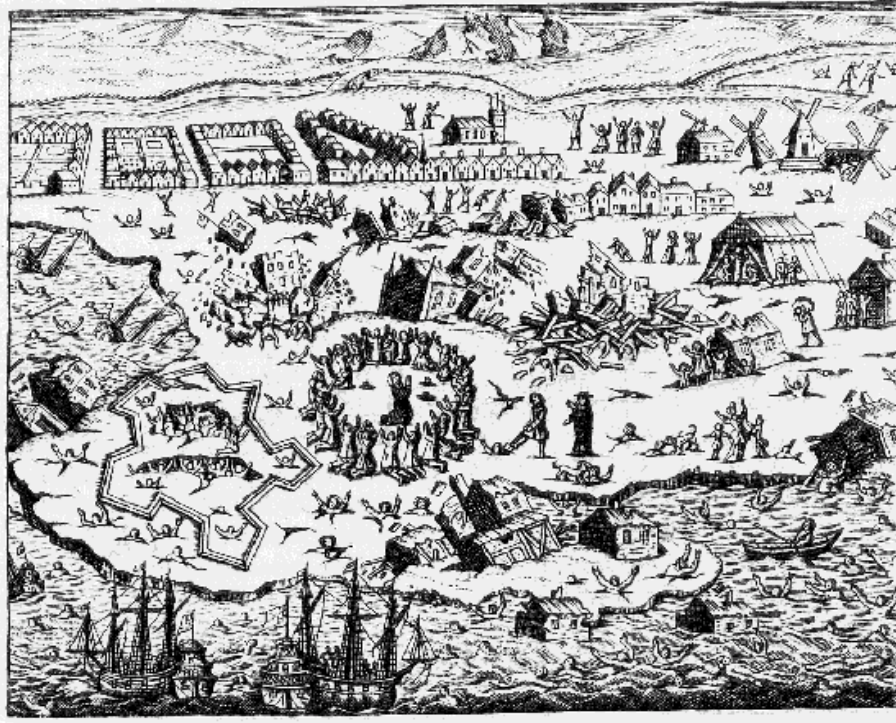


ENVIRONMENT AND CULTURE IN THE CARIBBEAN



Spring 2008

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Tuesdays 3-4, Wednesdays 11-12
And by appointment

Course Description: The environment of the islands of the Caribbean has undergone profound changes since the arrival of Europeans to the region in 1492. This course traces the history of the relationship between the physical environment and culture from pre-Columbian civilizations to the economies of tourism. Among the specific topics of discussion are Arawak and Carib notions of nature and conservation of natural resources; the impact of deforestation and changes in climate; natural hazards; the plantation economy as an ecological revolution; the political implications of the tensions between the economy of the plot and that of the plantation; the development of environmental conservation and its impacts on notions of nationhood; the ecological impact of resort tourism; and the development of eco-tourism. These topics are examined through a variety of materials: historical documents, essays, art, literature, music and film.

Texts (available in Bookstore)

David Barker and Duncan McGregor (eds.), *Environment and Development in the Caribbean*

Sherrie Bayer and Barbara Deutsch Lynch (eds.), *Beyond Sun and Sand*

Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place*

Shawn William Miller, *An Environmental History of Latin America*

Mayra Montero, *In the Palm of Darkness*

Polly Pattullo, *Last Resorts*

Class Dynamics: Classes will be based on dialogue, open discussion and specific student questions. Lectures will be provided occasionally to guide and inform discussion of particular concepts or texts but will not substitute for student participation. Therefore students are responsible for coming to class prepared, having read and/or viewed assigned materials, and ready to comment on them.

Students are responsible for bringing to our attention any problems they may encounter during the semester. This includes issues of comprehension, individual assignments or other concerns that may affect student performance.

Required Work: There are three types of written work required for class.

1. A series of brief responses (150 words each) to the readings that appear in **RED** on the syllabus. Look below for dates due. The responses are due by 5pm of the evening before class and should be posted on our Blackboard site. You are welcome to respond to any postings and are responsible for reading all your classmates' postings by class time.
2. An "environmental profile" (2000 words minimum) of a Caribbean island.
3. A 4000-word research paper on a topic chosen in consultation with the instructor.

If, in the course of writing any of the required work you should make use of the ideas or wording of a consulted source, you must provide documentation to that effect following the guidelines established in the *MLA Handbook* or *Chicago Manual of Style*. If you are unclear as to what requires documentation, consult the *Manual*, the pamphlet on *Originality and Attribution: A Guide for Student Writers at Vassar College*, or one of your professors. Failure to acknowledge sources constitutes a breach of academic integrity and will be referred to the College's Academic Panel. This applies equally to material taken from the Internet.

Attendance Policy: Attendance to class meetings is **obligatory**. Absence from class will not constitute a valid excuse for lack of preparedness or late work. Students can keep abreast of course assignments through Blackboard or through contact with fellow students or the instructor. After the first unexcused absence from class, subsequent absences will result in a corresponding reduction of the final grade (see below).

Students with Disabilities:

Academic accommodations are available for students with disabilities who are registered with the Office of Disability and Support Services. Please schedule an appointment with the instructor early in the semester to discuss any accommodations for this course which have been approved by the Director of Disability and Support Services as indicated in your DSS accommodation letter.

Discussion Schedule:

January

Part 1: Historical Background

- 24 Introduction
- 29 Historical Background
Read:
Sued Badillo's "Facing Up to Caribbean History" (Blackboard)
Miller's Chapter 1, An Old World Before it was "New" (p. 8-40)
Columbus' "Letter to Luis de Santangel" (Blackboard)
- 31 Theoretical Background
Read:
Faber's "The Ecological Crisis of Latin America: A Theoretical Introduction" (Blackboard)
Sawyer and Agrawal's "Environmental Orientalism" (Blackboard)
Slaymaker' "Ec(h)oiing the Other(s): The Call of Global Green and Black African Responses" (Blackboard)
Harris' "Resistance and Alternatives to Globalization in Latin America and the Caribbean" (Blackboard)

February

- 5 Environmental Background
Read:
McGregor and Barker's Chapter 1, A Geographical Focus for Environment and Development in the Caribbean (p. 3-17)
Draper, Jackson and Donovan, Geologic Provinces of the Caribbean Region (p. 3-12) (Blackboard)
Miller, Tropical Determinism, (p. 105-135)
- 7 Climate Change
Read:
IPCC 2007, Climate Change 2007: The Physical Basis, Summary for Policymakers (Blackboard)
Lindzen, Climate of Fear, Wall Street Journal (Blackboard)
Emmanuel, Increasing destructiveness of tropical cyclones over the past 30 years (Blackboard)
Tierney, In 2008, a 100 Percent Chance of Alarm, NY Times (Blackboard)

Part I: DEFORESTATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

- 12 The Dominican-Haitian Border
Read:
Jared Diamond from *Collapse* (Blackboard)
Amy Wilentz's "Cutting the Trees" (Blackboard)
"Confronting Haiti's Environmental Crisis: A Tale of Two Visions" (Blackboard)
Benson's "Kiskeya Lan Guinée-Eden: The Utopian Vision in Haitian Painting"
Benson's "A Long Bilingual Conversation Concerning Paradise Lost: Landscapes in Haitian Art" from *Caribbean Literatures*
Video: The Border
- 14 Grove's "Edens, Islands, and Early Empires"
Grove's "Climate, Conservation, and Carib Resistance" (Blackboard)
ISLAND PROFILES DUE

Part II: THE ECOLOGICAL REVOLUTION OF THE PLANTATION

- 19/21 Higman's "The Sugar Revolution" (Blackboard)

Benítez Rojo's "Sugar and the Environment in Cuba" from *Caribbean Literatures*
Williams, Rum: A Social and Sociable History, p 3-57.
Miller, Chapter 2 Colonial Balance Sheets

- 26 **Kincaid's *A Small Place***
DeLoughrey's "Island Ecologies and Caribbean Literatures" (Blackboard)

Part III: Tourism

- 28 **Pattullo's *Last Resorts***

March

- 4 ***Last Resorts (continued)***

- 6 Catch-up day

SPRING BREAK

- 25 Savage's "Ecological Disturbance and Nature Tourism" (Blackboard)
Cater's "Environmental Contradictions in Sustainable Tourism" (Blackboard)
Belisle's "Tourism and Food Imports: The Case of Jamaica" (Blackboard)
- 27 Beckles' "Where Will All The Garbage Go? Tourism, Politics, and The Environment In Barbados" (Blackboard)
Christian et al's "Parrot Conservation and Ecotourism in the Windward Islands" (Blackboard)
Hawkins et al's "Effects of Recreational Scuba Diving on Caribbean Coral and Fish Conservation" (Blackboard)

Part IV: Natural Hazards

April

- 1 Disasters and Risk Management
Abbott, Chapter 1, Natural Disasters and the Human Population, p. 2-23 (Blackboard)
Wisner et al., *At Risk* Chapter 1, "The Challenge of Disasters", p. 3-29 (Blackboard)
- 3 Geology and Tourism
Hughes et al., Climate Change, Human Impacts and the Health of Coral Reefs (Blackboard)
Lane et al., Volcanic hazard or economic destitution: Hard choices in Baños, Ecuador (Blackboard)
Kozak and Ebel, Macro seismic information from historic pictorial sources (Blackboard)
- 8 Hurricanes
Walcott, from *Omeros* (Blackboard)
Allfrey, "Hurricane David" (from *In the Cabinet*)
Abbott, Chapter 12, Hurricanes and the Coastline, p. 335-368, (Blackboard)
De Marchi, Not just a matter of knowledge: The Katrina debacle (Blackboard)
Kelman, Hurricane Katrina disaster diplomacy (Blackboard)
- 10 Volcanoes, Earthquakes and Tsunami
Abbott, Chapters 4 (earthquakes) and 8 (volcanoes) (Blackboard)
Zebrowski, The Cauldrons of Hell (Blackboard)
Scarth, The *Nuée Ardente* (Blackboard)
Zahibo et al., The 1867 Virgin Islands Tsunami (Blackboard)

Part V: Environmental Movements

- 15 Krieger's "A Caribbean Community for Ocean Development" (Blackboard)
Grossman's "Soil Conservation, Political Ecology and Technological Change on St. Vincent" (Blackboard)
- 17 Jackson's "What Was Natural in the Coastal Ocean?" (Blackboard)
Allen's "Increased Damage to Marine Ecosystems" (Blackboard)

Part VI: Nature and Nationalism

- 22 White's "The Nationalization of Nature" (Blackboard)
Environmentalism, Nation, and Music (cd)
- 24 Vieques
Davis et al., Military pollution and natural purity: seeing nature and knowing contamination in Vieques, Puerto Rico (Blackboard)
McCaffrey, Social Struggle Against the U.S. Navy in Vieques, Puerto Rico: Two Movements in History (Blackboard)
Antonius and Weiner, Corals under fire (Blackboard)
Baver' "Peace Is More Than the End of Bombing": The Second Stage of the Vieques Struggle

May

- 1 Catch up day
- 5 Pollution and Amphibian Decline
Mayra Montero's In the Palm of Darkness
Alford & Richards' "Global Amphibian Decline: A Problem in Applied Ecology" (Blackboard)
Blaustein et al's "Amphibian Declines" (Blackboard)
- 8? *In the Palm of Darkness*

Course Evaluation Criteria

- 10% Class Attendance (Please note that after the second unexcused absence from the class you will forfeit 5 percentage points off your final grade for every subsequent absence).
- 20% Class participation
- 20% Brief responses
- 20% Island profile
- 30% Final paper

Final paper will be due by 5pm on the second day of final exams.