

Spring 2016  
**HI 351/GE 394: Environmental History of Africa**  
Prof. James McCann

Tuesday 3-6  
African Studies Center, 232 Bay State Road #505

Office Hours:  
Monday 10-12; Tuesday 1-2:45  
(African Studies Center 232 Bay State Road # 518)  
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This course will focus on the evolution of African environmental and ecological systems over the past 200 years. Subjects will include aspects of the physical environment visible through changes in climate and hydrology, as well as key issues of human/environmental interaction, such as agriculture, deforestation, conservation, famine, malaria, and the role of colonialism and economic development in environmental change. The course will also examine the ways in which outsiders have created myths about the African environment and how Africans have managed their natural resources over time. The course will examine the causes and social effects of famine, vector-borne disease and the impact of political ecology of globalization on African environmental management. Course assignments will cover most geographical regions of Africa, but with special attention to East Africa. Materials available to students will include readings and lectures, but will also include films and other visual resources.

**Prerequisites:**

While there are no formal course prerequisites, it will be assumed that students have a basic knowledge of African geography and/or at least have completed advanced work in history or another discipline related to environmental studies. Taking at least one previous course with African content will be helpful in that regard but is not required.

**Teaching Method**

As an advanced undergraduate course, HI/ 351GE394 will use a combination of lectures, reading, focused discussion, and film to present and analyze course content. Beyond the historical content of the course, students will be given experience in expository writing, library research, and group discussion skills.

In addition to lectures, class meetings will consist of group discussions and a final project that illustrates an aspect of environmental change in Africa. Each class member will also be a member in a discussion group that will serve as a basis for discussing. In the first half of the course groups will discuss readings and questions posed by the instructor. Group discussions of readings will be organized around questions provided by the instructor in advance.

## **Evaluation**

Grades will consist of performance on written work, participation, and group work. Written work will include at least two short (3-4 page) opinion papers that will integrate reading assignments with lecture material and group discussion. Each discussion group will organize and present a joint research project in the form of a website in the final class session. Each student will write up a project research report in lieu of a final exam. That report will be due on May 10 by noon in the instructor's mailbox in the African Studies Center.

## **Reading**

Students are expected to have read the week's readings in advance of the sessions for which they are assigned.

The following books have been ordered from the bookstore:

Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History* (Athens, OH).

Maddox, Giblin, and Kimambo, *Custodians of the Land* (Athens, OH).

McCann, *Green Land, Brown Land, Black Land: An Environmental History of Africa* (Portsmouth and Oxford).

McCann, *Maize and Grace: Africa's Encounter with a New World Crop, 1500-2000* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).

\*Leach and Mearns, *The Lie of the Land* (Portsmouth). Out of Print but on Mugar reserve  
Adams and McShane, *The Myth of Wild Africa* (Berkeley).

## **JSTOR and Periodical Database Resources:**

Course readings will also include several readings from a library packet available in the Reserve Room at Mugar Library. These papers may also be downloaded from JSTOR using reference materials via the website of the Mugar library. Consult that website or the Mugar Library Reference Desk.

Richard Waller, "Tsetse Fly in Western Narok, Kenya," *Journal of African History*,  
Allan Hoben, Christopher Matthews, and Robert Kaplan *The New Republic* (January 1985).

## **Attendance and Class Rules**

Like all courses at Boston University, attendance in HI351/GE 394 is required. Students who miss class because of illness should notify the instructor as soon as possible after the absence. Other absences should be reported ahead of the class to be missed. Whenever possible written notification should be provided (health center slip, note from academic advisor, etc.). Please observe university regulations against consuming food or drink during class sessions.

## **Plagiarism and Academic Honesty**

All students are expected to adhere to the [CAS Graduate School Conduct Code](#). plagiarism represents not only a serious violation of academic ethics, they also represent a breach of that essential trust. I will report all such incidents to the student academic conduct committee of the College of Arts and Sciences; any violation of that code will result in a final grade of F for the course.

## Class Weekly Schedule

### **January**

#### Week 1

T 19<sup>th</sup>

Pt. 1: Images and Realities of African Environment (s)  
Introduction: Environmental history/Environmental Stories?  
(Discussion groups formed)

Pt. 2: Africa's environmental systems/Group discussion of images

Assignment for discussion: Whence Cecil the Lion? Surf the NYT coverage of the Zimbabwe lion hunting incident (search Cecil and Lion) and another site for op-ed and news coverage. Be prepared to discuss on Jan. 19 first seminar.

Reading:

McCann, *Green Land*, pp. 1-51.

Maddox, Giblin, and Kimambo, *Custodians of the Land*, 175-99.

#### Week 2      Images and Realities of Africa's Environment

January 26th      Africa's environmental systems/Group discussion of images of the African environment

Film: King Solomon's Mines/Discussion

Reading:

Adams and McShane, *The Myth of Wild Africa*, 1-36.

Maddox, Giblin, and Kimambo, *Custodians of the Land*, 1-14.

### **February**

#### Week 3      Population and African Agency

T 2<sup>nd</sup>

Sources for environmental history

Population in African History: Boserup versus Malthus

Maragoli: Film and Discussion on Population, Choice, and Gender in Africa  
(Questions distributed for group discussion)

Reading:

Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, 1-50.

Maddox, et. al, *Custodians*, 15-65.

#### Week 4

T 9<sup>th</sup>

Desertification: Creeping Desert, Human Hands?

Film and Discussion: The Desert Doesn't Bloom Here Anymore

Reading:

McCann, *Green Land*, 55-78.

Maddox, et. al., *Custodians of the Land*, 96-122.

Leach and Mearns, *Lie of the Land*, Chapters 1 and 4 (on reserve).

Week 5

T 16<sup>th</sup> Monday Class Schedule (no seminar)

Week 6

T 23<sup>th</sup> Second Nature: Film and Discussion

A Tale of Two Forests: Deforestation in Ethiopia

Reading:

McCann, *Green Land*, 79-108.

**March**

Week 7

T 1<sup>st</sup> Lecture: The Serengeti: Static Narratives and Ecosystem Change  
Film: Africa: the Serengeti and Group Analysis/Discussion

Reading:

Leach and Mearns, *Lie of the Land*, Chapter 6.

Adams and McShane, *The Myth Wild Africa*, 37-84.

Spring Break (March 5-13)

Week 8

T 15<sup>th</sup>

The Atlantic World: the Columbian Circulation  
Big Bang in the Upper Guinea Forest: 1500-1900

Reading:

McCann, *Green Land*, 109-140.

Week 9 African Environment and World Systems

T 22<sup>nd</sup> Maize and Grace in Africa: Lecture and Group Discussion  
Group meetings

Reading:

McCann, *Maize and Grace*, 1-93.

Week 10

T 29<sup>th</sup> Disease as History in Africa (from Sleeping Sickness to Ebola)

Panzootic: Sleeping Sickness and The Rinderpest Epizootic 1889-92;  
Group Discussion: Disease and African Environment Control

Reading (Week 10):

Maddox, et. al., *Custodians*, 127-151.

Waller, "Tsetse Fly in Western Narok, Kenya," [JSTOR]

Kjekshus, *Ecology Control*, pp. 51-79

Written Assignment Distributed (due April 5th).

## April

Week 11      The Ecologies of Famine

T 5<sup>th</sup>          Famine: Ethiopia's Agricultural Paradox

African Famine and the Media, Film: Consuming Hunger

Reading:

Hoben, Matthews, and Kaplan [JSTOR].

Week 12      The Ecology of Famine: Three Approaches

T 12<sup>th</sup>        Ethiopia after the Famine, Film/Discussion

Oxfam: The Ox Plow Project

Reading:

Leach and Mearns, *Lie of the Land*, Chapter 11 (on reserve).

McCann, "A Great Agrarian Cycle?" [JSTOR].

Group Assignment: Use Web to find three contemporaneous accounts of the 1984-85 Ethiopian famine for group discussion. Each student will turn in copies of the accounts they find.

Week 13

T 19<sup>th</sup>          Political Ecology of the African Environment:

How Africa's Maize Turned White

Maize and Malaria: Agroecology of Tropical Disease (film/discussion)

Reading:

McCann, *Maize and Grace*, 94-119, 174-96.

Adams and McShane, *The Myth of Wild Africa*, 161-263.

McCann, *Green Land*, 141-74.

Film: Darwin's Nightmare

Week 14

T 26<sup>th</sup>          Group Reports and Review (final class)

Final Exam Due May 5<sup>th</sup> (in McCann mailbox in African Studies Center)

## HI/GE 394 Film Schedule and Location

<u>Date</u>	<u>Film</u>	<u>Campus Source</u>
Jan 27	King Solomon's Mines	Krasker (NetFlix)
Feb 3	Maragoli	Krasker
Feb 10	Desert Doesn't Bloom	Outreach
Feb 24	Second Nature	Outreach
March 3	Serengeti	Office (McCann)
April 7	Consuming Hunger	Outreach
April 14	Ethiopia After the Famine	Outreach
April 21	Darwin's Nightmare	Outreach