

HIST 283: "Environmental Histories of South Asia"

Fall 2008 - Mr. Fisher, Rice 314, 58524/58420

Class Meets: TuTh 9:30-10:50 AM

Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 9:00-10:50 (and by appointment)

Overview

The diverse regions and micro-regions of South Asia have long been sites for complex interactions among living organisms, including humans, and the material world around them. Human and non-human forces have always affected, and are ever more rapidly transforming, the material world. While there has always been change, from pre-historical ages to the present, the direction of this change is neither fully predictable, nor fully-controllable, nor fully equitable. This course will explore the causes and types of changes as well as whom and what this change will affect, taking long-term perspective of history.

Further, specific societies, and the state and distinct groups and classes within them, hold a range of attitudes toward the material and living worlds, including the appropriate valuation and distribution of resources. To be effective, public policy must reflect the consensus of the people with power, and, to be equitable, should reflect the values of the people most affected. This course will examine some of the major long-term patterns in such attitudes by many of the cultures, states, groups, and classes within South Asia (which presently is mostly comprised of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, plus smaller nations including Sri Lanka and Nepal). Given this diversity, we can make interregional and intraregional comparisons over historical time.

The earliest substantial evidence about interactions between people and the material world dates from the third millennium BCE. Over the more than fifty centuries that have followed, intricate webs of relationships among the land, the water, the flora, and the fauna have emerged and shifted, often producing tensions and even sharp ruptures. The most powerful agents for dramatic, long-term change have been the many competing peoples who have sought to reshape and develop the land, exploit and conserve the water, control and manage the flora, and domesticate and harness the fauna, according to their own diverse cultural valuations of them. All this has occurred within larger natural and human contexts, including global weather patterns, world-wide colonialism, and increasing transnational movements of peoples, animals, and plants.

This course explores crucial material, socio-political, and cultural relationships among the many peoples of South Asia and their ecosystems down to the present. We focus on a series of integrated and cumulative examples that highlight these changing interrelationships. We also read the contending interpretations by a range of historians and environmentalists. Each class meeting will include both discussion and also presentation of contextualizing material by the instructor. Each student will write an independently designed research project, concentrating on a particular area of interest.

Readings:

This is a very rapidly changing academic field, hence no one or more textbooks adequately represent its many facets. As a result, the instructor will make available various required readings through **Blackboard**. To read these from Blackboard, you will need to have access to a computer that can handle both .pdf and .doc files (the machines in computer labs can do this). Since there are no required textbooks, please use the money you would otherwise have spent on them to either photocopy or print out from your print quota these approximately 575 pages of readings.

Course requirements:

Doing the assigned reading in advance, attending every class meeting, and participating through insightful questions and comments. Each student will make one (or more) brief presentation(s) to the class about an individualized reading which is related to the topic at hand.

Write two position papers (3-5 pages, 750-1,250 words each). There is a penalty of 3 points off every two hours it is late. Each paper will focus on the readings, and will enable students to develop their own arguments in a coherent and insightful way.

Write one 3000-5000 word (12-20 page) research paper, with penultimate draft version submitted (on topic to be decided through individual consultation with the instructor). Students might productively select a particular region or set of specific issues, for example, an environmental history of Kerala or Bengal, or the process of sedentization, or relationships between a particular forest and the people who live within or otherwise interact with it.

Grading

Position Papers average: 25%; Class participation/discussion 25%; Research Paper: 50%

The grading is as follows: A+ 100-97; A 96-93; A- 92-90; B+ 89-87; B 86-83; B- 82-80; C+ 79-77; C 76-73; C- 72-70; D 65-69; F below 65.

Honor Code: The Honor Code applies to all assignments in this course. This means that any student found cheating, plagiarizing, turning in another person's work as his/her own or otherwise violating the instructor's explicit or implicit instructions will be subject to a hearing before the Student Honor Committee. To learn more about the Code, see the Rules and Regulations Section VI A and B in Fussers or the Student Handbook. (language courtesy of Susan Colley and the Student Honor Code Committee).

All requests for accommodation due to special needs that come to the instructor in advance endorsed by Ms. Boomer will be entertained.

Useful units of measure:

Metric:

Kilometer = 1000 meters = 3,281 feet = .625 mile

Hectare = 2.471 acres; 100 hectares= 1 sq. km = .386 sq miles = 247.1 acres

India contains 328 million hectares; Pakistan 80 million hectares; Bangladesh 14 million hectares

Specifically South Asian:

lakh/lac = 100,000; *crore* = 10,000,000

Schedule of Class meetings

9/2 Overview of the course: Environmental contexts and histories of South Asia.

Required: You will find this and the other readings on BLACKBOARD: Madav Gadgil and Ramahandra Guha, selections from Ecology and Equity (GadgilGuhaEcology.pdf, 12pp)

Part I: Indigenous Cultures

9/4 Vanjati ["Forest Born"]/Adivasi ["Original"]/ST ["Scheduled Tribe"] peoples' cultural and economic relationships to the environment.

Required: I. Etiology of the Kharias, and II. Selection from Paraja by Gopinath Mohanty (ForestPeople.doc, 13pp) and Baviskar, "Tribal Politics and Discourses of Environmentalism" (BaviskarTribalPolitics.pdf, 16pp).

9/9 Indus, Vedic, and Buddhist cultural and economic relationships to the environment.

Required: I. Selected Vedic Hymns; II. Selection from the Epic poem, Mahabharata; III. Selections from the Shastras; and IV. Edicts from Emperor Ashoka (VedicHinduBuddhist.doc, 9pp.) and Alley, "Ganga and Gandagi" (Alley.pdf, 19pp).

9/11 Islam, sedentization, the Mughal imperial state's cultural and economic relationships to the environment

Required: Singh, "Forests, Pastoralists and Agrarian Society in Mughal India" (SinghChetan.pdf, 15pp).

Recommended: Ozdemir, "Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Quranic Perspective" (OzdemirQuran.pdf, 18pp).

9/13 (Saturday by noon with a penalty of 3 points off every two hours it is late) first position paper (3-5 pages, 750-1250 words) due by email as an attachment. The topic should be one aspect of Indian pre-colonial cultural and/or political relationships with the material world/environment. You should establish a thesis and then use specific evidence from the readings (giving foot/endnotes for direct quotations). Suggested topics include: assessing the Gadgil-Guha model (ecosystem people, ecological refugees, and omnivores) in light of any one or more of the pre-colonial South Asian cultures (Indus, Vedic, Buddhist, Islamic, Hindu); analyzing the relationship between the rulers of any one or more of these pre-colonial South Asian cultures and the material world; analyzing the presuppositions of any one or more of these prescriptive texts toward the material world. You can include the Hardiman and/or Samant readings (due Tuesday) in your paper.

9/16 Regional water conservation and controls

Required, read at least one of the following: Hardiman, "Small-Dam Systems of the Sahyadris" (HardimanSmallDam.pdf, 13pp.) and/or Samant, "Manifestation of the urban public...ghats in Ujjain" (SamantUjjain.pdf, 21pp.).

Part II: British Colonial Rule and Indian Anti-Western Environmentalism

9/18 The coming of "green[?] colonialism"

Required: Barton, "Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism" (Barton_Gregory.pdf, 24pp) and/or Grove, "Conserving Eden: (The European) East India Company and their Environmental Policies..." (GroveCSSH.pdf, 34 pp) and/or Guha, "Prehistory of Community Forestry" (GuhaPrehistory.pdf, 26pp).

9/23 British Imperial "scientific" natural resource administration

Required: Rajan, "Imperial Environmentalism or Environmental Imperialism" (Rajan.pdf, 24pp), and/or Gilmartin, "Scientific Empire and Imperial Science: Colonialism and Irrigation Technology in the Indus Basin" (gilmartinJAS.pdf, 23pp) and/or Lewis, "Personal Equation: Political Economy and Social Technology on India's Canals" (LEWIS.MICHAELCanals.pdf, 28pp).

9/25 Colonial officials, indigenous peoples, and their differing knowledge of and relationship to the environment

Required: Sivaramakrishnan, "State Sciences and Development histories: Encoding Local Forestry knowledge in Bengal" (SivaramakrishnanEncoding.pdf, 15pp), and/or Skaria, selections from Hybrid Histories, (skaria.pdf, 27pp), and/or Mann, "Delhi's Belly: On the Management of Water, Sewage and Excreta in a Changing Urban Environment during the Nineteenth Century" (MannDelhiSinH.pdf, 31pp) and/or Prashad, "Technology of Sanitation in Colonial Delhi" (PrashadMAS2.pdf 43pp).

9/30 M. Gandhi, conservation, and Western and Eastern civilizations

Required: selections from M. Gandhi, Hind Swaraj (ESGandhiHindSwaraj.doc, 30pp)

10/2-10 meet individually with instructor to select your research paper topic.

10/2 Gandhian deep ecology[?]

Required: Lal, "Gandhi and the Ecological Vision" (LalGandhi.pdf, 11pp) and Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique" (GuhaDebate.pdf, 8pp).

10/7 Sacred Groves, Forests, and Biodiversity

Required: Tomalin, "Bio-Divinity and Biodiversity Perspectives on Religion and Environmental Conservation in India" (Tomalin_Emma.pdf, 31pp).

10/9 (No class: Yom Kippur)

10/11 (Saturday noon with a penalty of 3 points off every two hours it is late) second position paper (3-5 pages, 750-1250 words) due. Analyze some aspect of British colonial rule and/or anti-Western environmentalism, and its/their relationships to the material world. You can include Tuesday's readings in your paper.

10/14 Women as the environment

Required: Shiva, "Women in the Forest," from Staying Alive (ShivaWomenForest.pdf, 21 pp) and Banerjee and Bell, "Ecogender: Locating Gender in Environmental Social Science" (BanerjeeEcoFem.pdf, 17pp)

10/16 No Class, (in light of individual meetings on papers)

Fall Break

Part III: Independent Nation-States of South Asia

10/28-30 Independent India; overview

Required: Rangarajan, 'Politics of Ecology: the Debate on Wildlife and People in India, 1970-95' (Rangarajan.pdf, 26pp)

10/30 At start of class: Submit paper topic prospectus and preliminary bibliography.

11/4 The Chipko ["Hug the Trees"] Anti-deforestation Movement

Required: Guha, "Chipko: Social History of an 'Environmental' Movement" and "Epilogue, the Afterlives of Chipko" (GuhaUnquietChipko.pdf, 25pp) and Shiva, "Evolution, Structure, and Impact of the Chipko Movement" (VandanaChipko.pdf, 10pp).

11/6, 11, 13, 18 Independent India. These class meetings will be tailored to the collective and individual interests of the members of the class. Depending on individual interests, issues to be discussed may include: Climate Change Conservation, Deforestation, Dams, Ecodevelopment, Green Revolution, Joint/Community Resource Management, and Various kinds of Pollution (Urban and Rural). Specific readings will be allotted to groups and individuals.

11/27 No Class (Thanksgiving)

11/20 Independent Pakistan, overview

Required: "Pakistan: Country Study in Asia Pacific Journal of Environmental Law" (PakistanCountry.pdf, 14pp)

Brief individual reports on research paper progress.

11/25, 12/2 Independent Pakistan. Depending on individual interests, issues to be discussed may include: Climate Change Conservation, Deforestation, Dams, Ecodevelopment, Green Revolution, Joint/Community Resource Management, and Various kinds of Pollution (Urban and Rural). Specific readings will be allotted to groups and individuals.

12/4 Independent Bangladesh, overview

12/5 (Friday) at noon: Penultimate draft of research paper due

12/9-11 Independent Bangladesh. Depending on individual interests, issues to be discussed may include: Climate Change Conservation, Deforestation, Dams, Ecodevelopment, Green Revolution, Joint/Community Resource Management, and Various kinds of Pollution (Urban and Rural). Specific readings will be allotted to groups and individuals.

12/18 (Thursday) at 9:00AM **research paper due** (as officially scheduled in exam period)