

Marine Environmental History

SEA 3023 (4 credits)

Course Contact Hours: 60.

Instructor: Professor Jeff Wescott. jwescott@sea.edu

Course Footprint:

Component	Duration	Location
Shore	Sep 28 – Nov 17	Woods Hole, MA
Sea	Nov 17 – Dec 20	SSV <i>Corwith Cramer</i> with port stops in US Virgin Islands, Dominica, and St. Kitts and Nevis

Course Philosophy and Approach:

Marine Environmental History (MEH) is a four-credit course that begins in Woods Hole and moves to the sea component in the Caribbean. The course begins with an overview of basic concepts, methodologies, and questions within the field before turning its focus to issues of adaptation, resilience, and sustainability faced by Atlantic coastal communities in the face of climate change. It also explores the impacts of (neo)colonialism on contemporary human-environmental interactions through readings, discussions, and firsthand observations.

Learning Objectives:

There are three primary goals for this course: that students (1) add to their current knowledge of the coastal impacts of climate change across histories and social and geographical boundaries; (2) test new knowledge and skills against their own observations and experiences; and (3) explore and advance connections between humanities- and natural science-based approaches to environmental history.

Evaluation:

Journal Essays (four total) 40%

MEH Audio Essay 40%

Participation 20%

Assignments:

Journal Essays

The instructor will provide questions to guide four journal-style essays throughout the program. Entries will focus on an individual student's selection of an island to write about and will consist of reflections based on readings and class discussions. Each essay will be two to three double-spaced pages each.

The requirements for the journal essays are as follows:

1. Select an island anywhere in the world. Having visited the island is not a requirement.
2. Responding to a series of prompts, reflect on your island's cultural, political, and environmental histories and their relevance to current-day climate change-related issues. Provide citations for all sources you consult.
3. Apply concepts learned from the MEH course and Coastal Resilience program to real and theory-informed case studies, and explore solutions where warranted.

Turn in your journal entries by 0900 on each due date. Email to jwescott@sea.edu. This assignment is worth a total of 40% of the overall course grade (10% per essay).

MEH Audio Essay

In teams, students will record sound clips during the sea component that they will compile and edit during the second shore component to produce a five- to seven-minute audio essay that addresses a topic in marine environmental history relevant to the Climate Change and Coastal Resilience program. Sound clips will include narrations performed by team members, interviews, and environmental sounds recorded at sea and during port stops. Team members must secure permission from interviewees before recording.

The rubric for the MEH audio essay is as follows:

1. Teams will reveal the topic at the start of the essay, and it will be evident in the essay's title. Teams will consult with the course instructor about viable topics.
2. The MEH audio essay does not require a solution to a problem. The objective is to inform the listening audience about the relevant aspects of a topic (e.g., the impacts of marine plastic debris on coastal aquaculture).
3. All team members must participate in the production of the essay. You will work together to divide the work.

Submit your team audio essay as an mp3 file by 2200 on Friday, December 28. The audio essay is worth a total of 40% of the overall course grade.

Participation

This course features several in-class exercises, each of which requires completing the assigned readings and contributing as a team member in the planning and completion of the exercises. The participation grade, which counts for 20% of your total course grade, is based on (1) your attendance, (2) your contributions to the exercises, and (3) the support and positive feedback you provide to your fellow students. Your instructor understands that there are many different ways to contribute, and will work with you and your teammates to identify the roles that best match your own particular skills and interests. If you anticipate that you will be unable to attend class or contribute to class work, please let the instructor know as soon as possible.

Academic Integrity:

SEA expects all students to actively participate in program discussions and activities. Punctual attendance is required at every class meeting and watch session. **Late assignment submissions are not accepted** – please speak with your instructor in advance if you anticipate a concern.

The policy on academic accuracy below will be strictly followed in this class. The assignments that you submit in this course are expected to be your original work. You must take care to distinguish your own ideas and knowledge from wording or substantive information that you derive from one of your sources. The term “sources” includes not only published primary and secondary material, but also information and opinions gained directly from other people and text that you cut and paste from any site on the Internet.

The responsibility for learning the proper forms of citation lies with you. Quotations must be placed properly within quotation marks and must be cited fully. In addition, all paraphrased material must be acknowledged completely. Whenever ideas or facts are derived from your reading and research, the sources must be indicated.

Inclusivity and Classroom Culture:

Our SEA community embraces diversity of age, background, beliefs, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and other visible and nonvisible categories. We expect each one of you (and you should expect the same from us) to contribute to a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment. If you feel that you are not being welcomed, included, or accepted here, please reach out to one of your teachers or one of the deans at SEA to share your concern.

Land and cultural heritage acknowledgement:

We in Falmouth are on the traditional homeland of the Wampanoag people who live and continue to thrive here for thousands of years. We acknowledge the painful history of colonization that has enacted forced assimilation, enslavement, genocide, and efforts by many to eliminate Indigenous cultures. We respect and honor the Indigenous people and the descendants of forced migrants still connected to these lands and are eager to learn from their ways of life. We also recognize these words are not enough and need to be followed with action steps.

Course Readings:

Beland, Amanda. Local Indigenous communities are reclaiming their food sovereignty. WBUR Boston. November 26, 2024. <https://www.wbur.org/news/2024/11/26/local-indigenous-communities-food-sovereignty>

Bertness, Mark. 1992. The ecology of a New England salt marsh. *American Scientist* 80(3): 260-268.

Buck, Holly Jean. 2015. On the possibilities of a charming Anthropocene. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 105(2): 369-377.

Diaz, Rosalina (ed). 2023. *Decolonizing Paradise: A Radical Ethnography of Environmental Stewardship in the Caribbean*. New York: Peter Lang.

Erlandson, J.M., and T.C. Rick. 2010. Archaeology meets marine ecology: The antiquity of maritime cultures and human impacts on marine fisheries and ecosystems. *Annual Review of Marine Science* 2: 165–85.

Gastropod Podcast. A Tale to Warm the Cockles of Your Heart. April 7, 2020.
<https://gastropod.com/a-tale-to-warm-the-cockles-of-your-heart/>

GRAVY podcast. Reclaiming Native Ground. February 9, 2017.
<https://www.southernfoodways.org/gravy/reclaiming-native-ground/>

Klein, Emily S. and Ruth H. Thurstan. 2016. Acknowledging long-term ecological change: the problem of shifting baselines. In *Perspectives on Ocean Past: A Handbook of Marine Environmental History*, Kathleen Schwerdtner Máñez and Bo Poulsen, eds. Berlin: Springer. pp. 11–29.

Kueffer, Christoph, and Kealohanuiopuna Kinney. 2017. What is the importance of islands to environmental conservation? *Environmental Conservation* 44(4): 311–322.

Liboiron, Max. 2018. Waste colonialism. *Discard Studies*.
<https://discardstudies.com/2018/11/01/waste-colonialism/>

Morgan, P.D., J.R. McNeill, M. Mulcahy, and S.B. Schwartz. 2022 *Sea and Land: An Environmental History of the Caribbean*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Múkaro Borrero, Roberto. 2017. Paradise Lost? As extreme weather events threaten the Caribbean, the region's Indigenous peoples seek a climate-just future. *World Policy Journal* 34(4): 30-34.

Neeganagwedgin, E. 2022. Caribbean Indigenous experiences of erasure: movement, memory and knowing. *Analecta Política* 12(22): 1-17. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18566/apolit.v12n22.a01>

Wescott, Jeff. 2024. Pristine grounds, plastic histories: narrating Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai. In *Entire of Itself? Towards an Environmental History of Islands*. Milica Prokić and Pavla Šimková, eds. Cambridgeshire, UK: White Horse Press, pp. 327-348.

Whittaker, R.J., et al. 2017. Island biogeography: Taking the long view of nature's laboratories. *Science* 357(6): DOI: 10.1126/science.aam83.

Whyte, Kyle. 2017. Indigenous climate change studies: indigenizing futures, decolonizing the Anthropocene. *Project Muse* 55(1-2): 153-162.

Willacy, Mark. 2020. A poison in our island. Australian Broadcasting Corporation. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-27/the-dome-runit-island-nuclear-test-leaking-due-to-climate-change/916144>

Course Calendar:

Topic	Readings/Assignments Due
Week 1 (On shore in Woods Hole)	
<p>Introduction to MEH 1</p> <p>Tue, Sep 29: Program introduction</p> <p>Wed, Sep 30: Course introduction</p> <p>Fri, Oct 2: What is environmental change?</p>	<p>Read for Fri: Erlandson and Rick 2010. The antiquity of maritime cultures</p> <p>Recommended: Klein and Thurstan 2016. The problem of shifting baselines (in Máñez & Poulsen pp. 11-30)</p>
Week 2	
<p>Introduction to MEH 2</p> <p>Mon, Oct 5: Visit to Woodwell Climate Research Center</p> <p>Wed, Oct 7: The “genius of adaptation”</p> <p>Fri, Oct 9: OGC crossover – Measuring environmental change</p>	<p>Listen for Wed: GRAVY podcast. Reclaiming native ground. February 9, 2017. Link</p> <p>Gastropod Podcast. A Tale to Warm the Cockles of Your Heart. April 7, 2020. Link</p> <p>Beland 2024. Local Indigenous communities are reclaiming their food sovereignty. (Read and listen) Link</p>
Week 3	
<p>Islands</p> <p>Mon, Oct 12: No class - Indigenous Peoples’ Day</p> <p>Wed, Oct 14: Thinking with islands</p> <p>Fri, Oct 16: Environmental knowledge and experience in island communities</p>	<p>Read for Wed: Kueffer and Kinney 2017. What is the importance of islands?</p> <p>Recommended: Whittaker et al 2017. Island biogeography.</p> <p>Due Fri, Oct 16: Journal essay 1</p>

Week 4	
<p>Eco-colonialism 1: globalization and erasure</p> <p>Mon, Oct 19: Life histories and environmental upheaval</p> <p>Wed, Oct 21: OGC crossover – Atlantic storms</p> <p>Fri, Oct 23: Roundtable: Ecologies of disruption, disease, and disaster</p>	<p>Read for Fri: Neeganagwedgin 2022. Caribbean Indigenous experiences of erasure.</p> <p>McNeill (in Morgan et al) 2022. Disease environments in the Caribbean to 1850 (pp. 162-186).</p> <p>Múkaro Borrero 2017. Paradise Lost?</p>
Week 5	
<p>Blue carbon environments</p> <p>Mon, Oct 26: Mangroves, salt marshes, and seagrasses</p> <p>Wed, Oct 28: Visit to Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve</p> <p>Fri, Oct 30: Field trip TBD</p>	<p>Read for Mon: Bertness 1992. The ecology of a New England salt marsh.</p> <p>Read for Wed: Wampanoag Tribal Archives: Mashpee Link; Aquinnah Link</p>
Week 6	
<p>Eco-colonialism 2: contaminations</p> <p>Mon, Nov 2: Plastic pollution as colonial relic; Audio essay introduction</p> <p>Wed, Nov 4: Guest speaker: Changes in coastal foodways</p> <p>Fri, Nov 6: Roundtable: Anthropocene incursions</p>	<p>Read for Fri: Liboiron 2018. Waste colonialism. Link</p> <p>Willacy 2020. A poison in our island. Link</p> <p>Whyte 2017. Indigenizing futures.</p> <p>Optional: Wescott 2024. Pristine grounds, plastic histories.</p> <p>Due Fri, Nov 6: Journal essay 2</p>
Week 7	
<p>Conclusions</p> <p>Mon, Nov 9: Futures of coastal resilience</p> <p>Wed, Nov 11: OGC crossover – Democratizing data</p> <p>Fri, Nov 13: Dominica and St. Kitts & Nevis preview</p>	<p>Read: Buck 2015. On the possibilities of a charming Anthropocene.</p>

Week 8 (At sea)	
Reading discussions at sea and in port	Read: Diaz (ed.) 2023. Selections from <i>Decolonizing Paradise?</i>
Week 9	
Port stop activities (TBD)	Due Fri, Nov 25: Journal essay 3
Week 10	
Reading discussions at sea and in port	Read: Diaz (ed.) 2023. Selections from <i>Decolonizing Paradise?</i>
Week 11	
	Read: Diaz (ed.) 2023. Selections from <i>Decolonizing Paradise?</i> Due Fri, Dec 11: Journal essay 4
Week 12	
Fri, Dec 18: Audio essay presentations and discussion	Due Fri, Dec 18: Audio essay