

# Imperial Nature:

The United States and the Global Environment

Macalester College  
Fall 2015

TR 1:20-2:50  
Olin-Rice 300



Prof. Chris Wells

Olin Rice 249c (office)

[wells@macalester.edu](mailto:wells@macalester.edu)

651-696-6803

Office Hours:

W 3:30-4:30,

F 10:50-11:50,

and by appointment

## Required Texts

John Soluri, *Banana Cultures*

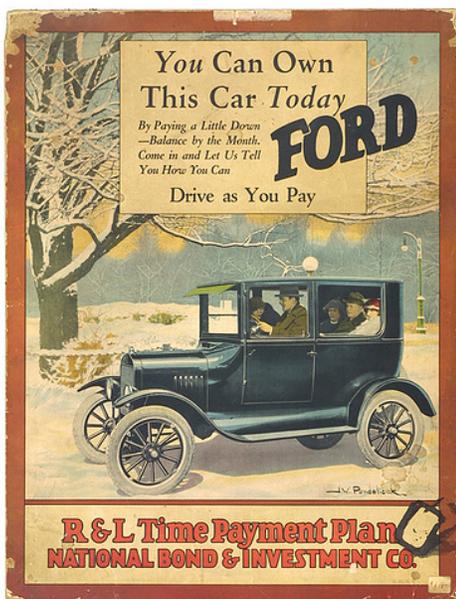
Greg Grandin, *Fordlandia*

Bartow Elmore, *Citizen Coke*

All other course readings are available on Moodle

## 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.



## Grading

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Book review (1000 words)	10%
State of the Field (4-5 pp)	15%
Primary docs collection	20%
Class participation	25%
Research paper (12-15 pp)	30%

## Email & Office Hours

You can always reach me by email. I will usually reply quickly, and always within 24 hours. My office hours are Wed 3:30-4:30, Fri 10:50-11:50, and by appointment. You can reserve a Wednesday slot in my office at [bit.ly/1AOzawe](http://bit.ly/1AOzawe). Friday “walking” office hours will take place around Shaw Field (in nice weather) or the Field House track (if inclement). If you cannot make my open office hours, give me some times that work for you to check against my schedule. Talking to students is one of my favorite things about being a professor. No question is too small, and no pretext to talk is too flimsy: if you want to talk, we can talk.

## Primary Docs Discussions

Once this semester, you will lead a class discussion for 10-15 minutes. To prepare, identify two primary documents: 1) a primary source cited in the day’s assigned reading, and 2) a primary document from the recent past that connects directly to one of the themes in the day’s assigned reading (and preferably in the first document). Excerpt your documents to a maximum combined length of three pages or less. (Please do *not* shrink the text to microscopic proportions to remain within length—excerpt instead). Upload these documents as an attachment posted to the News Forum on our course Moodle site by 6 p.m. the day before class with the expectation that everyone will read them before class. You will take charge of the in-class discussion that ensues.

## Participation

Participation grades will be based on class attendance and the quality of your participation in discussions. Discussions are the driving force in this class, so it is vital that that we all respect one another’s time, space, values, and ideas by coming to class on time and prepared to engage in respectful, intellectually challenging discussions. Our project in class meetings will be to explore connections between events, to answer questions, to clear up any confusion, to discuss the major themes of the course, and above all to engage with the readings. Please remember that we are all in this together, and we are all responsible for the success of the course. As eager as I am to share with you what I know, I expect that you will learn at least as much from one another as you will from me. *No laptops during discussion, please*



## Resources and Policies

**Regular attendance** is required in order to receive a passing grade for the course, regardless of how well you do on your written assignments. Absences will directly affect your class participation grade.

**Academic dishonesty** erodes the basic foundations of higher education: exchange, debate, and the thoughtful consideration of what we know, how we know it, and why it matters. It has no place in this course. For Macalester’s policies on academic integrity, see [bit.ly/1mKrAKF](http://bit.ly/1mKrAKF). For help on avoiding plagiarism, see [bit.ly/1mJTGG4](http://bit.ly/1mJTGG4). For the Quick Guide to the Chicago Manual of Style, the citation system used by historians, see [bit.ly/1lsPe3j](http://bit.ly/1lsPe3j) (requires login).

**Accommodations.** In some circumstances, course design may pose barriers to a student’s ability to access or demonstrate mastery of course content. Reasonable accommodations can be implemented in such circumstances. If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, please contact Lisa Landreman (‘16) or Robin Hart Ruthenbeck (‘17-’19) at x6220.

**Late Work.** You will be assessed a late penalty of one-third of a letter grade per day for late assignments, so please plan ahead! If extenuating circumstances arise, you may discuss with me ahead of time the possibility of an extension with a reduced penalty.

## 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 1-2 page paper. (I will distribute a list of pre-approved titles in class.) What is its argument? What are its greatest strengths and weaknesses?

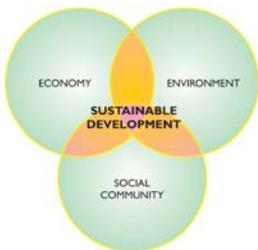


which is not included in your page limit for this assignment.)

*The Research Question Discussion:* Prepare a 3-4 minute presentation that explains your research paper topic, the historical question you hope to answer, why that question is valuable, and what you find most interesting or important about your question.

*The Primary Documents Collection:* Plan to complete this assignment as you wrap up your primary research for your research paper. For this assignment, you should:

- 1) Photocopy 10-12 of the best primary source documents that you have found as you have conducted your research. Excerpt each document to a length of no more than two pages to include in the collection. (Do not use more than two documents from any single periodical.) Record the full bibliographic information of each source following the Chicago Manual of Style. (For help with this style, visit this site: [http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChiNotes\\_1stRef\\_book.html](http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/DocChiNotes_1stRef_book.html))
- 2) Write a gloss for each source, limiting yourself to no more than one double-spaced, half-page paragraph per gloss. As you write your glosses, consider questions such as: What does this source say? Why is it valuable? What are its biases? How does it interact with the other source—primary and secondary—you have collected?
- 3) Divide your documents into 3-4 subject categories that you plan to use in your research paper. Use these categories to make a table of contents for the collection.
- 4) Write an introduction to your collection no longer than one page. Explain its strengths and weaknesses as a base of evidence for your research paper. Where is your evidence strongest? Weakest? If you could travel to archives (or read another language), how would this collection be different?
- 5) Provide the working title of your paper as Primary Title: Secondary Title.



*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.

*The Peer-Review Draft of the Research Paper:* A complete draft of your research paper—with the same polish and completeness typical of a final draft—is due Tuesday, Nov. 24, at the start of class. Of the 30% 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 clearly defined rubric. This assessment will focus entirely on completeness, and will *not* assess the quality of the ideas or argumentation in the review draft. The final version of your research paper, which will account for 25% of your grade, will be assessed for its ideas, argumentation, and overall effectiveness.



*The “State of the Field” Essay:* This short essay (4-5 pages) should critically assess what you deem to be, based on your research, the 3-4 most important existing scholarly sources that inform your research question. At the end of your essay, include an annotated bibliography with another 6-7 important secondary sources, so that between your essay and the annotated bibliography you have identified and summarized at least ten relevant sources. (See Storey, “Getting Started,” for specific instructions on putting together your annotated bibliography, which is not included in your page limit for this assignment.)

**DRAFT READING SCHEDULE: SEE MOODLE FOR OUR OFFICAL LIST**

## WEEK 1: IMPERIALISM, ECOLOGICAL AND OTHERWISE (0)

9/3 R Imperialism, Sustainability, and the U.S. on a Global Stage

## UNIT I: THE AGROECOLOGY OF EMPIRE

## WEEK 2: RETHINKING THE BANANA REPUBLIC (160)

9/8 T Soluri, *Banana Cultures*, Intro-ch. 3.

Spend some time with the valuable resources at: <http://historyprofessor.org/>

9/10 R Soluri, *Banana Cultures*, chs. 4-5.

## WEEK 3: TROPICAL COMMODITIES IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE (117)

9/15 T Soluri, *Banana Cultures*, chs. 6-8.

9/17 R Tucker, "The Last Drop," 81-112. **X**

## WEEK 4: SMALL-TOWN IMPERIALISM (293)

9/22 T Grandin, *Fordlandia*, intro-ch. 8.

Please bring a laptop to class today : Zotero workshop 1

9/24 R Grandin, *Fordlandia*, chs. 9-18.

Please bring a laptop to class today : Zotero workshop2

## WEEK 5: ECOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES (134)

9/29 T Grandin, *Fordlandia*, chs. 19-end.

Schrag, "How to Write a Review," 1-2. **X**

10/1 R Tucker, "The Crop on Hooves," 151-83. **X**

Storey, "Getting Started," 3-24. **X**

**Book Review due via Moodle by start of class**



## WEEK 6: COCA-COLA CAPITALISM (214)

10/6 T Elmore, *Citizen Coke*, Prologue-ch. 3.

Graff and Birkenstein, "Entering the Conversation," 1-15. **X**

10/8 R Elmore, *Citizen Coke*, chs. 4-6.

Schrag, "How to Write a Prospectus," 1-7. **X**

## UNIT II: AN "AMERICAN EARTH"

## WEEK 7: DEVELOPMENT, AMERICAN STYLE (85)

10/13 T Robertson, "This is the American Earth," 561-84. **X**

**First round of Research Question Discussions**

10/15 R Staples, "The Birth of Development," 1-7. **X**

Goldman, "The Rise of the Bank," 46-99. **X**

**Second round of Research Question Discussions**



## WEEK 8: WAR AND THE ENVIRONMENT (72 + 5:08 video)

10/20 T Hamblin, "Vietnam and the Seeds of Destruction," 179-96. **X**

Griffiths, *Agent Orange*, 14 selected pages. **X**

Merlin and Gonzales, "Environmental Impacts of Nuclear Testing in Remote Oceania, 1946-1996," 167-202. **X**

"A Time-Lapse Map of Every Nuclear Explosion Since 1945" (5:08),

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W\\_lLhBt8Vg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_lLhBt8Vg)

Richardson, "What is Historiography, Anyway?" 1-2. **X**

Schrag "How to Write an Essay," 1-2. **X**

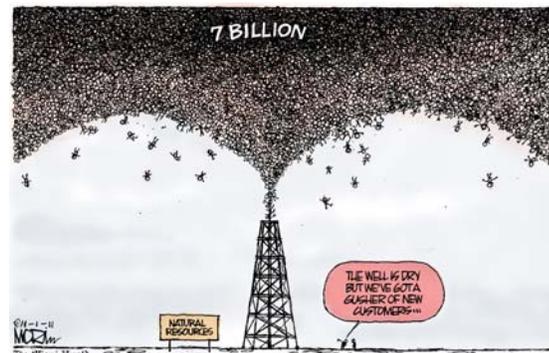
10/22 R NO CLASS: FALL BREAK

## WEEK 9: INTERVENING IN INDIA (119)

- 10/27 T Robertson, "Paul Ehrlich, the 1960s, and the Population Bomb," 126-51. X  
**State of the Field Essay due via Moodle by start of class**
- 10/29 R Doyle, *Altered Harvest*, 255-281. X  
 Cullather, *The Hungry World*, chs. 7 and 9. X  
 Cronon, "Learning to Do Historical Research," 1-10. X

## WEEK 10: THE COSTS OF EMPIRE (174)

- 11/3 T Elmore, *Citizen Coke*, chs. 6-7.  
 Schrag, "How to Research a History Paper," 1-2. X
- 11/5 R Elmore, *Citizen Coke*, chs. 8-9 and Epilogue  
 Behring, "Inside the Digital Dump," 74-79. X  
 Graff and Birkenstein, "Her Point Is," 30-41. X



## WEEK 11: SECURING STRATEGIC RESOURCES (85)

- 11/10 T Klare, *Blood and Oil*, chs. 1-2. X  
 Walzer, "Is There An American Empire?" 1-6. X
- 11/12 R Black, "Peak Oil," Climate Change, and Petroleum under Siege," 213-36.  
**Primary Documents Collection due via Moodle by start of class**

## WEEK 12: THE ETHICS AND POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE (94 + TBA)

- 11/17 T Roberts and Parks, "Fueling Injustice," 133-184. X  
 Zinsser, "The Tyranny of the Final Product," 255-264. X  
 Lamott, "Shitty First Drafts," 21-27. X
- 11/19 R Agarwal & Narain, "Global Warming in an Unequal World," 157-160. X  
 Joshi, "Rich Nations Accused of Green Imperialism on Climate Change," 1-2. X  
 Klein, "Climate Rage," 1-5. X  
 Bond, "Climate Capitalism Won at Cancun—Everybody Else Loses," 1-3. X  
 McKibben, "Global Warming's Terrifying New Math," 1-9. X  
 Paris readings TBA  
 Schrag, "The Anatomy of a Ten-Page Paper," 1-2. X

## UNIT III: IMPERIAL MORALITY?

## WEEK 13: MISSIONARY ZEAL (93)

- 11/24 T Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible*, 13-82. X  
 Moseley and Laris, "West African Environmental Narratives and Development Volunteer Praxis," 59-81. X  
**Peer-Review Draft due via Moodle by start of class**
- 11/26 R NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK



## WEEK 14: ORGANICS, FAIR TRADE, AND ECOTOURISM (129)

- 12/1 T Cohen, Glass, Paper, Beans, selections. X
- 12/3 R Honey, "In Search of the Golden Toad," 3-26. X  
 Belsky, "The Meaning of the Manatee," 285-308. X  
 Wirth summary of Booth et al., "Revising Your Organization and Argument," 2. X

## WEEK 15: CONSERVATION REDUX (73)

- 12/8 T Reel, "Argentine Land Fight Divides Environmentalists, Rights Advocates." X  
 Welsh, "Brazil Tells Foreigners Amazon Not for Sale." X  
 Davis, Rulli, and D'Odorico, "The Global Land Rush and Climate Change." X
- 12/10 R McKibben, "The Durable Future," 177-232. X  
**Peer Group Meetings using Peer Review Checklist (available on Moodle)**
- 12/17 R **Final Papers due via Moodle by 1:30 pm**