COURSE DESCRIPTION: This seminar course will take as its topic "Environmental History" as a global theme. The course will be divided into two main sections with a three-week "interlude" in between:

Section 1: This will examine the historiography of the subject of environmental history - where it came from, why it developed the way it did, what its major "problems" - points of scholarly contention - are, which areas are fertile ones for further analysis, and so on. This section will comprise approximately one third of the course coverage.

Interlude: Collapse and its Detractors. In the middle part of the course we will spend three sessions looking at one of the current controversies in the field of global environmental history, the idea, advanced by Jared Diamond (but not held solely by him by any means) that environmental factors have played a much larger role in the collapse of past civilisations than we have previously accepted. The theory of environmental stress producing civilisational collapse is a hotly-contested one, not least because of the environmental challenges, real or imagined, that appear to confront us in the twenty-first century. This contested position is reflected in the recent publication of Questioning Collapse, a collection of articles generated by an international group of scholars who argue that human societies are in fact far more resilient than the environment-collapse model would suggest. (This does not mean in any way that they deny the reality or the gravity of the state of the environment in the 21st century, only that they question the apocalyptic language employed by some - Diamond not necessarily among them - who advocate for immediate and massive shifts in human behaviour in order to avert catastrophe on a global scale.) We will examine Jared Diamond's massively popular follow-up to his extremely important Guns, Germs and Steel (1997), namely 2005's Collapse: How Human Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed and juxtapose it with Questioning Collapse (2010). These two works are two of the three required textbooks for the course.

Section 2: Case Studies in Environmental History. Here we shall examine various historical events from a different perspective. Guess which perspective that would be. Because this is a globally-ranged course, there will be a broad range of temporal coverage here so be prepared to remember all that material from 1103/13 and 1223/1233 that you thought you'd never need again. These case studies will be described and evaluated by you on the basis of current source materials that will be presented in seminar format.
REQUIRED TEXT: As indicated above, there are three required texts for the course.


In addition, there will be weekly readings as outlined below. These are located on the course's ACORN page. These are not optional readings but required. They will form the basis for the great majority of the course. In class you may work with either hard copies of the readings (i.e., print them all off) or with electronic copies; I must admit that my preference is to work with paper copies, but which you choose is up to you.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING: Attendance is mandatory for all classes. The seminars will be considerably enriched by contributions from all members of the class; therefore, participation is mandatory as well. If you do not talk in seminars, then I’ll want to know why I shouldn’t be giving you an “F” for the course. Your participation mark will be based on (but not restricted to) your preparation for seminars (doing the assigned reading), your participation in discussions, and your analytical grasp of the readings. In addition to participation, there is a presentation grade. Once during the term you will be required to present a discussion of the seminar readings and will be required to hand in that presentation in written form for grading. Missing your assigned seminar presentation is strongly discouraged: you will receive a grade of zero on the assignment in such circumstances. Furthermore, there will be no opportunity to make up such a missed assignment in the absence of documented medical or family emergency. Please remember that a missed presentation will disrupt the efforts and the work of the rest of the seminar group. And as I noted above, attendance in seminars is mandatory for non-presenters too: it is a matter of common courtesy to the presenters and absence will be strongly reflected in your participation mark.

GOBBETS: These are one of the most powerful tools known to humanity. No, really! They're so good that Dr. Perrins stole them from me.

This is what they are: they are a 100-word distillation of a source – they must include its thesis statement, its main argument, its main sources, and a judgement of its conclusions. In 100 words. For every 10 words over or under that target, your gobbet will automatically lose 10%. Titles and author information presented as a gobbet title do not count. Spelling and grammar matter. Make sure your gobbets are clear, crisp, and to the point. No extraneous material. That’s what you learn with gobbets – how to take a whack of material and distill it down to its essentials. This is a skill that is immensely important for all of you to learn, whatever your post-Acadia goals may be.

Each week, at the beginning of class, you will submit gobbets for each of the assigned readings, one per reading, with a word count for each gobbet.

You do not gobbet articles on the day that you’re presenting.
RESEARCH ESSAY: The research essay can be either historiographical in nature (a discussion of the sub-discipline of Environmental History - on its origins, whether it really is a "unique " branch of historical inquiry, etc.) or it may be topical - that is, on a subject of interest to environmental historians (say, the collapse of the cod fishery, or the environmental impact of the Industrial Revolution, and so on). The essay should be 18-20 pp (approximately 3,500-4,000 words) in length and employment of primary sources will be required for a grade in the excellent (A- or above) range. A proposal and preliminary bibliography is due, in class, on February 7. This should present sufficient evidence that you've done basic research on your topic to that point and that you can command Chicago Manual of Style format as would be expected of a senior student of history.

FINAL TAKE-HOME EXAM: This will be distributed at the end of the final class (4 April) and will be due, in electronic format, on ACORN by 12 noon on the last day of the examination period (26 April). Note that no late examinations will be accepted for any reason; you can of course submit earlier than the deadline if you wish. The examination will consist of one or more essay-format questions that will test your understanding and interpretation of our class readings and discussions. I would expect your submissions to be in essay format, approximately 12 pp in length, with appropriate scholarly apparatus (footnotes/endnotes, bibliography, etc.). Successful examination answers will be interpretive and analytic rather than mnemonic in nature.

Grade Table:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Grade Weight</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gobbets</td>
<td>20% (*)</td>
<td>Every week, at the beginning of class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Date to be selected by you</td>
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<tr>
<td>Seminar Participation</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>Ongoing, in each class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Essay:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Topic/Proposal Essay</td>
<td>5% 25%</td>
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<td>February 7, in class</td>
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<td>April 8 (last day of classes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-home Final Examination</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>During Winter Term Exam Period, Final Due date of December 19th</td>
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* If you fail to hand in gobbets on two separate occasions, you will receive a zero for this component.

Late penalties for all written assignments are 5% per calendar day overdue, with the exception of gobbets, which will only receive a grade if they are handed in on time, at the beginning of class.

Don't bother telling me your printer ran out of ink and you'll email them right after class is done, or even during class. I want hard copies, right at the start of class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY AND DISHONESTY
I refer you to the section “Academic Integrity” to be found on pp. 28-29 of the Acadia University Calendar, 2010-2011. You must be familiar with these guidelines to be enrolled in this course. Plagiarism is also viewed seriously by the Department of History and Classics: it is departmental policy that plagiarised work will receive a grade of F (zero), with no departmental appeal possible. In especially bad cases more severe penalties, including a course grade of F (zero) and/or a recommendation for expulsion from the university, are possible. If the transgression
warrants it, I will not hesitate to seek the application of such a penalty. Please note that under no circumstances will I tolerate a breach of academic integrity: transgressions such as cheating, plagiarism, or actively aiding another student in such an act will result in – at the very least – a grade of zero on the offending assignment.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1 (17 Jan) – Course Introduction, Readings Division, Presentation Schedule, etc.

Week 2 (24 Jan) – The Origins of the field of Environmental History


John Opie, “Environmental History: Pitfalls and Opportunities,” Environmental Review 7, No. 1, Special Issue: Papers from the First International Conference on Environmental History (Spring 1983): 8-16.


J. Donald Hughes, What is Environmental History? Chapters 1-3.

Week 3 (31 Jan) – Evolutionary Directions in the field of Environmental History


J. Donald Hughes, What is Environmental History? Chapters 4 and 6.

Week 4 (7 Feb) – Collapse Week: Be prepared to discuss Diamond's Collapse, in its entirety

Week 5 (14 Feb) – Questioning Collapse Week 1: Be prepared to discuss the critiques of Collapse offered in McAnany and Yoffee's collection. We will be paying particular attention to chapters 1-6 this week. Each of these requires a gobbet.
Week 6 (21 Feb) – Reading Week, No Class

Week 7 (28 Feb) – *Questioning Collapse Week 1*: Be prepared to discuss the critiques of *Collapse* offered in McAnany and Yoffee's collection. We will be paying particular attention to chapters 8-13 this week. Each of these requires a gobbet.

Week 8 (7 Mar) – Environmental History and the Themes of World History


J. Donald Hughes, *What is Environmental History?* Chapter 5.


Week 9 (14 Mar) – The Environmental History of the Ancient World


Week 10 (21 Mar) – The Environmental History of Imperialism
Week 11 (28 Mar) – The Environmental History of the Industrial Revolution


Week 12 (4 Apr) – The Environmental History of the Soviet World


