HIST 180: Global Environmental History
Fall 2014: MWF 2:30-3:20 pm Science Center N292
Instructor: Willis Okech Oyugi
Department of History
Office: RICE 303; Office Tel: x56259
Office Hours: MWF: 3:30-4:30 & by appointment
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Course Description/Goals
This course explores one of the fundamental aspects in the history of humanity—the continual interactions between humans and their natural environment. From earliest times to present, we use historical inquiry to explore these relationships through space and time as we examine how human agencies have shaped diverse environments and how natural environments have shaped human histories. We compare, contrast, and seek interconnections across regions/environments and how these have been manifested in human-environment interactions.

We begin by examining these interactions from prehistory, through pre-industrial agriculture, and through the Little Ice Age. In the second part of the course we turn our attention to topics such as animal, plant, and disease transfers; industrialization; imperialism/colonialism; environmentalism and conservatism; urbanization; demographic change; and climate change. Throughout the course we will broadly interrogate some of the major historiographical debates and theories pertinent to environmental history and these dynamic interactions.

By the end of the semester students should be able: 1). To analyze authors’ perspectives and arguments; 2). To question narratives of environmental determinism and degradation as relates to different regions of the world; 3). To analyze, write, and speak about environmental history taking into account chronology as well as time and space.

Required Texts/Materials*
The following books are available at the Oberlin Bookstore. These texts have also been placed on print reserve, or are available electronically in Mudd Library. If for any reason you cannot acquire or access any of the reading texts/materials please contact me. All other readings are available on Blackboard (BB) unless otherwise indicated.


**Course Participation**
The course will be in a lecture-discussion format. You should complete the weekly readings as scheduled prior to attending lecture. This preparation will facilitate your grasp of the lecture material and enhance your participation in class discussion. Because participation is a significant part of your grade, and since the lectures complement the readings, attendance is mandatory and will be registered.

**Evaluation/Grading**

Attendance and engagement in class discussions **20%**
Weekly analytical summaries based on current world environmental events (these will be due at the beginning of class Wednesday or Friday) **10%**
Mid-Term Exam **15%**
Paper Proposal (3-4 pages) **10%**
Final Exam (Date?) **15%**
Term Paper (5-7 pages) **30%**

**Exams:** The midterm and final examinations will consist of a map quiz, identifications and short essay questions based on material from all the lectures, readings, and discussions. Note that the final will not be cumulative.

Grading will be as follows: A+100-97; A 96-93; A- 92-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-83; B- 82-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-73; C- 72-70; D 65-69, F below 65.

**Please note that I would prefer to answer questions concerning grades during office hours or by appointment.**

**Writing Assignments**

• I will give you more detailed information about the subject matter.
• Papers must be typed in 12-point font (Times New Roman), double-spaced with one-inch margins, and include page numbers and a title.
• The Term Paper will be graded on originality, structure and style and must be cited appropriately following the *Chicago Manual of Style*. Footnotes are preferred (although you may use endnotes).
• I am happy to discuss your assignments with you as you prepare them, the earlier the better. Email or come see me during office hours to talk about the term paper outline, thesis paragraph/s, or drafts (sent at least 48 hours before the deadline).
• You must submit a hard copy of your paper in class. E-mail submissions will only be accepted under certain conditions.
• Late papers will be penalized 1/3 of a letter grade per day and will only be accepted up to one week after the due date.
• I encourage you to take advantage of the writing resources Oberlin offers to you. The writing center located at Mudd Center offers individual assistance at any stage in the writing process.

• **Honor Code: Cheating and plagiarism will not be tolerated.** Consequences can be dire and range from failing grade on the assignment to expulsion. For more information on academic conduct familiarize yourself with the Student Honor Code available at: [http://www oberlin.edu/students/life/rulesregs.html](http://www.oberlin.edu/students/life/rulesregs.html). Accordingly, the College requires that students sign the honor code for all assignments that reads: "**I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment.**"

**Other Information (Please keep the following in mind)**

• I endeavor to answer course-related emails within the shortest time possible. It is, however, my prerogative to respond to student emails between 6pm-9am and on weekends.

• Cell phones, laptops, iPods and other technological *distractions* are not welcome in section.

• Appropriate accommodation will always be granted to students with documented disabilities or those who feel they may have physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities. Please let me know early in the semester so that your learning disabilities may be appropriately met. Any questions about the necessary process of documenting disabilities should be addressed to Jane Boomer, Coordinator of Services for Students with Disabilities (Peters Hall).

**Course Reading Schedule**

**Week 1: Introductions**

9/1 (Labor Day, No Class)

9/3: Introduction to the Course


**Week 2: Prehistory to circa 7000 BC**

9/8, 9/10, & 9/12

• J.R. McNeil, Ch.1: Prologue: Peculiarities of a Prodigal Century, pp. 3-17.


Week 3: circa 7000-circa 2500 BCE: Neolithic
9/15, 9/17, & 9/19
• Jared Diamond, Guns, Germs, and Steel, 85-156.

Week 4: 2100 BCE-1AD: Pre-Modern Civilizations/Bronze and Iron Age
9/22, 9/24, & 9/26
• Simmons, “Pre-Industrial Agriculture,” in Global Environmental History, pp. 52-108. (BB)

Week 5: Pre-Modern Civilizations II
9/29, 10/1, & 10/3
• Fernandez-Armesto, F, Civilization, Chapters 3-6
• Hughes, J. D. “The Middle Ages,” in An Environmental History of the World, pp. 85-111.
• First Paper Draft Due

Week 6: Pre-Modern Civilizations...Conti...
10/6, 10/8

10/10: Mid-Term Exam

Week 7: Nature vs. Humans: Medieval Warm Period/Little Ice Age
10/13, 10/15
10/17: Paper Proposal/Draft Due

Week 8: (Fall Recess, No Class)
Week 9: The Columbian Exchange, circa 1400
10/27, 10/29, & 10/31

**Week 10: Industrial Revolution: Ecological Footprints**

11/3, 11/5, & 11/7


**Week 11: Global Environmentalism**

11/10, 11/12, & 11/14


**Week 12: Demography**

11/17, 11/19, & 11/21


**Week 13: Comoditization, Power, and Nature I**
11/24 & 11/26

- McNeil, *Something New Under the Sun*, Ch. 5 & 6

11/28: No Class, Thanksgiving break

Week 14: Commoditization, Power, and Nature II

12/1, 12/3, & 12/5

- James Scott, *Seeing Like a State*.

Week 15: Urbanization, Pollution, and Climate Change

12/8, 12/10, & 12/12


*Term Paper Due 12/12 at the beginning of class*

**Final Exam: December 17 at 2.30**

Note: *This syllabus is provisional and is subject to minor changes. Please check with Blackboard for up-to-date information.*