Seminar examines ways of knowing and what we know about historical environments. Compares and contrasts contributions by various disciplines and interdisciplinary approaches to historical ecology and environmental history. Readings drawn from science, social science and humanities literature. Individual investigation projects required.
Course Justification

Students engaged in environmental practice, such as impact assessment or ecosystem restoration, benefit from understanding precursor conditions and long term factors that have in some cases degraded sites and in other cases created conditions highly favorable to certain organisms’ existence. This seminar encourages breadth of exposure to modes of thinking and ways of investigating questions about past environmental change. Information sources for appreciating environmental history and historical ecology derive from disciplinary and methodological approaches that can best be apprehended via comparisons and contrasts of published results.

Student Learning Objectives: Students will
- Be exposed to sources of knowledge concerning historical environmental conditions
- Recognize the relative importance of factors inducing disturbance in ecosystems
- Develop a framework for judging claims made regarding environmental impacts from human actions and for making forward looking decisions about site management.

Enrollment (three years offered as special topics course):

Spring 2002  MLS 501  10
Spring 2003  NR595F  03
Spring 2004  NR595F  12
Spring 2005  NR595E  06

New Resources Statement

No new resources are required for this course, as it is within the teaching obligation of Professor Blank’s normal teaching load and has developed out of his research interest in historical ecology and environmental history.

Syllabus (from last course offering). Syllabus items E. through I. are included in the following syllabus.

N. Statement on laboratory safety or risk assumption in courses requiring physical activity or field trips. Not applicable.

O. Statement on extra expenses: explanation of charges beyond that of textbook costs or explanation of "pass-through" charges, e.g., lane rental at the bowling alley, field trip costs, etc. or explanation of charges beyond that of textbook costs. Not Applicable

P. Statement on transportation: notification to students of expected transportation accommodations e.g. students having to provide their own transportation to a field trip or internship site. Not applicable.
“Historical ecology seeks to interpret the natural and artificial factors that have
influenced the development of an area of vegetation to its present state.”
--O. Rackham (1980)

“The landscape reflects the technological innovations, the economic constraints, and
the cultural aspirations of its inhabitants, all of which are superimposed upon its
natural features.”
--G.G. Whitney (1994)

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  site management.

Texts
guide to reference ecosystems. Island Press, Washington, D.C.
Hughes, J.D. 1996. Pan’s Travail: environmental problems of the ancient Greeks and
University Press, New Haven.

Grading Scale: A+= 97-100, A = 93-96, A- = 90-92, B+= 87-89, B = 83-86, B- = 80-82,
C+ = 77-79, C = 73-76, C- = 70-72, D+ = 67-69, D = 63-66, D- = 60-62, F = below 60.

Assignments % Due Date
Weekly responses 15 Weekly
Critical Analysis 25 Early February
Literature Review 25 Late February
Research Project 35 Final Examination Period
1. Responses to book chapters or readings: from your personal perspective or selected topical focus respond to the readings assigned for each week. Bio-diversity, sustainability, forest decline, restoration--are the kinds of topic foci that I envision you bringing to the discussion, depending upon what your particular interest might be. Due weekly

2. Critical analysis of research method or theoretical approach Due in early February
A critical analysis examines a subject of interest, identifies its constituent concepts or parts (e.g., techniques, tools, assumptions), and applies articulated criteria to arrive at value judgments about the subject of interest. In this case, the subject of interest can be either a research method used in or a theoretical approach used by environmental historians or historical ecologists. You may choose to focus on a particular work (study) or particular author or a particular work by a particular author as an example of the method or approach you analyze. But your aim in this paper is to analyze the method or approach rather than the example. This is not a book review.

3. Literature Review focused on a place or region of choice. Due in late February
This assignment’s purpose is to examine a number of textual sources bearing on a particular landscape focal point of interest: place, region, or country. By far textual sources provide the majority of the material on which environmental historians concentrate their work. Historical ecologists will shape their field data collection and other investigations in reaction to documentary evidence. In either case, synthesis of information and perspectives is the aim.

4. Research Project in Historical Ecology Due Exam week
Each person in this class brings a different background into the course and after it will proceed in a direction different from everyone else. The project paper will probably evolve from the previous two papers, taking the results of the critical analysis and literature review assignments and then examining a particular question in some detail. This assignment could evolve into a proposal for further investigation in some later stage of your graduate career. It could attempt to answer a question that has been nagging or intriguing you for some time. At some point, I’ll ask for a memorandum explaining what you want to accomplish in your project paper.

Schedule

**Week Generative Topics, Readings, and Assignments**

1/12 Course introduction, background, aims, assignments, etc.
Framework to discern historical ecology and human impacts
Where do we start and with what definitions? Lecture with examples


1/26 Russell: Part I “Questions and Clues”


2/02 Continue discussion of Hughes and Mediterranean ecosystem questions

Russell: Chapter 9: Historical Patterns of Human Settlement and their Ecological Consequences

2/16 ESEH Meeting in Florence


3/09 Spring Break


4/13  Restoration Implications  
Blank: “A Case Integrating Historical Ecology to Restore a Transitional Pinus Palustris Community”  
Russell: Chapter 5: Mimicking Nature

4/20  Russell: Part III: Case Study Contributions of Historical Ecology to the Understanding of Ecological Issues  
Egan and Howell: Part III Case Studies Using Reference Conditions

4/27  Course conclusions, observations and evaluations

**Late Policy and Attendance**

The professor reserves the right to accept late assignments with acceptable justification supplied by the student. Incomplete grades are discouraged as a matter of mutual self preservation and must be negotiated prior to the end of the first week of the examination period. A specific time for completion must be agreed upon in writing.

Attendance is expected at all seminar sessions but (excused and unexcused) absences, and scheduling makeup work are tolerated so long as they do not become detrimental to the individual’s completion of course work. University attendance policies can be found at [http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic_affairs/pols_regs/REG205.00.4.php](http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic_affairs/pols_regs/REG205.00.4.php)

**Statement for students with disabilities**: "Reasonable accommodations will be made for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653.  [http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/offices/affirm_action/dss/](http://www.ncsu.edu/provost/offices/affirm_action/dss/) For more information on NC State's policy on working with students with disabilities, please see the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation ([http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic_affairs/courses_undergrad/REG02.20.1.php](http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic_affairs/courses_undergrad/REG02.20.1.php)).

**Academic Integrity Expectations**

This course follows the general policies and expectations with regard to student academic integrity and pursuit of knowledge and the dissemination of ideas. Any questions about ethical conduct can first be considered in light of the ample guidance given at: