

HIST 642

Research Seminar in History

Course Description:

The Research Seminar in History provides students to continue to hone research and writing skills as they prepare to write research papers, theses, and dissertations. Environmental History provides an introduction to the changing relationships between human beings and the natural world in various places and various time periods around the world. Environmental History also contextualizes differing values and ideas associated with the non-human world. A primary concern of Environmental History is to provide graduate students with tools and approaches that they can apply to historical cases regardless of geographical region and / or time period.

Course Objectives:

- Analyze the close relationship between humans and nature around the globe from prehistory to the present.
- Understand how humans shape landscapes for their use and how nature shapes culture.
- Assess narratives of environmental history and relate them to general themes of Global History.
- Develop the skills to research and write a formal, publishable essay.

Course Format:

Class consists group discussions of assigned readings, led by a participant and the instructor. Students will complete the research and writing for a major historiographical paper (HIST641) or research paper (HIST642).

Student Responsibilities:

1. attending class sessions
2. reading assigned material (~ 200 pages per week) on time
3. actively participating in class discussions
4. leading 1 discussion
5. maintaining respect for others despite clashing views on controversial subjects
6. completing final paper and presentation

Required Reading (available at the University Bookstore, Amazon, and Library Reserve):

Leonard Cassuto, *Academic Writing as if Readers Matter*

John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. Hill & Wang. 1983.

Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*. Norton.

James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. Yale University Press.

Frederick R. Davis. *Banned: A History of Pesticides and the Science of Toxicology*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014. Chapters available on BrightSpace.

Bartow J. Elmore. *Seed Money: Monsanto's Past and Our Food Future*. New York: W.W. Norton. 2021.

Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*

Articles as assigned in Syllabus (available on BrightSpace)

Assignments and Grading:

Research Paper	400
Discussion Leadership	200
Individual Presentation	200
Attendance and Participation	200
Total	1000

Discussion Leadership (200 points): Everyone will lead a discussion for the first 30 minutes of one session. This is a challenging but valuable exercise for everyone in the class. Note: it is your responsibility to pose questions and guide the discussion. You should **not** present your synopsis and analysis of the readings.

Research Paper (400 points total): As graduate seminar, you will need to write a formal research paper of approximately 5000 words that demonstrates your ability to conduct historical research and marshal your research to produce a thoughtful and cogent essay on a subject relevant to Environmental History. I will provide a list of potential topics, but I welcome additional ideas. This is your opportunity to reflect on the course material, marshal your sources, analyze what you have learned, and develop a reasoned argument based on your findings. Everyone will present his/her thesis and major findings in an individual presentation during the last week of class. There will be time to discuss your thesis, outline, and rough draft later in the semester. *Note: you will submit your research paper [via Turnitin.com](https://www.turnitin.com).

Individual Presentation (200 points): Presentations should last no more than 10 minutes with 3 minutes afterwards for discussion and should include visual material. Remember, this is an opportunity to share your work with the class so you should make every effort to develop an interesting presentation.

Attendance and Participation (200 points): There is no better way to clarify your ideas and sharpen your opinions regarding a new subject than to discuss them with fellow students and the instructor. It is vital that you attend class and be prepared to engage each other. Starting Week 2, I will take attendance. After one unexcused absence, I will deduct 20 points for each

subsequent unexcused absence. See below for the University Attendance Policy and a description of excused absences. See also Emergency Preparation.

University Attendance Policy:

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

Grading Scale

A 93-100	A- 90-92	
B+ 88-89	B 83-87	B- 80-82
C+ 78-79	C 73-77	C- 70-72
D+ 68-69	D 60-67	
F <60		

Academic Honor Policy:

Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. Purdue's nondiscrimination policy can be found at: http://www.purdue.edu/purdue/ea_eou_statement.html.

Academic integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breaches of this value by either emailing integrity@purdue.edu or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information that is submitted provides the greatest opportunity for the university to investigate the concern.

"As a boilermaker pursuing academic excellence, I pledge to be honest and true in all that I do. Accountable together - we are Purdue." For more information, see: [Purdue's Honor Pledge](#).

Academic Dishonesty

Purdue prohibits "dishonesty in connection with any University activity. Cheating, plagiarism, or knowingly furnishing false information to the University are examples of dishonesty." [Part 5, Section III-B-2-a, [Student Regulations](#)] Furthermore, the University Senate has stipulated that "the commitment of acts of cheating, lying, and deceit in any of their diverse forms (such as the use of substitutes for taking examinations, the use of illegal cribs, plagiarism, and copying during examinations) is dishonest and must not be tolerated. Moreover, knowingly to aid and abet, directly or indirectly, other parties in committing dishonest acts is in itself dishonest." [*University Senate Document 72-18, December 15, 1972*]

For additional details, see Purdue's student guide for academic integrity: <https://www.purdue.edu/odos/academic-integrity/>

Accessibility

Purdue University strives to make learning experiences as accessible as possible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability, you are welcome to let me know so that we can discuss options. You are also encouraged to contact the Disability Resource Center at: drc@purdue.edu or by phone: 765-494-1247. More details are available on our course Brightspace under Accessibility Information. Students may present a “Letter of Accommodation” to the professor at any point in the semester.

CAPS Information:

Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (765) 494-6995 and <http://www.purdue.edu/caps/> during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselors physically located in the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.

Mental Health Statement

If you find yourself beginning to feel some stress, anxiety and/or feeling slightly overwhelmed, try [WellTrack](#). Sign in and find information and tools at your fingertips, available to you at any time.

If you find yourself struggling to find a healthy balance between academics, social life, stress, etc. sign up for free one-on-one virtual or in-person sessions with a [Purdue Wellness Coach at RecWell](#). Student coaches can help you navigate through barriers and challenges toward your goals throughout the semester. Sign up is completely free and can be done on BoilerConnect. If you have any questions, please contact Purdue Wellness at evans240@purdue.edu.

If you’re struggling and need mental health services: Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of mental health support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact [Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#) at 765-494-6995 during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or by going to the CAPS office of the second floor of the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.

Nondiscrimination Statement

Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. More details are available on our course Brightspace table of contents, under University Policies.

Syllabus Change Policy

“Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.” See also *Emergency Preparation* above.

Website

The Syllabus, assignments, style guides, term sheets, and other information relevant to *Global Environmental History* can be found at <https://purdue.brightspace.com>. You will need to use your Purdue ID and Password to access the site via <https://purdue.brightspace.com>. If you do not have a PUID or experience trouble logging in, contact IT Support for assistance.

Academic Guidance in the Event a Student is Quarantined/Isolated

If you become quarantined or isolated at any point in time during the semester, in addition to support from the Protect Purdue Health Center, you will also have access to an Academic Case Manager who can provide you academic support during this time. Your Academic Case Manager can be reached at acmq@purdue.edu and will provide you with general guidelines/resources around communicating with your instructors, be available for academic support, and offer suggestions for how to be successful when learning remotely. Importantly, if you find yourself too sick to progress in the course, notify your academic case manager and notify me via email or Brightspace. We will make arrangements based on your particular situation

Course Schedule (*Subject to Change*)

1/12 Introduction to *Research Seminar*

1/19 Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday – No Class

1/26 Academic Writing

Reading: Leonard Cassuto, *Academic Writing as if Readers Matter*

2/02 The Landscape of History

Reading: John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*

2/09 Biological Invasion

Reading: William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*

2/16 The Ecological Indian

Reading: Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*

2/23 Visions of the State

Reading: James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*

3/02 Merchants of Doubt

Reading: Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*

3/09 Corporate Chemistry

Reading: Bartow J. Elmore, *Seed Money: Monsanto's Past and Our food Future*

3/16 *Spring Break - No Class*

3/23 Merchants of Doubt

Reading: Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming*

Guest Speaker: Erik Conway, Professor of History

3/30 Writing History

Reading:

Abstract due

4/06 Individual Meetings

Thesis and Outline due

4/13 Independent Research on Paper - No Class

4/20 Research Roundtable

Rough Draft due (optional)

4/27 History and the Future

Individual Presentations

Final Paper due

General Questions to guide discussion

1. The Author's background and other works (search the web, web databases, etc.)
2. Why the author decided to write the book
3. The Historical problem(s) the Author tackles
4. Author's thesis (or theses)
5. Sources of Evidence
6. Genre of History (Social, Cultural, Institutional, Diplomatic, Economic, Intellectual, Political, etc.)
7. Significant findings
8. Author's Ideological Orientation (i.e. Marxist, structuralist, post-structuralist, Foucaultian, etc.)
9. Author's methodology and / or approach
10. Historiographical contribution(s)
11. The Strengths and Weaknesses of the book