HIST 321 Missionaries and the Environment

Instructor: Garrett Washington  garrett.washington@oberlin.edu  Tel: 440-775-6879
Class Time: Wed 2:30-4:20
Classroom: Peters 212
My Office: Rice 28
Office Hours: T/Th 2:30-4PM and By Appointment

Course Description:
Examining Western Christian missionary activity since 1500, this course will highlight the frequently ignored environmental elements of the story. From Jesuit reducciones in 16th-century New Spain to conservation thinking in 19th-century South Africa, European and U.S. missionaries’ footprint on agriculture, natural resource management, and local perceptions of nature are very considerable. We will use scholarly literature and primary sources to study how missionaries viewed, interacted with, and impacted the environment and environmental thinking in the non-West. This writing-intensive class will allow students to think in new and more complex ways about the place of missionaries in global environmental history and to prepare and execute an original research-based history paper on this topic.

Required Texts:
(All Readings will be available electronically via Blackboard, J-Stor, or Oberlin College Library Electronic Resources, or)

Class Topics and Readings:

February 5  Intro to the Course
READING(S) : none
ASSIGNMENT(S) : none

February 12  First Encounters with the Environment of the “Other”
READING(S)
2) Jose de Acosta, Historia Natural y moral de las Indias p. 77, 81-84, 97-98 (at Jose de Acosta Electronic Resource)
ASSIGNMENT(S):
Summary 1 (of Anagnostou) due

February 19  First Encounters with the Environment of the “Other”
READING(S)
2) David Livingstone, The Last Journals of David Livingstone, in Central

**ASSIGNMENT(S):**

**Primary Source Analysis** due

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**February 26**

Missionaries and Land-use (Change) in “Discovered” Worlds

**READING(S):**


**ASSIGNMENT(S):**

**Response Paper** (on both readings) due

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**March 5**

Missionaries and Environmental Disaster: Archival Visit

**READING(S):**


-OR-


-OR-


**ASSIGNMENTS:**

1) **Summary 2** (on the Oberlin-related secondary source of your choice)

2) Browsing the Shansi Digital Collection

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**March 12**

Missionaries and Environmental Education

**READINGS:**

1) Gary R. Hess, “American Agricultural Missionaries and Efforts at Economic Improvement in India” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 42, No. 1
(Jan., 1968), 23-34

ASSIGNMENTS: none

March 19
Oberlin Shansi and the Environment
READING(S): None
ASSIGNMENT(S): Discussion
Shansi Paper due

March 26
No Class

April 2
Missionaries and Changing Environmental Thought: Conservation in Southern Africa AND Library Visit
READING(S):
ASSIGNMENT(S): Topic Paragraph due

April 9
Missionaries and Changing Environmental Thought: Conservation in New Zealand
READING(S):
ASSIGNMENT(S): Proposal and Prelim Bibliography due

April 16
Missionaries and Changes in Environmental Thinking: Climate
READING(S):

**ASSIGNMENT(S):**

**Literature Review** due

**April 23**  
Missionaries and Changes in Environmental Thinking: Disease

**READING(S)**


**ASSIGNMENT(S):**

**Summary** 3 (of Archer or Oduntan) due

**April 30**  
Presentations

**READING(S):** none

**ASSIGNMENT(S):** none

**May 7**  
Wrap Up

**READING(S):** none

**ASSIGNMENT(S):**

**Rough Draft** due by 5/5,  
**Peer-Review** comments due 5/7 (in class)

**May 14**  
Final Paper due

**Grading Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Final Paper</td>
<td>27.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topic Paragraph</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposal</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preliminary Bibliography</td>
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<td>Peer Review</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shansi Paper</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discussion Leadership</td>
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<tr>
<td>Primary Source Analysis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summaries (x3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Response Paper</td>
<td>2.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>5%</td>
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</tbody>
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Assignment Explanations:

**Final Paper:** (2500-3000 words) Write a paper comparing modern missionaries’ environmental encounters and interactions in China with those of missionaries in one of the following regions: South Asia, Southeast Asia, North Africa, or Southern Africa.

**Topic Paragraph:** (250 words) Write a paragraph describing the topic that you have chosen for your **Final Paper** and the types of sources (not the names of the sources just yet) you hope to use.

**Proposal:** (500 words) State your research question and why it is important, and explain how you plan to go about answering your question.

**Literature Review** (500-words) Summarize the literature that you have read thus far on your topic and situate your research question within that literature.

**Preliminary Bibliography:** Identify at least 8 peer-reviewed secondary sources (academic journal articles or books) and 4 primary sources (other than those consulted for your **Shansi Paper**) that you intend to use for your **Final Paper**.

**Peer Review:** A thorough review of your peer's Final Paper Rough Draft with constructive comments and a comments summary at the end.

**Shansi Paper:** Write a 1000-word Research Essay Using at least 3 secondary sources and 2 different kinds of primary sources to respond to one of the following questions: 1) What “environment” did Oberlin missionaries encounter in China?; 2) How did Oberlin missionaries impact the Chinese environment/local approaches to it? 3) How did environmental disaster in China affect Oberlin missionaries?

**Discussion Leadership:** On six designated days, one student will be in charge of setting the discussion agenda. This entails a short presentation in which the discussion leader identifies the central themes brought out by the common readings and then proposes a series of questions for the class to consider.

**Primary Source Analysis Worksheet:** Respond to the questions on this worksheet as they relate to the assigned writings in the journal of David Livingstone.

**Summary:** (300 words) A concise summarization of a single reading assignment, meant to allow you to practice expressing yourself clearly and concisely within a limited number of words.
Response Paper: (300 words) Write a short essay in which you respond to the assigned reading with an evaluation of the how well the author accomplishes her objectives, some interesting questions that the readings raise for you, and the overall significance of the piece in the context of this class.

Presentation: Give a 12 minute presentation, and lead the subsequent discussion about your Final Paper. This presentation aims to enhance your presenting skills, educate your classmates and me, and give you the opportunity to show off your newly found expertise.

Participation: A composite grade comprising attendance (required) and participation in class during discussions and activities.