

HI 1330 - Introduction to Environmental History

Professor William San Martín, Salisbury Labs 008

Course Schedule: M-T-R-F | 12:00 PM - 12:50 PM - Higgins Labs 202



Deforestation in the Amazon
Carajas, Brazil, true color
Date: 2017-07-08

The cattle sector of the Brazilian Amazon, incentivized by the international beef and leather trades, has been responsible for about 70 percent of all deforestation in the region, or about 14 percent of the world's total annual deforestation, making it the world's largest single driver of deforestation. By 1995, 70 percent of formerly forested land in the Amazon had been deforested, and 90 percent of that had been converted to cattle ranching. Much of the remaining deforestation within the Amazon has resulted from farmers clearing land for small-scale subsistence agriculture or mechanized cropland producing soy, palm, and other crops.

Photo Source and Caption: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/sentinelhub/46200453914>

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1. Course Overview

A. Course Description:

This class is an introductory class to the questions, methods, and source materials that shape socio-historical studies of human-environment interactions. We will examine major research questions, methodologies, and theories that guide the work of scholars across disciplinary fields for the study of socio-environmental change. We will critically think about the historical origins of major global ecological issues today, such as climate change, sustainable development, environmental inequalities and justice, the interface of science and policy, indigenous and expert knowledge, extractive economies, market capitalism, and colonialism.

B. Teaching Methodology:

- This course is hands-on and discussion-oriented. By its design, you will have the opportunity to explore, clarify, and strengthen your analytical skills. Please be aware that it is expected that you will experience a certain level of ambiguity and perhaps even a feeling of being overwhelmed at times.
- We will discuss various issues such as racism and violence that might make us feel uncomfortable. Always feel free to communicate your discomfort and if

you prefer not to be part of certain class discussions. I will do my best to provide an environment that fosters meaningful, evidence-based, and respectful discussions.

- This is a Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) course and you will not need to purchase texts or additional materials for the course. All assigned materials are available on this Canvas Site.
- You will be reading experts in their fields and materials published in peer-reviewed journals and academic publishers. That means the assigned materials might often be difficult to understand and might require re-reading, taking notes, working with peers, or asking for assistance.
- We will explore historical and present-day problems that will be unclear and uncharted. You will be expected to deal with the ambiguity and have the courage to explore different ideas without knowing the answers.
- This course will be presented through a combination of reading materials, group discussions and activities, individual assignments, and group presentations/projects.
- You will need to work in groups so you must make yourself available to your group members outside of the scheduled classroom time, communicate effectively with your team about tasks and deadlines. To be successful in this course, you must use effective time management and project planning tools.

C. Expectations & Policies:

- Critical thinking and more critical thinking: Students are expected to think critically, communicate their thoughts effectively, and participate in a collaborative community of learning.
- Weekly readings/assigned materials: All students are expected to do the required weekly readings and audiovisual materials which will form the basis for course discussions and assignments.
- All assignments and participation are mandatory.
- Quality time thinking and analyzing readings and historical sources.
- What nobody wants to do: Plagiarism will result in disciplinary action. For details on what constitutes plagiarism and academic integrity please visit: <https://www.wpi.edu/about/policies/academic-integrity> [Links to an external site.](#)

We will discuss all of this on our first day of class, but please feel free to reach out if you have any questions.

D. Questions? Open Q&A Forum + Online Office Hours

If you have questions about this class, please post them questions to the [Open Question and Answer Forum](#)

That is where we will respond to questions about the course material, lectures, assignments, and expectations.

If you know the answer to someone else's questions, feel free to jump in -we are all here to learn from each other.

You can also email me at wsanmartin@wpi.edu– You can expect a response within 24 to 48 hours.

I also have regularly scheduled virtual office hours on Mondays 1-2 pm or by appointment. Follow this [Zoom link \(Links to an external site.\)](#) to reach me during this time. If this time doesn't work, send me an email and we can find another time for zoom, or a walking meeting on Campus.

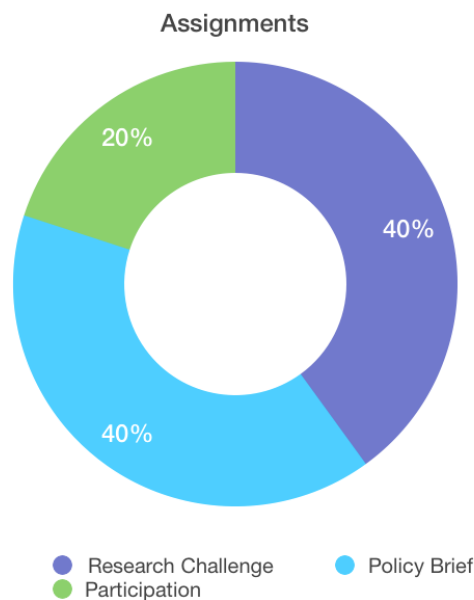
E. Don't think about grades!

Think about learning and developing skills

But if you find yourself distracted, here a visual representation of what will constitute your final grade

Grading Summary

ASSIGNMENTS	
Research Challenge (Assignments 1-4)	40%
Policy Brief (Assignments 5-8)	40%
Participation	20%
TOTAL	100%



F. A Discussion about Discussion Boards

Participation in discussion boards is a requirement in this class. Here you will find guidelines and two rubrics I will use to grade your participation in discussions.

Guidelines for posting your reflections and responses:

- Be thoughtful, respectful, and clear.
- Provide concrete examples from the readings or real-life from your communities or experiences anytime when appropriate. Connections open up the imagination.
- Provide quotes or pictures of a specific section from the readings that helps to support your claim. Those quotes might serve everyone when writing your papers.
- Either written, audio, or audiovisual (video) responses are welcome. Sometimes reading at loud a quote to others and explaining in your own words why that's meaningful or how that connects with real-life examples help others understand better the nature of your ideas.
- Don't be afraid of making mistakes or disagreeing. We are all here to learn, be challenged, and rethink our own realities and imagined futures through other peoples' lenses.
- When crafting your comments and replies, consider including at least two of the following: a Compliment (e.g., "I like how..."; "I like that..."), a Comment (e.g., "I agree that... because..."; "I disagree that... because..."), a Connection (e.g., "I also have read/seen/heard/thought that..."), and a Question (e.g., "I wonder why/how/who/what/when/where...").

Rubrics to assess your participation and participation grade:

1. [Rubric for Participation in Discussions](#) describes how I will assess your individual participation in each of our discussion forums.
2. At the end of this class, I will use the [Rubric for Final Participation Grade](#) to translate your participation in all the forums into a letter grade.

Action Item: If you have questions, or would like to 'negotiate' any elements of these rubrics or grading system, please post your comments below.

Rubric for Participation in Discussions:

Grade	Characteristics
Complete (Leads to an A or B)	Outstanding contribution and follow-up comments that inspire a rich and fruitful discussion. Demonstrates understanding of material as well as an ability to tie the material to larger ideas, making rich connections and evoking deep and interesting questions.
Incomplete (Leads to a C or NR)	No contribution or a contribution that feels rushed like it was “just something that had to be done for the grade”

Rubric for Final Participation Grade:

	Exceeds Expectations (A)	Meets Expectations (B)	Below Expectations (C)	Unacceptable
Timely and active participation	Posts initial response before due date. Posts, replies, and asks questions four or more times throughout the week.	Posts initial response by the due date. Posts, replies, and asks questions two or three times throughout the week.	Posts initial response after the due date. Posts, replies, or asks questions once during the week.	Posts initial response after the due date or does not post response.
Thoughtful and complete response to question(s)	Fully responds to the question(s). Post is supported by connections to the readings and real-life examples.	Fully responds to the question(s). Post is supported by connections to the readings or real-life examples.	Partially responds to the question(s). Provides vague or incomplete connections to the reading or real-life examples.	Does not post a response or response is vague, off topic, or repetitive.
Thoughtful contributions to the learning community	Posts thoughtful questions or novel ideas to peers that generate new ideas and group discussion.	Asks questions or posts thoughtful responses to generate a single peer’s response.	Posts minimal or vague responses to peers that do not motivate a response (e.g., “I agree with you, Sherry!”).	Does not post a response and/or does not reply to peers.

Note: these rubrics were adapted from the Association of College and University Educators (ACUE):
https://acue.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Section-4_PG1_Discussion-Rubrics_CFIN.pdf

G. Need Accommodations? Course Adaptations or Accommodations

I fully support the use of accommodations.

If you have not already done so, students who believe that they may need accommodations in this course are encouraged to contact the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS) as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion. The OAS is located in Daniels Hall. Their phone number is 508.831.4908 and email is accessibilityservices@wpi.edu. Furthermore, please reach out to me to allow me to advocate with you and implement accommodations.

2. Assignments Descriptions & Requirements

A. Perusall Annotations and Discussions

In this course, we will use Perusall to access, read, and annotate all assigned materials (readings, videos, etc.) for each class session. Students have to launch each Perusall assignment from the link in the weekly modules. We will go over this on a live demonstration on our first day of class on Tuesday.

If you need more assistance, reach out to me, post a question in the Open Question and Answer Forum, or access the Perusall help page for students at:

[https://support.perusall.com/hc/en-us/articles/360033995074-Getting-started \(Links to an external site.\)](https://support.perusall.com/hc/en-us/articles/360033995074-Getting-started_(Links_to_an_external_site.))

We are using Perusall this term to change the solitary act of reading into a collaborative and thought-provoking exercise.

Here are some guides to help you annotate texts and videos:

- Identify key ideas, assumptions, gaps in knowledge, and conclusions
- Trace the development of ideas/arguments throughout the source
- Expand on ideas and provide additional data and examples
- Connect ideas, assumptions, etc. to other information (knowledge from other readings, discussions, materials)
- Clarify passages (terms, concepts, etc.) for yourself and others
- Explain or reword difficult to read text or concepts
- Ask questions that can build the conversation and deepen learning

- Share answers, perspectives, and external knowledge in threads
- Annotate text, images, equations, and videos

Keys to high engagement with the sources:

- Begin reading/viewing the sources several days before the class session
- Break the reading/viewing into several times – this allows you to answer questions and pose new insights based on what others are writing
- Distribute your thoughtful comments and questions throughout the source
- Read/view the entire source
- Answer questions
- Upvote thoughtful questions and helpful answers

Perusall provides a score based on the above metrics. That should give you an idea of how you are engaging with the materials and how to improve. This is only a tool to improve reading and analysis skills and to facilitate collaborative learning. This score will not be part of your final grade. However, active engagement with the assigned materials will be considered for your participation grade.

B. Research Challenge (Assignments 1-4)

Learning Objectives: Research Design; Writing; Interdisciplinary Analysis; Audiovisual and Oral Presentations

Overview:

The causes and consequences of global socio-environmental change are complex and rapidly changing across spatial and temporal scales. They have both local and global manifestations and are entangled with biological, socio-cultural, economic, and political processes. Many of these challenges require novel approaches, including innovative research methods and effective research questions. They also require rigorous interdisciplinary analysis and a precise understanding of main historical drivers and long-lasting consequences.

In this assignment, each team will design a unique research plan to answer critical challenges at the intersection of human-induced environmental change and the management of human-nature interactions. Each of these challenges focuses on a particular region and context. This means special attention to the local history, knowledge, culture, politics, and environment will be fundamental to address these challenges.

This activity has four parts. Each of them will be a separate assignment (assignments 1-4). Although this is a group project, assignment 1 will be graded as an individual assignment. All assignments will require coordination among group members and accountability for the shared tasks.

Each team will be assigned one of the following research challenges. Each challenge will include 3-5 assigned readings, which will be the basis of your project.

- Aedes Aegypti and Mosquito-borne Disease in Brazil
- The Nile Crocodile and Human-Crocodile Conflicts in Africa
- Orangutan Rehabilitation in Borneo
- The Pacific Walrus in the Bering Strait
- American Bison and the Great Plains
- Rigs-to Reefs Debate in California
- Desertification and Development Policy in North Africa
- Indigenous Activism and Conservation in Bolivia

C. Policy Brief (Assignments 5-8)

Learning Objectives:

Research Design, implementation, and Writing; Interdisciplinary Analysis; Audiovisual and Oral Presentations

Overview:

This is the second mini project for this class. As our Research Challenges, it will be divided into four assignments.

The Policy Brief is our final assignment for this class. It's meant to provide you with a flexible platform where you can 1) deepen some of the themes/arguments we discussed in this class, 2) integrate readings and materials discussed in this class, 3) implement key concepts, perspectives, and methods in environmental history research discussed throughout the term, and 3) develop a narrow research project that links a specific topic with the broader history of social and ecological change.

In these, you will be expected to apply many of the skills developed in the previous assignments as well as ideas, concepts, and methods discussed in this class.

However, there are some important differences with the Research Challenges Project: 1) instead of ending with a research proposal, this assignment requires you to implement a research process and produce a specific research outcome -a policy brief, 2) This project is fully an individual assignment, and 3) you have the freedom to work on any theme discussed in this class or any other of your interest pre-approved by the instructor.

What is a Policy Brief?

A policy brief is a concise synthesis of a particular issue. It provides evidence, a clear argument, and recommendations. It is aimed at government policymakers, decision-makers, and others who are interested in formulating or influencing policy. Policy briefs can take different formats.

For more details about how to write a policy brief and its formats please check the information [here \(Links to an external site.\) \(Links to an external site.\)](#) and the examples posted on [this](#) module on Canvas.

What theme should I pick?

You are picking the main theme and focus of your policy brief, there is no assigned prompt. You chose the area/topic/problem you would like to focus on and address a particular prompt/question within it. That means you also decide who would be your target audience. Suggestion: pick a theme that would allow you to use several of the assigned readings for this class and one that you are very excited to continue learning. Being happy with your topic is a requirement.

There are different formats, which one should I follow?

As you can see from the examples above, policy briefs vary on extension and format. The three examples and the link above can offer an idea of a shorter and a longer brief (and its different sections).

For this assignment, there is no word limit or pre-established format. Since you would be the expert on that particular topic, it is your decision what structure works better for you and the question(s) you want to answer. But remember, a policy brief follows a different format from a regular history essay or paper. 1) it looks different: visual organization, figures, maps, diagrams are key (you need to make sure the document is attractive to read and well organized -long text sections are not recommended); 2) it reads differently: a policy brief is succinct, the logic flow of ideas should be clear to the unfamiliar reader, and there is no room for personal interpretations (the link between evidence and claims needs to be clear and solid).

Of course, I'm available to help you brainstorm or make decisions.

What sources should I use?

Regarding sources and materials, it is a requirement that you integrate at least 10 sources. These can be a combination of readings and materials from this class, additional peer-reviewed articles or books, or newspaper articles (historical or present). Your topic will define what kind of materials you must need to integrate, but I would recommend that at least four of those readings should be from our assigned materials. The annotations should and group discussions should help you to frame your ideas and decide what sources might help you with your Policy Brief.

I understand some methods of research will be unavailable during social-distancing measures are in place. But there are plenty of resources online. Remember the resources mentioned at the of the piece on Environmental History from Prof. Mooley that we discussed in week 1. Also, consider that WPI has access to many international historical newspapers where you can search by keywords or specific dates. Ask me or our librarians if you need help.

What is the goal of my policy brief?

The most important thing is the coherence between the (historical) evidence, analysis, and recommendations that you provide. You want your policy brief to effectively provide an evidence-based argument(s) and convey specific advice about a particular topic. In other words, you need to convince your policymaker to 1) continue reading after the title 2) trust that your argument is based on enough evidence, and 3) implement your advice. Easy, right?

Policy briefs require more work researching, thinking, and structuring before starting the writing process than traditional papers. Plan accordingly. Giving your draft to somebody else to read always helps, that's why we are having an open feedback house for your abstracts and a formal peer-reviewing session. And remember to take advantage of the Writing Center. They are working online and happy to help.

As always, reach out if you have any questions. Enjoy the brainstorming process and have fun learning about something that you're excited about!

3. Research & Support

A. Need Help with your Research? Research and Instructional Support

This class requires students to find information sources for assignments and projects. Appropriate sources include scholarly and peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and news magazines and newspapers when examined properly. Please reach to me if you have doubts about what is an appropriate source. Many sources are helpful if critically analyzed.

Please check the following instructional videos on research tools available via our library.

- WPI Library Search Box: <https://youtu.be/mqsqDeCOBN8> (Links to an external site.)
- Locating Relevant Databases at WPI: <https://youtu.be/WGe9Qa9H86c> (Links to an external site.)
- Searching a Database and Retrieving Full-Text Articles at WPI: <https://youtu.be/aBW5OdTy94Y> (Links to an external site.)
- Google Scholar: [Google Scholar](#) (Links to an external site.)

- Evaluating Sources for Credibility: <https://youtu.be/oeGMT30xnP4> (Links to an external site.)
- Latin American and Caribbean Studies Research Guide at WPI
https://libguides.wpi.edu/latin_american_studies

You can always reach out to our WPI's Research and Instruction Librarians throughout the term at any time

B. Need Help with your Writing?

The Writing Center offers one-on-one consultations, both in-person and over Zoom, to help you improve as a writer. Writing Center tutors will read your written work, give you feedback about your document's strengths and weaknesses, and help you chart a path forward as you revise. Consultations are free and open to all WPI students for all classes and projects, and tutors will happily work with you at any stage of the writing process (early brainstorming, revising a draft, polishing sentences in a final draft). To see our appointment options for both in-person and synchronous online meetings, go to the Writing Center homepage: wpi.edu/+writing (Links to an external site.)

C. Need help with APA citations?

APA citation is a standard citation format in many academic fields, and you will need to use it in many other courses in WPI, including in your IQP reports which are public and downloaded hundreds of times every year.

So, grasping APA citations now will save time and effort and will help you be better prepared for the rest of your career.

Here you can find a video tutorial and a [PDF summary](#)

4. Course Schedule and Assigned Materials

Week 1. Introduction. Doing Environmental History: Whales and Energy Consumption in the Arctic

Session 1: Introduction. Course Overview and Review of Assignments [10/25]

Session 2: Doing Environmental History [10/26]

- Environmental History (Mosley)
- Bathsheba Demuth: Do Whales Judge Us? Interspecies History and Ethics - Full video

Session 3: Doing Env. History Discussion [10/28]

- Discussion 1 -Doing Environmental History (Due Oct. 28 at 11:50am)

Session 4: Inter-species Histories [10/29]

Week 2. The Question about Scales: The First Earth Day, People, and The Planet

Session 5: Scales and the Rise of the Planet [11/1]

- The environment. History of the idea (Warde, Robin, and Sörlin)

Session 6: The Rise of the Planetary [11/4]

- The Nation Tackles Pollution: The Environmental Protection Agency and the Clean Air and Water Acts (Layzer)
- 1970: The first Earth Day in Boston (CBS News) - Full video
- Earth Day 1970 Part 1: Intro (CBS News with Walter Cronkite) - Full video
- Discussion 2 -Social Systems & Earth Systems (Due Nov 4 at 11:50am)

Session 7: The Rise of the People [11/5]

Week 3. The Question about (In)justice: Global Waste Trade

Session 8: Mapping Challenge and Drafting a Research Proposal (In-class Activity I) [11/8]

- Assignment 1: Case Study Assessment

Session 9: Hazardous Waste from the Perspective of Environmental Justice and Racism [11/09]

- Resisting Global Toxics. Transnational Movements for Environmental Justice. (Pellow) Chapter 1: Environment, Modernity, Inequality

Session 10: The Challenges of Applying Environmental Justice Research (In-Class Activity) [11/11]

- Discussion 3: Environmental (in)justice as an analytical tool (Due Nov 11 by 12:00 pm)

Session 11: Inequalities as a Research Framework [11/12]

Week 4: The Question about Knowledge: Knowledge Systems, Expertise, and Decision-Making

Session 12: Research Challenge Peer-reviewing (In-Class Activity) [11/15]

- Assignment 2: Mapping Challenge and Drafting a Research Proposal

Session 13: A Knowledge Systems Approach: Bridging Indigenous Knowledge and Policy [11/16]

- Indigenous Knowledge Systems (MacGregor)
- The Rights of Nature: A Global Movement - Full video
- Assignment 3: Research Challenge Peer-reviewing

Session 14: Presentations Research Challenge I [11/18]

Session 15: Presentations Research Challenge II [11/19]

Week 5: The question about Risks: Melting Glaciers and Vulnerability in the Andes

Session 16: Activity: Building Policy Briefs. History for a Sustainable Future [11/22]

Assignment 4: Revised Research Proposal

Session 17: The Place of History in Decision-Making: Climate Risk and Adaptation [11/23]

Adapting to Climate Hazards in the Peruvian Andes (Carey and Moulton)

Glaciers and Culture (Carey) - Full video

Week 6. The Question about Whose Anthropocene: Welcome to the Anthropocene(s)

Session 18: Did you have a good Holocene? [11/29]

- Beyond the Anthropocene -Johan Rockstrom

Session 19: Framing a Problem [11/30]

Session 20: Anthropocenes of the "Poor" 1 [12/2]

- From Political Economy to Political Ecology (Guha and Martínez-Alier)

Session 21: Anthropocene Knowledge across the North-South Divide [12/3]

- Science as Power in International Environmental Negotiations. Global Environmental Assessments Between North and South (Biermann)

Week 7. The Question about Climate (Futures)

Session 22: Policy Brief Title, Abstract, or Executive Summary [12/6]

- Assignment 5. Policy Brief Title, Abstract, or Executive Summary (Due Dec. 6 at 11:50 am + Comments Due Dec. 6 by 12:50pm)

Session 23: Research Futures [12/7]

- Four Theses (Chakrabarty)

Session 24: Postcolonial Futures [12/9]

- Subnational climate justice for the French Outre-mer: postcolonial politics and geography of an epistemic shift (Ferdinand)

Session 25 Fossil Futures [12/10]

- Assessing ExxonMobil's climate change communications (1977–2014) (Supran and Oreskes)

Week 8. Policy Briefs Week!

Session 26 Policy Brief Presentations I [12/13]

- Assignment 6: Policy Brief Draft

Session 27: Policy Brief Presentations II [12/15]

- Assignment 7: Policy Brief Peer-reviewing

Session 28: Class Assessment [12/16]

- Assignment 8: Final Policy Brief