

General Overview:

This course is a seminar organized around questions of human and environmental change in Latin America. We move from pre-Columbian civilizations through time to the present to consider the ways peoples in Latin America have approached nature conservation. To address conservation, we must first consider the ways peoples have *used* the earth's biota (including plants, forests, fields, minerals, waterways, wildlife, etc.) and how those uses have changed over time. This environmental history approach provides a glimpse of the general chronology of historical events including civilizations, colonialisms, and independence. We also examine the rise in understandings about nature conservation, notions of wilderness, and park concepts. Conventional histories posit that conservation arose as a response to increased industrialization and modernity, largely in the late nineteenth century. Yet, this understanding is based largely on histories of North America and Europe and to a lesser extent Africa and Asia. To understand if and how nature conservation differed in this region we discuss a series of examples from particular environments. These include the management of guano islands in Peru, rain forest conservation and extractive reserves in Amazonia, the social context of the creation of Mexico's national parks, controversies surrounding the conservation of Inkan artifacts in Peru, the relationship between tourism, ecotourism, and resource use in Costa Rica, and the use of conservation as a type of neo-liberal development in Chile. Through these and other examples we will seek a narrative of nature conservation for the region. Because this course is an experiential seminar, your learning depends upon personal observations, careful listening, and thoughtful exchanges. To this end, three broad and inter-related questions will guide our interrogation:

1. How have Latin American peoples understood the natural world and what meanings have they given to its conservation? What values emerged when? Why?
2. Of all decisions any society makes, the most fundamental concern the natural world upon which all human existence ultimately depends. What are the ways individuals, communities, scientists, businesses, governments, non-governmental entities (and other groups) in Latin America have made decisions about the earth's biota? What have been the results for social and economic development?
3. Have different environments engendered different methods of conservation? What plants, animals, or systems merit exceptional attention and why?

Course Objectives:

By drawing upon personal observation, field experience, discussion, cultural artifacts, primary documents and the appropriate literature, this course aims for students to:

1. Examine how relationships between societies and nature change over time.
2. Understand interdisciplinary approaches to nature conservation's history.
3. Develop and defend written and oral arguments about trends and significant events in Latin American and environmental history.

Assignments:

Discussion, participation, quizzes	40%
Daily journal entries and blog	30%
Final essays and presentations	30%

Course Materials:

Shawn Miller, *An Environmental History of Latin America* (Cambridge 2007)
Binder readings and in-class films

Class Schedule:

1. Landmarks in Time and Space
 - a. **Reading:** Miller, *Latin American Environmental History*
 - b. **Journal Entry:** What is Latin America? What is Environmental History?
2. Theories and Issues: Latin American History
 - a. Miller, *Latin American Environmental History*
 - b. What stories are there about humans and nature in Latin America?
3. Use: Guano
 - a. Cushman “The Most Valuable Birds in the World”
 - b. How and why are economic values placed on animals? What happens?
4. Use: Oil
 - a. Bosselman et.al., “Oil and Gas Development in the Peruvian Amazon”
 - b. What is development and who does it happen for? Do laws matter?
5. Primary Documents: Testimonies of the Incas
 - a. Garcilaso de la Vega
 - b. Cieza de Leon
 - c. Guaman Poma
 - d. What glimpses of the past do these men provide? Whose perspectives?
6. FILM: *The Nature of Things*
 - a. How should resource wealth accumulate or be distributed?
7. Conserving Cultural Artifacts and Patrimony
 - a. Hiram Bingham “In Search for Machu Picchu”
 - b. Heaney, “Did Yale Plunder Peru?”
 - c. Who is responsible for conservation of cultural heritage? Who benefits?
8. Representation
 - a. Silverman, “Touring Ancient Times”
 - b. How is the past persistent in the present? Who controls the past? Why?
9. Use: Coca
 - a. Poole and Reñique, “Coca Capitalism”
 - b. Morales, “Let Me Chew my Coca”
 - c. Why isn’t there a Cocabucks (instead of a Starbucks) on campus?
10. FILM: *State of Fear*
 - a. How does a society heal from violent conflict?

11. Wilderness
 - a. Leopold, “Wilderness as a Form of Land Use”
 - b. Stegner, “The Gift of Wilderness”
 - c. Wilson, “The Conservation Ethic”
 - d. What is wilderness? Why conserve it?
12. Problems of wilderness?
 - a. Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness”
 - b. Gómez-Pompa and Kaus, “Taming the Wilderness Myth”
 - c. Is wilderness a cultural value? Whose? What values compete with it?
13. Primary Documents: Wilderness
 - a. Wilderness Society Creed 1937
 - b. SERNANP “What are Protected Areas?” 2011
 - c. Wilderness Act 1964
 - d. UNESCO World Heritage Application and Declaration of Manu in 1987
 - e. How & why do different groups articulate the importance of wild spaces?
14. Amazonian imaginings
 - a. Slater, “Amazonia as Edenic Narrative”
 - b. Hecht and Cockburn, “Seven Beliefs”
 - c. Millard, “River of Doubt”
 - d. Is there a popular draw toward the rainforest? Since when? Why?
15. FILM: *Fitzcarraldo* and *Burden of Dreams*
 - a. NYT articles, Fitzcarraldo
 - b. Geographical Journal Reports (3) on travel down Madre de Dios
 - c. What schemes for development have persisted in the tropics?
Interpretations of these schemes?
16. Manu
 - a. Terborgh, “Paradise Fading” and “The Danger Within”
 - b. Dowie, “Exclusion”
 - c. Is conservation in conflict with native peoples?
17. Amazonia and Indians
 - a. Redford, “Ecologically Noble Savage”
 - b. Shephard, “Trouble in Paradise”
 - c. What should be done with people in parks? Who gets to decide?
18. FILM: *Iracema*
 - a. Sarzynski, “Celluloid Jungle”
 - b. What metaphors help explain human relationships with nature?
19. Use: Rubber
 - a. Hemming, “The Rubber Boom”
 - b. Keck, “Rubber Tappers of Acre”
 - c. Coomes, “Century of Rain Forest Use”
 - d. What are the ebbs and flows of rubber use and labor relations?
20. Use: Logging and Roads
 - a. Conover, “The Routes of Man”
 - b. Do transportation and communication change how societies value nature?
21. Use: Oil
 - a. Sabin, “Searching for Middle Ground”

- b. What makes oil extraction so complicated?
22. FILM: *Crude*
- a. True Cost of Chevron Alternative Annual Report
 - b. Carus, “Chevron Chiefs face Shareholders”
 - c. Who is responsible for environmental destruction?
23. Use: “Eco” Tourism?
- a. Fraser “Joining Forces”
 - b. Honey “Costa Rica’s Green Tourism”
 - c. What are the promises and limitations of tourism?
24. Who makes parks and why?
- a. Wakild “Purchasing Patagonia”
 - b. Wakild, excerpt “Revolutionary Parks”
 - c. Does national sovereignty matter for conservation?
25. FILM: *Touching the Void*
- a. Carey, “The Politics of Place”
 - b. How do different people experience different environments (like glaciers)?

A Brief Note on Keeping Your Journals:

Your journal should be a rigorous reflection of your experience on this course. Take the time to reflect on what you see, hear, smell, taste, and touch as well as what you think about those experiences. Anticipate events or activities and process them afterwards. Reactions to the readings should be interwoven with these observations.

For each set of readings I’ve listed at least one question that will guide our group discussion. Writing out your thoughts on these questions both before and after our discussions will help you squeeze the most out of the issues at hand. It will also make writing the final paper much easier. Take the time to keep a great journal.

Your journal should be a space for creativity—write, draw, sketch, compile, chronicle and otherwise do as you wish with it because it will be yours to keep. There is no set length—but fewer than fifteen entries will be unacceptable.

Specificity is always superior to vagueness—if you don’t remember what you just saw, ask someone or look it up. Avoid clichés like “throughout history” or “for all time”—think about how certain times are unique and when those are. If there are useful generalizations, make sure they are truly useful and broadly applicable. Then think about why that is the case.

Finally, this can also be a place to reflect on difference and sameness, inequalities and injustices, transcendent beauty, utter amazement, bitter tragedy, deprivation, survival, glory, and patterns of any sort.

Observe. Think. Reflect. Share. Be good.