strongly recommend that you read
Roberts, *The End of Oil*, in its entirety over break.)

WEEK 9: THE ETHICS AND POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE (87)

M 3/23 Gardiner, “Ethics and Global Climate Change,” 555-595. **X**
Agarwal & Narain, “Global Warming in an Unequal World,” 157-160. **X**
Joshi, “Rich Nations Accused of Green Imperialism on Climate Change” **X**
Kolbert, *Field Notes from a Catastrophe*, 131-170. **X**

*** Available at <http://www.schrag.info/teaching/index.html>

WEEK 10: THE POLITICS OF ENERGY (142)

M 3/30 Roberts, *The End of Oil*, Prologue through ch. 5.
State of the Field Essay (hard copy) due at the beginning of class

WEEK 11: ENERGY IS POWER (190)

M 4/6 Roberts, *The End of Oil*, chs. 6-13.

WEEK 12: WAR AND THE ENVIRONMENT (95)

M 4/13 Buckingham, *Operation Ranch Hand*, Foreword and 87-136. **X**
Griffiths, *Agent Orange*, selected pages. **X**
Faber, "War Against Nature," 191-221. **X**

UNIT III. IMPERIAL MORALITY?

WEEK 13: MISSIONARY ZEAL (93)

M 4/20 Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible*, 13-82. **X**
Moseley and Laris, "West African Environmental Narratives and
Development-Volunteer Praxis," 59-81. **X**

WEEK 14: ORGANICS, FAIR TRADE, AND ECOTOURISM (72)

M 4/27 Rice, "Noble Goals and Challenging Terrain," 39-62. **X**
Honey, "In Search of the Golden Toad," 3-26. **X**
Belsky, "The Meaning of the Manatee," 285-308. **X**
**Peer-Review Draft of the Research Paper (3 hard copies) due at the
beginning of class**

W 4/29- F 5/1 PEER REVIEW GROUP MEETINGS

WEEK 15: PRESERVING NATURE, PRESERVING JUSTICE (6)

M 5/4 Reel, "Argentine Land Fight Divides Environmentalists, Rights Advocates." **X**
Welsh, "Brazil Tells Foreigners Amazon Not for Sale." **X**

F 5/8 **Final Papers due in hard copy at my office by 7 p.m.**