

Marine Environmental History

SEA 3023 (4 credits)

Course Contact Hours: 60.

Instructor: Professor Jeff Wescott. jwescott@sea.edu

Course Footprint:

Component	Duration	Location
Shore 1	Mar 3 – Apr 5	Woods Hole, MA
Sea	Apr 5 – May 15	SSV <i>Corwith Cramer</i> with port stops in US Virgin Islands and Bermuda
Shore 2	May 15 – May 28	Woods Hole, MA

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 Atlantic before concluding back on the SEA campus. The course begins with an overview of basic concepts, methodologies, and questions within the field before turning its focus to islands and issues of biodiversity and environmental sustainability faced by present-day human communities in the Western Atlantic region. We will also explore 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 breadth of biodiversity and conservation issues 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 (five total)	50%
MEH Audio Essay	30%
Participation	20%

Assignments:

Journal Essays

The instructor will provide questions to guide five 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 environmental issues. Provide citations for all sources you consult.
3. Apply concepts learned from the MEH course and PBS 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 Jeff at jwescott@sea.edu. This assignment is worth a total of 50% 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 Plastics and Biodiversity 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. The topic must be announced at the start of the essay, and must be evident in the essay's title. Teams must 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 shellfish harvesting).
3. All team members must participate in the production of the essay.

Turn in your team audio essay as an mp3 file by 2200 on Tuesday, May 26. The audio essay is worth a total of 30% 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:

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.

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>

Taylor, John P. 2000. Authenticity and sincerity in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 28(1): 7-26.

Taylor, Joseph E., III. 2013. Knowing the black box: methodological challenges in marine environmental history. *Environmental History* 18: 60–75.

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/9161442>

Wong, Elizabeth. 2023. Indigenous erasure and resistance in the Caribbean. *Caribbean Quilt* 7(1): 125-131.

Course Calendar:

Topic	Readings/Assignments Due
Week 1 (On shore in Woods Hole)	
<p>Beginnings</p> <p>Wed, Mar 4: Program introductions</p> <p>Fri, Mar 6: Introduction to marine environmental history</p>	
Week 2	
<p>Concepts</p> <p>Mon, Mar 9: What is environmental change?</p> <p>Wed, Mar 11: Field trip: Narrating land- and seascapes</p> <p>Fri, Mar 13: Visit to Woodwell Climate Research Center</p>	<p>Read for Mon: Erlandson and Rick 2010. The antiquity of maritime cultures</p> <p>Klein and Thurstan 2016. The problem of shifting baselines (in Máñez & Poulsen pp. 11-30)</p> <p>Recommended: Taylor 2013. Methodological challenges in marine environmental history</p>
Week 3	
<p>Islands</p> <p>Mon, Mar 16: Island biogeographies</p> <p>Wed, Mar 18: Thinking about (and with) islands</p> <p>Fri, Mar 20: Environmental knowledge and experience in Caribbean Island communities</p>	<p>Read for Mon: Kueffer and Kinney 2017. What is the importance of islands?</p> <p>Whittaker et al 2017. Island biogeography.</p> <p>Read for Fri: Neeganagwedgin 2022. Caribbean Indigenous experiences of erasure.</p>
Week 4	
<p>Eco-colonialism 1: globalization and erasure</p> <p>Mon, Mar 23: Ecologies of money, labor, and power</p>	<p>Read for Wed: Wampanoag Tribal Archives: Mashpee Link; Aquinnah Link</p> <p>Read/listen for Fri: Múkaro Borrero 2017. Paradise Lost?</p>

<p>Wed, Mar 25: Visit to Waquoit Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve</p> <p>Fri, Mar 27: Climate change in the Indigenous Atlantic</p>	<p>GRAVY podcast. Reclaiming native ground. February 9, 2017. Link</p> <p>Wong 2023. Indigenous erasure and resistance in the Caribbean.</p>
Week 5	
<p>Eco-colonialism 2: contaminations</p> <p>Mon, Mar 30: Intrusions and extractions</p> <p>Wed, Apr 1: World Café: Anthropocene incursions in island communities</p>	<p>Read for Wed: 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>
Week 6 (At Sea)	
Port stop activities (TBD)	No assignments or readings
Week 7	
Reading discussions at sea and in port	Read: Morgan et al. 2022. Excerpts from <i>Sea and Land</i> , Ch. 1.
Week 8	
Reading discussions at sea and in port	Read: Morgan et al. 2022. Conclusion to <i>Sea and Land</i> .
Week 9	
Port stop activities (TBD)	No assignments or readings
Week 10	
Reading discussions at sea and in port	Read: Diaz (ed.) 2023. Selections from <i>Decolonizing Paradise</i> .
Week 11 (On Shore in Woods Hole)	
<p>Deconstructing the environmental exotic</p> <p>Mon, May 18: MEH audio essay production</p> <p>Wed, May 20: World Café: histories of authenticity</p>	<p>Read: Diaz (ed.) 2023. More selections from <i>Decolonizing Paradise</i>.</p> <p>Taylor 2000. Authenticity and sincerity in tourism.</p>

Fri, May 22: Discussion of <i>Decolonizing Paradise</i>	
Week 12	
Tue, May 26: Audio essay presentations and discussion	Due Tue, May 26 (2200): Audio essay
Wed, May 27: Course review	