

# **Global Environmental Problems, Environmentalisms, and the Age of Climate Change (INTL 101)**

Francisco Laguna

Sections A05 & A06 (Friday)

# What are sections for?

- Discuss and review weekly readings and key concepts.
- Preparation for exams and writing assignments.
- Activities to complement lecture.

The syllabus for this section is available on TritonEd.

# Attendance:

**Attendance of all TA sections:** If you are going to miss a class, you have to justify it (Excuse letters, doctor appointment letters, etc).

- No unexcused absences = 100% for section grade (includes excused absences). That means that if you come to your sections and participate in them, you will get an A grade, for your "Section Attendance and Participation", which counts for the 15% of the total grade in this course.
- Attendance counts for the 15% of the total grade of the course.
- One unexcused absence = 95% for section grade. A-
- Two unexcused absences = 89% for section grade. B+
- Three unexcused absences = 75% for section grade. B

**Make sure to write your name on the blank paper!**

# Francisco Laguna

- History Department. Ph.D. Candidate.
- Specialty: Spanish Empire in the Indies or the Americas (1492-1898).
- Local Religion, Evangelization, Indigenous Communities, History of the Church.
- **Humanist approach** to cases related to the environment. Interest in the relationship between nature and indigenous religion. The environment may shape religious beliefs.

# The case of “El Tío” in “Potosí”.



**El Potosí, Bolivia. A city famous for its silver mines.**



- El Tío (The Uncle) is according to native traditions, the lord of the Underworld and protector of mines.
- He offers protection if sacrifices and offerings are given. If neglected, El Tío punishes the miners.
- Miners offer him tobacco, liquor, coca leaves. Sacrifice of animals.
- El Tío is considered by the miners as being more reliable than their government.



**Representation of El Tío, combining Christian (demonic) elements merged with indigenous symbolism. Syncretism.**



**Bolivian miners with an idol of “El Tío” (The Uncle).**

Why do the miners seek protection from El Tío? Does it have to do with their native religious traditions, the environment, or their labor conditions?



# Week 2 – Friday January 18:

- How to write a response paper: a general guideline.
- Review of key concepts and readings from weeks 1 and 2.
- Ted Steinberg, “Down to Earth: Nature, Agency and Power in History” *American Historical Review* 107, 3 (June 2002): 798-820
- Andreas Malm, “The origins of Fossil Capital: From Water to Steam in the British Cotton Industry” *Historical Materialism* (2013) (selections).
- McNeil, *Something New Under the Sun: chapter 1 and chapter 10*.
- Myrna Santiago, “Class and Nature in the Oil Industry of Northern Veracruz, 1900-1938” in *A Land Between Waters: Environmental Histories of Modern Mexico* ed. Christopher R. Boyer (Univ of Arizona Press, 2012)

# Writing a Response Paper

- 1. Format and references
- 2. Argument and approach
- 3. Bibliographic dialogue
- 4. Criticism

# 1. Format and references

- **Format:** Two-page response paper. Times New Roman 12. Double spaced.
- **Footnote/references:** Write the author and page number you are citing in parentheses in the text at the end of sentence. E.g., (Malm, 17-19).

## 2. Argument and Approach:

- **Identify** the main argument and the approach of the author you are reading!
- **Normally stated at the beginning of the article/chapter or in the conclusion.** Look for words such as “I argue...”, “my point is...”.
- When reading a book, **DO NOT SKIP THE INTRODUCTION.** It is a very important part!
- When writing your response paper, devote the first paragraphs to let your reader know the author’s argument and approach.

## 2. Argument and Approach:

- **Identify the main argument and the approach:**
  - Example: Myrna Santiago, “Class and Nature in the Oil Industry of Northern Veracruz, 1900-1938” .
  - Approach: Environmental and labor history approach. Focus on the interplay between class power and nature/environment.
  - Argument: She argues that class position shaped how people view and experience the natural world around them (Santiago, 173).



# Do it yourselves!

- When writing your own essays start by letting your reader know what is your main argument and how you are going to prove it. This is valid for any class in any discipline!
- Example: ““I argue that rubber was the principal cause for the deforestation of the Amazon in the nineteenth century. I take an environmental and labor history approach to explore how rubber impacted the Brazilian economy and how it modified the environment and the labor structure...”.

# 3. Bibliographic dialogue

- **Make the readings have a conversation!**
- This means to compare the arguments of the different texts and try to see what they have in common, and in which aspects they differ.
- You may find that they share the same approach. Or perhaps, they are completely different and criticize each other.

- When writing an article or chapter, the scholars tend to review their historiographic precedents. That means, the people that wrote about their topic in the past.
- Example: Malm criticizes in his book the works of other historians and authors (Wrigley, Wilkinson, etc) that explored the substitution of water mills for steam engines.

# 4. Criticism

- **Your opinion is important.**
- After having read and understood the main points and approaches in the readings, do you agree with them or not? Why?
- Do not be afraid to be wrong and dare to criticize what you read.

# Key concepts review:

- 1. Modernity
- 2. Colonialism
- 3. Social Darwinism
- 4. Commercial Capitalism
- 5. Fossil Capitalism
- 6. Second Industrial Revolution



# **1. MODERNITY**

# 1. Modernity

- Notion (and promise) of progress.
- Scientific revolution, rationalism.
- Globalization. Expansion and incorporation of new markets.
- Individualistic lifestyle. Pursue of comfort and pleasure.
- Constant change.
- Rejection of tradition.

## **2. Colonialism**

## 2. Colonialism

- One nation controlling another nation through direct (or indirect) control over their government and economy.
- Purposes of colonization: expand colonial culture (evangelization, civilization), extract resources, and control labor.
- Lasting legacies (culture, political organization, economic production).
- Colonialism and capitalism historically have supported each other. Globalization and new markets.
- Colonialism/imperialism generally justified by notions of racial superiority over the colonized peoples.

# **3. Social Darwinism**



# 3. Social Darwinism

- Racial theory derived from Darwin's work. Herbert Spencer. Survival of the fittest.
- Belief that humans evolved differently. Some were more "evolved" (better adapted) and thus superior to others.
- Sometimes justified colonization.

# **4. Commercial Capitalism**

# 4. Commercial Capitalism

- Economic system that transforms nature (raw materials such as minerals, crops) into products.
- Commodification of nature.
- Environmental impact: deforestation, pollution, etc.

# Review: Colonialism, Environment and Modern World

- Colonialism □ Commercial capitalism □ commodification of nature (3 C's)
- Utilitarian views of nature prevail
- Effects of commodified nature on environment and people—sugar and silver
- Silver
  - Coerced indigenous labor
  - Land and water poisoning—enters blood streams of people
  - deforestation
- Sugar
  - Enslavement and fierce exploitation
  - Deforestation and mass land clearing

# **5. Fossil Capitalism**

# 5. Fossil Capitalism

- Coal and oil as the prime energy source for production.
- Idea of constant growth.
- Modernity. First world countries participate the most in fossil capitalism.

# **6. Second Industrial Revolution**

# 6. Second Industrial Revolution

- Creation of more durable goods. Cars, fridges, telephones, computers, etc.
- Chemical manufacturing.
- Incorporation of new minerals (lithium, copper, tin) and fuels (oil).
- Exploitation of new regions.
- Sacrifice zones. Example: Huasteca, Mexico.



# Reading Review

- Ted Steinberg, “Down to Earth: Nature, Agency and Power in History”.
- Myrna Santiago, “Class and Nature in the Oil Industry of Northern Veracruz, 1900-1938”.
- Andreas Malm, “The origins of Fossil Capital: From Water to Steam in the British Cotton Industry”-

## **Ted Steinberg, “Down to Earth”.**

- Who has had the power to control resources and the natural world more generally according to Steinberg? And what have been the consequences on people and their livelihoods?
- During the reading, Steinberg provides a couple of cases in which we can examine how the political power controls nature. Discuss one example with your classmates.

# Ted Steinberg, “Down to Earth”.

- Textbooks, historians, have disregarded nature and the environment as a relevant factor in their analysis.
- Focus: Interrelation between power + nature.
- Political power can shape how humans interact with nature (government decisions to preserve natural parks or to regulate urbanism and the fishing industry).
- Social classes approach differently to nature.

- Case of Yellowstone:
  - Indians: Hunt, fishing, gathering food.
  - Rural Whites: Gather food and wood, escape from wage labor.
  - Government: Wrest control of the area from Indians and Whites. Criminalization of activities, creation of reserves and Natural Parks. Protection fo the elk > attracts tourism > elk population increases exponentially.
  - Environmental change.

# **Myrna Santiago, “Class and Nature”.**

Why do the oilmen and the workers have a different view of nature according to Santiago? Give an example.

Comparing the articles written by Santiago and Steinberg, do they have something in common?

# Myrna Santiago, “Class and Nature”.

- Class determines how nature is viewed and experienced.
- Focus: Interplay between nature and class power. Similarities with Steinberg: those who have power (government, capitalists) modify nature.
- Oilmen vs workers.
- Role of race in labor and the environment. Mexican workers had worse conditions in terms of housing, security.

# Malm, “The origins of Fossil Capital”.

- What are the causes of the transition from water to steam in the British cotton industry in the second quarter of the nineteenth century?

# Malm, “The origins of Fossil Capital”.

- Not a democratic decision. Capitalists took it.
- Allowed capitalists to better exploit labor.
- Steam engines facilitated mobility. Factories could be build anywhere.
- Less dependent on seasons, time schedule.



# Is it worth it?



**President Rafael Correa of Ecuador, with oil in his hand.**

# Is it worth it?

- In 2013, the president of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, authorized the exploitation of the Natural Park of Yasuní (Ecuadorian part of the Amazon, rich in oil).
- Justification: The money obtained from oil exploitation would be distributed among the poor. Economic development of the region.
- Opposition from the native communities. Biodiversity and ecotourism as alternatives.
- By 2018 this plan is now its the second phase. Going deeper into the national park.