

Brunk  
History 5309  
Fall 2021

Office Hours: R 12:30-1:30 (in person); T 11:00-12:00, W 12:00-1:00 (online), and by appointment  
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## **STUDIES IN LATIN AMERICAN HISTORY: ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF LATIN AMERICA**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES:** The primary aim of this course is to introduce students to some of the basic works and issues of the environmental history of Latin America, in both colonial and modern periods. This is still a relatively new and underdeveloped field, but prompted by growing environmental awareness in contemporary societies, scholars are increasingly finding that a better understanding of history's environmental dimension sheds new light on their political, economic, social, and cultural concerns. Topics will include the Columbian Exchange, the impact of livestock on American ecosystems, deforestation, disease, science and biodiversity, urban space, the impact of commodity production, and the creation of national parks, among others.

**GRADING:** Final grades will be based on five written assignments and class participation. The first four written assignments will be essays on weekly readings. Each week I will distribute a question about the following week's readings. Students may choose whether or not to answer that question for any given week, but must answer a total of four questions during the semester in essays of at least 2000 words. Each of these weekly papers will focus on that particular week's readings, but they will also ask you to incorporate relevant material from earlier readings and class discussions.

These papers are designed to benefit all students by developing skills of critical analysis and clear, logical writing. Students may, however, choose to make **one** of these four papers a simple book review, of at least 1500 words, instead of answering that week's question (this option is not available on books by Dean or McNeill, which we are splitting over two class periods). If you would like, instead, to develop a lesson plan for one week's readings, that is also a possibility—please let me know if you are interested. Regardless of paper type, these weekly papers are due, emailed to me, **before the start of class** on the day for which the corresponding readings are assigned.

The last written assignment will be a final paper of about 3000 words in which you will answer a question or questions that will require you to synthesize the material covered during the semester. This makes it crucial for you to participate in weekly discussions, and take careful notes.

Expectations for class participation will include leading one class discussion sometime during the course of the semester.

Grades will be calculated as follows:

Weekly papers	60% (15% each)
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Final paper	20%
Participation	20%

**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 hold Virtual Office Hours on Tuesdays from 11:00-12:00 and Wednesdays from 12:00-1:00 (along with a face to face office hour prior to our class). To join a Virtual Office Hour, click on the appropriate "Virtual Office Hour" in the lefthand menu on Blackboard.

**CORONAVIRUS:** The coronavirus situation continues to be very fluid, with cases rising rapidly on international, national, state, and local levels. 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. If you are feeling unwell, please let me know as soon as possible, so we can work on appropriate accommodations. 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).

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention also recommends that people in areas of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission—such as Texas--wear face masks when indoors in public spaces. Please understand that while vaccination is the best way to keep yourself safe, even if you are vaccinated you can catch and spread the disease to family members and fellow students who might be at greater risk than you. Masks are the best way to keep from passing the disease to people around you, including children, who cannot be vaccinated, and who with the arrival of the delta variant are being hospitalized with the virus in larger and larger numbers.

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:** You are expected to attend class (and to be there on time). This is especially essential in graduate courses, and class participation grades are naturally tied, in part, to attendance. If you must, for some reason, miss a class, it's your responsibility to speak to the instructor about the additional assignment and any handouts you might have missed. Students are also responsible for turning in assignments on time. Weekly papers will be accepted late only under extraordinary circumstances; late final papers will be penalized.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** Plagiarism is the use of the ideas, information, or words of another author 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. 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:** The readings for this course are listed below. Most of the books are on reserve in the library, and all of them are available at the bookstore or, less expensively, at online sellers such as Amazon. Many of them are also available as ebooks through the UTEP library website, so you may want to check on those possibilities before you purchase. Please recognize that these books may not be available to multiple readers at once, so if you rely on library ebooks you should plan to work ahead.

The articles listed are all available free online through the library. The links provided for them should work; if they don't, find the online version of the article by searching for the journal title in the library catalogue. It would be a good idea to download these articles now so I can help you, before the last minute, if you're having trouble getting one.

Shawn Miller, *An Environmental History of Latin America* (2007)

Elinor Melville, *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico* (1997)

Warren Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand: Destruction of the Brazilian Atlantic Forest* (1997)

John Soluri, *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States* (2006)

J.R. McNeill, *Mosquito Empires: Ecology and War in the Greater Caribbean, 1620-1914* (2010).

Emily Wakild, *Revolutionary Parks: Conservation, Social Justice, and Mexico's National Parks, 1910-1940* (2011)

Edward Melillo, *Strangers on Familiar Soil: Rediscovering the Chile-California Connection* (2015)

Megan Raby, *American Tropics: The Caribbean Roots of Biodiversity Science* (2017)

Matthew Vitz, *A City on a Lake: Urban Political Ecology and the Growth of Mexico City* (2018)

Shawn Miller, *The Street Is Ours: Community, the Car, and the Nature of Public Space in Rio de Janeiro* (2019)

Claudia Leal, *Landscapes of Freedom: Building a Postemancipation Society in the Rainforests of Western Colombia* (2020)

Mark Carey, "Latin American Environmental History: Current Trends, Interdisciplinary Insights,

- and Future Directions,” *Environmental History* 14:2 (2009), pp. 221-252  
<https://0-www-jstor-org.lib.utep.edu/stable/i40026709>
- 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  
<http://0-www.jstor.org.lib.utep.edu/stable/pdfplus/2564490.pdf>
- Christian Brannstrom, “Rethinking the ‘Atlantic Forest’ of Brazil: New Evidence for Land Cover and Land Value in Western Sao Paulo, 1900-1930” *Journal of Historical Geography*, 28:3 (2002), pp. 420-439  
<https://0-www-sciencedirect-com.lib.utep.edu/journal/journal-of-historical-geography/vol/28/issue/3>
- Vera Candiani, “The Desagüe Reconsidered: Environmental Dimensions of Class Conflict in Colonial Mexico,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 92 (2012), pp. 5-39  
<https://0-read-dukeupress-edu.lib.utep.edu/hahr/issue/92/1>
- Judith Carney, “African Traditional Plant Knowledge in the Circum-Caribbean Region,” *Journal of Ethnobiology*, 23, no.2 (2003): 167-185.  
<https://geog.ucla.edu/sites/default/files/users/carney/426.pdf>
- José Drummond, “The Garden in the Machine: An Environmental History of Brazil's Tijuca Forest,” *Environmental History*, 1 (1996), pp. 83-104  
<https://0-academic-oup-com.lib.utep.edu/envhis/issue/1/1>

## COURSE SCHEDULE

- Aug 26 Introductory Remarks and Course Organization
- Sept 2 Surveying the Field  
**READING:** Miller, *An Environmental History*; Carey, “Latin American Environmental History”
- Sept 9 Conquest Environments  
**READING:** Melville, *A Plague of Sheep*; Endfield and O’Hara, “Degradation”
- Sept 16 Brazil’s Atlantic Forest  
**READING:** Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand*, to p. 190
- Sept 23 Atlantic Forest continued  
**READING:** Dean, *With Broadax and Firebrand*, p. 191 to end; Brannstrom, “Rethinking the ‘Atlantic Forest’”
- Sept 30 Commodity and Environment  
**READING:** Soluri, *Banana Cultures*
- Oct 7 Empire, Disease, and Landscape

**READING:** McNeill, *Mosquito Empires* to p. 136; Candiani, “The Desagüe Reconsidered”

Oct 14 Empire, Disease, and Landscape cont.

**READING:** McNeill, *Mosquito Empires* p. 137 to end; Carney, “African Traditional Plant Knowledge

Oct 21 Parks and Conservation

**READING:** Emily Wakild, *Revolutionary Parks*; Drummond, “The Garden in the Machine”

Oct 28 Pacific Links

**READING:** Melillo, *Strangers on Familiar Soil*

Nov 4 Science and Biodiversity

**READING:** Raby, *American Tropics*

Nov 11 Urban Ecology

**READING:** Vitz, *A City on a Lake*

Nov 18 Mobility and Urban Public Space

**READING:** Miller, *The Street Is Ours*

Dec 2 Race and Landscape

**READING:** Leal, *Landscapes of Freedom*

Dec 9, 5:00 p.m., **Final Paper Due**