

Brunk  
History 3348  
Environmental History of Latin America  
Spring 2022

Office Hours: TR 12:00-1:00, R 2:00-  
3:00 and by appointment  
Office: LART 328  
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**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course will introduce students to a dramatically different way of looking at history than most of them are accustomed to by focusing on the interaction of humans with the natural environments in which they live. It is ideal for students looking for a broad understanding of Latin American history in that it will explore that interaction across both time--from the pre-Columbian period to the present—and space, from Tierra del Fuego to Mexico's border with the United States. Among the issues we will examine in some detail are pre-Columbian manipulations of the environment—we will test the notion that indigenous peoples always lived in harmony with their environments; the environmental results of the invasion of Europeans and their animals, plants, and diseases; the impact of urbanization; changes over time in the desert environment along Mexico's border with the United States; and the ongoing destruction of the region's rain forests. The course will combine lecture and discussion.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:** Students will become familiar with the field of environmental history in general, and more specifically with some of the main issues in the environmental history of Latin America. They will also develop their ability to critically and clearly analyze and discuss historical materials.

**COMMUNICATION:** You may email me at any time at my UTEP email address, [sbrunk@utep.edu](mailto:sbrunk@utep.edu), which I check frequently (though not late at night). Be sure to use your UTEP email account when you do so. I will generally reply quickly, but if you do not receive a reply in 24 hours please email me again in case I somehow didn't receive the first one. I will often communicate with the class through the Announcement tool on Blackboard, so you should check there frequently for updates and reminders, though those announcements will also come to your UTEP email address, which you should also check frequently for important information.

**GRADING:** Final grades for undergraduates will be determined on the basis of two exams (a midterm and a final), two book reviews, and class participation (which includes the submission of informal essays). Grades will be weighted as follows:

Exams	40% (20% each)
Book Reviews	40% (20% each)
Class Participation	20%

Graduate Students will be required to write a longer paper, and should confer with the professor about these expectations and grading.

**No extra credit** will be offered in this course. Students hoping to raise their grades should talk to the professor (well before the end of the semester) about how to improve on the tests and papers assigned. **Improvement will be rewarded in determining final grades (but only for**

**those students who complete all assignments, including informal papers).**

**BLACKBOARD:** All handouts, lecture notes, and Powerpoint outlines will be available through Blackboard. Both informal and formal papers will be submitted on Blackboard as well. Blackboard will also be used as a backup system should public health concerns (see below) force the class to move online.

**CORONAVIRUS:** The coronavirus situation continues to be very fluid, with cases rising rapidly, due to the new omicron variant, on international, national, state, and local levels as I prepare this syllabus. Given that fact, UTEP's coronavirus policies may well change during the semester, and I will try to make sure you are kept up to date.

**Under no circumstances should you come to class (or to campus) if you have been diagnosed with COVID-19, are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms,** or have had recent contact with a person who has received a positive coronavirus test. Lecture notes will be posted on Blackboard for students who are ill or simply feel unsafe in the classroom. If you have tested positive for COVID-19, please report your results to [covidaction@utep.edu](mailto:covidaction@utep.edu), so that the Dean of Students Office can provide you with support and help with communicating with your professors. The Student Health Center is equipped to provide COVID-19 testing.

The best way to protect yourself from serious illness is to get vaccinated. If you still need the vaccine, it is widely available in the El Paso area, and will be available at no charge on campus during the first week of classes. For more information about the current rates, testing, and vaccinations, please visit [epstrong.org](http://epstrong.org).

Please do me the favor of wearing a mask that covers both your mouth and nose while in the classroom. The omicron variant is the most contagious yet, and though you may be young and healthy there is no guarantee that covid will not compromise your health. While masks can help protect you, they are even more useful in protecting the people around you from a disease that you can pass even if you don't know you have it. The instructor and his wife are both of an age that makes them especially vulnerable to covid, and for all you know the student sitting next to you is immuno-compromised or lives with elderly relatives or with children who cannot yet be vaccinated.

As with any other comparable issue (see the section on student responsibilities below) please contact me as soon as possible if temporary accommodations due to COVID-19 are needed.

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:** You are expected to attend class or, if unable to attend in person due to health considerations, to keep up with coursework through Blackboard. Your participation grade depends, in great part, on paying close attention to class activities and completing assignments on time. Absences due to scheduled university activities, health problems or concerns, or serious family emergencies (such as the illness of a child or a death in the family) will be excused, but please keep me apprised of what's going on rather than simply disappearing.

**If you miss an exam** for any reason other than a scheduled university activity or a health, family, or other emergency that you can document, you will not be eligible for a makeup. If missing the exam was due to circumstances outside your control, communicate with me **immediately**, ideally on the day of the exam.

It is also your responsibility to turn in all papers on time. Late papers will be penalized and **formal papers will not be accepted after the discussion** period dedicated to the material they cover.

Although there is evidence that taking notes by hand may be better, you may use a computer to take notes if you choose, but please turn off your cell phones and all other devices when you enter the classroom. (Of course, if you have a potential emergency, let me know and I'll gladly make an exception).

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** Plagiarism is the use of the ideas, information, or words of another author or fellow student without giving proper credit to your source. You are responsible for citing your sources as indicated by the instructor and, in cases where you directly quote from a source, for enclosing those words that are not your own in quotation marks. Failing to give proper credit to your sources in these ways is academic dishonesty. You are also responsible for adhering to the instructor's rules on exams. I will refer all suspected incidences of academic dishonesty to the office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution for investigation. Students found guilty of such actions will be punished. See UTEP policy on this issue at <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/student-conduct/academic-integrity.html>. For some tips on avoiding plagiarism, see: <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/osccr/Files/docs/Avoiding-Plagiarism.pdf>.

**STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES:** If you have a disability and need classroom accommodations, please contact the Center for Accommodations and Support Services (CASS) at 747-5148, or <https://www.utep.edu/student-affairs/cass/>. CASS Staff are the only individuals who can validate and, if need be, authorize accommodations for students with disabilities.

## **READINGS:**

Shawn Miller, *An Environmental History of Latin America*

Judith A. Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery*

Chico Mendes, *Fight for the Forest*

Elinor G. K. Melville, "Environmental and Social Change in the Valle del Mezquital, Mexico, 1521-1600," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 32 (1990), pp. 24-53,

Georgina H. Endfield and Sarah L. O'Hara, "Degradation, Drought, and Dissent: An Environmental History of Colonial Michoacán, West Central Mexico," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 89 (1999), pp. 402-419

J.R. McNeill, "Ecology, Epidemics and Empires: Environmental Change and the Geopolitics of Tropical America, 1600-1825," *Environment and History* 5 (1999), pp. 175-184

José Drummond, "The Garden in the Machine: An Environmental History of Brazil's Tijuca Forest," *Environmental History*, 1 (1996), pp. 83-104

Emily Wakild, "Border Chasm: International Boundary Parks and Mexican Conservation, 1935-1945," *Environmental History* 14 (2009)

Susanna B. Hecht and Alexander Cockburn, "The Furies Unleashed," from *The Fate of the Forest: Developers, Destroyers, and Defenders of the Amazon*

Seth Garfield, "A Nationalist Environment: Indians, Nature and the Construction of the Xingu National Park in Brazil," *Luso-Brazilian Review* 41, 1 (2004): 139-67.

“Interview with Ailton Krenak,” and “Forest Peoples’ Manifesto,” from Hecht and Cockburn,  
*The Fate of the Forest.*

## SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Date	Topic	Readings
Jan 18	Introduction	
20	Video: “The New Conquistadors”	Miller, introduction and ch. 1
25	Latin American Geography and the Arrival of Humans <b>(FIRST INFORMAL ESSAY DUE)</b>	Begin Carney
27	Discussion	
Feb 1	Environment and the Pre-Columbian World <b>(SECOND INFORMAL ESSAY DUE)</b>	Miller, ch. 2; Melville
3	Discussion	
8	The Pre-Columbian Andes <b>(THIRD INFORMAL ESSAY DUE)</b>	Endfield and O’Hara, Sluyter
10	Discussion	
15	The European Arrival	Carney through
17	Discussion <b>(FOURTH INFORMAL ESSAY DUE)</b>	at least page 99; Miller, ch. 3; McNeill
22	Case Study: Brazil’s Atlantic Forest	Finish Carney
24	Review <b>(BOOK REVIEW OF CARNEY DUE)</b>	
Mar 1	Discussion of Carney	
3	<b>MIDTERM EXAM</b>	
8	The Nineteenth Century	Miller, ch. 4, 5; Drummond
10	The Green Revolution <b>(FIFTH INFORMAL ESSAY DUE)</b>	
<b>March 14-18 Spring Break</b>		
22	Discussion	Miller, ch. 6; Wakild
24	Mexico City <b>(SIXTH INFORMAL ESSAY DUE)</b>	
29	Discussion	“The Furies Unleashed”

31 Deserts on the Border  
**(SEVENTH INFORMAL ESSAY DUE)**

Apr 5 Discussion

7 Deforestation and Resistance in Chiapas  
**(EIGHTH INFORMAL ESSAY DUE)**

Finish Miller; Garfield;  
start Mendes

Apr 12 Discussion

14 The Colonial Amazon  
**(NINTH INFORMAL ESSAY DUE)**

Krenak Interview and  
“Forest Peoples’ Manifesto”

19 The Rubber Boom

21 Marching to the West: The Military in the Forest

Finish Mendes

26 The Costa Rican Experiment

**(BOOK REVIEW OF MENDES DUE)**

28 Discussion of Mendes

May 3 Concluding Remarks

5 Review

**FINAL EXAM: Thursday, May 12, 4:00-6:45**