

CLAS PROGRAM PROPOSAL

Title:

The Environmental Histories of Latin America:
Sources and Resources for Researching and Teaching

Proposed Dates:

April 23-25, 2015

Program Type:

Faculty Workshop

Faculty Coordinators:

Mikael Wolfe (History, Stanford University) and Lise Sedrez (Universidade Federal do
Rio de Janeiro)

Graduate Student Coordinator:

Fred Freitas (History, Stanford University)

Requested Budget Amount:

\$10,000

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Summary: We propose to bring sixteen of the leading scholars in the field of Latin American environmental history to Stanford for a two-day workshop in order 1) to exchange and discuss scholarly work and ideas on future research agendas and resources, and 2) the content for a reader of primary sources to be published in book form along with an accompanying website for teaching undergraduate and graduate students in the field. We request funding from CLAS to help support the success of this workshop.

Background and Context: At present, the field of Latin American environmental history has come of age. Indeed, whereas fifteen years ago, only a handful of scholars devoted their careers to researching and writing on the historical interactions between humans and their environment in Latin America, several dozens do so today. This is evidenced by their rapidly growing presence on the programs of major conferences on Latin America, including the annual meetings of the Latin American Studies Association and the Conference on Latin American History (which is part of the American Historical Association). In addition, Latin American topics at the annual meeting of the American Society of Environmental History continue to grow every year and now constitute a considerable proportion of all presentations. The field's growth has not been limited to the United States; Latin Americans founded La Sociedad Latinoamericana y Caribeña de Historia Ambiental (SOLCHA) in 2006, which meets in a different Latin American or Caribbean country every two years, and individual countries, including Mexico and Brazil, organize their own national environmental history conferences. In recognition of this growth, the prominent Spanish journal *Revista de Historia Iberoamericana*, which reaches a wide Spanish language readership in Spain and Latin America, will publish a special dossier on Latin American environmental history this December (which will include articles by several invited participants to this workshop).

Many history departments and Latin American studies programs at universities and colleges across the continent, sometimes in collaboration with history of science, geography and environmental studies programs, among others, now offer both undergraduate and graduate courses in the environmental history of Latin America. The pedagogical content and methods of such courses vary widely spatially, temporally, and thematically. For example, some are discussion-based upper division undergraduate and graduate colloquiums and seminars in which students read one monograph per week and discuss its contributions to the field. The monographs' topics include the history of deforestation in Brazil from pre-colonial times to the present; mining pollution in colonial Bolivia and Mexico; melting glacier control in twentieth century Peru; the ecological impact of urbanization and industrialization, such as the building of transportation and sewerage infrastructure, across the continent from the late nineteenth century to the present; and popular values and attitudes toward nature from a Latin American perspective, such as Cubans' awe of destructive hurricanes in the nineteenth century. Others introduce lower division undergraduate students to these topics through interactive lectures and discussions using audiovisual materials and assigning shorter article length versions of the growing number of monographs.

Despite their eclectic subject matter and approaches, all such courses share a common aim: to get students to think about the Latin American past through the lens of

environmental change. To do so, students, with their professors' guidance and mentorship, historically contextualize and analyze primary sources about human-nature interactions produced by a wide variety of historical actors, including campesinos, landowners, miners, foresters, engineers, scientists, factory workers and owners, poets, novelists and artists, among many others. Students thus learn about how class, race, gender and employment (or lack thereof) are part and parcel of the "social construction" (and therefore, paradoxically, often physical destruction) of nature in Latin America, and how such constructions/destructions change over time and inform the present.

In recent years, historians have published several general Latin American environmental history books that serve as introductory texts to the field. No single volume featuring a collection of primary sources exists, however, unlike for the general histories of individual Latin American countries (e.g., "The Mexico Reader: History, Culture, Politics", "The Argentina Reader", "The Brazil Reader", etc.) or for U.S. environmental history (e.g., "Major Problems in American Environmental History", now in its third edition) that have been published since the 1990s.

At the same time, environmental historians of Latin America have published a number of scholarly "state of the field" articles and books for their colleagues and graduate students. These have aimed to synthesize the field's thematic and conceptual trends up until the time of their publication, and thereby suggest new directions and approaches on topics that have been little explored in the historiography thus far. Among these include urban environmental history, labor and environmental history, history of climate variability and its impact on social change, and transnational histories of conservation, many of them using cutting-edge digital tools such as Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

Purpose and Significance of Event:

1) Present and discuss our cutting-edge research-in-progress organized into four thematic sessions: (a) transnational histories of conservation through national park creation along the borders between Argentina, Brazil and Chile and forestry in the US-Mexico borderlands; (b) history of climate variability and social rebellion, unrest and revolution in colonial Cuba and postcolonial Mexico and Brazil; (c) urban environmental histories of Mexico City and Rio de Janeiro from the drainage of the former's lakes in colonial times to the transformation of the latter's bay in the last century; (d) and the history of labor and the environment in extractive industries across the continent in the 19th and 20th centuries, Black slavery and the environment in 19th century Colombia, and labor in the sugar cane fields of Brazil in the 20th century;

2) Present and discuss a selection of primary sources that each workshop participant will bring for possible inclusion in the **first** English-language reader on Latin American environmental history for use in undergraduate and graduate courses as well as for scholarship and general reader interest. Gisela Fosado, editor at Duke University Press, has already expressed strong interest in publishing this volume. It would be tentatively entitled "The Latin American Environmental History Reader" and would include an interactive web site for locating the primary sources on a GIS-produced map as well as

oral histories, videos, photos and other materials. Director Zephyr Frank of the Center for Textual and Spatial Analysis (CESTA) at Stanford University has already agreed to host the website, and Fred Freitas, an advanced graduate student in the field who is an expert graphic designer and GIS user, will help create and design the website.

Potential Audience:

All of the sessions will be open to the Stanford community and the public. Given the spatial, temporal and thematic diversity and breadth of the topics that will be presented and discussed, it will interest students and faculty in history, anthropology, geography, political science, sociology, Latin American and environmental studies, earth sciences, and others from a diversity of disciplines across campus and beyond. Indeed, in addition to requesting financial and logistical support from CLAS and the Department of History, we are also requesting it from the Urban Studies Program, the Freeman Spogli Institute and the Woods Institute for the Environment. Such a diverse group of co-sponsors would be a testament to the workshop's interdisciplinary breadth and depth.

Tentative Schedule:

The proposed dates of the workshop are April 23rd to 25th, 2015 (purposely organized just after Earth Day). The tentative schedule is as follows:

Thursday April 23rd: Participants arrive during the day and settle in their hotel rooms.

Dinner at 7 pm: Professor Richard White of the Stanford University History Department, one of the founding historians of U.S. environmental history in the 1980s, will give a keynote dinner talk about the expansion of environmental history globally with a focus on Latin America.

Friday April 24th:

8:15-9:00 Breakfast at workshop site (in CESTA)
9:00-9:15 Brief introduction to workshop, participants, and its goals
9:15-10:45 Panel on climate and social change in Latin America:

Sherry Johnson, *The Impact of Hurricanes on colonial Cuban Development*

Mikael Wolfe, *The Drought of 1908-1910 in northern Mexico and the outbreak of the Mexican Revolution*

Eve Buckley, *Drought and Social Engineering in northeastern Brazil in the mid-20th century*

Mark Carey, Discussant

10:45-11 Coffee break
11-12:30 Transnational Conservation in Latin America:

Fred Freitas, *Conserving the Iguazu Falls between Brazil and Argentina, 1950-1980*
Emily Wakild, *The Conservation of Patagonia between Chile and Argentina in the 1930s*
Christopher Boyer, *Cooperative Forestry along the US-Mexico Border in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1940-2000*

Sterling Evans, discussant

12:30-1:30 Lunch

1:30-3:00 The Urban Environment:

Vera Candiani, *The Postconquest Drainage of Mexico City's Lakes*
Matt Vitz, *The Desiccation of Mexico City's Lakes and Dust Storms in the 20th Century*
Lise Sedrez, *"The Bay of All Beauties": The Transformation of Rio's Guanabara Bay during the 20th Century*

Zephyr Frank, discussant

3-3:15 Coffee break

3:15-4:45 Labor and the Environment

Tom Rogers, *Labor and Environment in the Sugar Cane Fields of Brazil in the mid-20th century*
Myrna Santiago, *The Effect of Extractive Industries on Labor and the Environment across Latin America in the 19th century*
Claudia Leal, *Black Slavery and the Environment in 19th Century Colombia*

John Soluri, discussant

4:45-6:30 Break and return to hotels to refresh

7:00 dinner

Saturday April 25th

8:30-9 Breakfast

9-11:30 Roundtable Discussion of Submitted Primary Sources for Latin American Environmental History Reader

12:00-1 Lunch

2-5 Optional tour of Jasper Biological Reserve

Preliminary Budget:

Hotel for two nights for 13 people @ \$175 per night: \$4550

Airfare for 13 people traveling beyond driving/public transit distance:

From Eugene, Oregon (Mark Carey): \$250 RT

From Philadelphia (Eve Buckley): \$450

From Miami, FL (Sherry Johnson): \$400

From Oklahoma City (Sterling Evans): \$500

From Boise, Idaho (Emily Wakild): \$450

From San Diego (Matt Vitz): \$250

From Newark, NJ (Vera Candiani): \$450

From Rio de Janeiro, Brazil (Lise Sedrez): \$1500

From Bogotá, Colombia (Claudia Leal): \$600

From Atlanta, GA (Tom Rogers): \$450

From Pittsburgh, PA (John Soluri): \$500

Local transportation:

From East Bay (Myrna Santiago): \$100

SuperShuttle rides to and from airport @ \$60 per person for 13 people: \$780

Transportation total: \$6680

Meals:

Two dinners (at restaurant): \$1280 (\$80 per person)

Two breakfasts (at workshop site): \$320 (\$20 per person)

Two box lunches (at workshop site): \$480 (\$30 per person)

Two coffee breaks (at workshop site): \$160 (\$10 per person)

Meals totals: \$2240

Graduate student coordinator labor: \$1000

Materials cost (advertising, video, computer equipment, website, etc.): \$2000

Labor and materials total: \$3000

Other costs:

Childcare for participant Emily Wakild who will come with her baby (\$20/hour): \$600

Honorarium for keynote speaker Richard White: \$500

Grand total: \$17570

Requested Funding Sources:

Center for Latin American Studies Faculty Conference Grant: 10000

Urban Studies Program: 5000

Freeman Spogli Institute: 1000

Department of History: 1000

Woods Institute for the Environment: 1000

Probable Participant Biographies:

Chris Boyer (Professor of History and Chair of the History Department at the University of Illinois, Chicago)'s scholarship is located at the crossroads of the social and environmental history of Modern Mexico. He is currently finishing a book called *Political Landscapes: Forests, Communities, and Resource Management in Modern Mexico* that looks at the conflicts and alliances between forestry experts and indigenous communities in Mexican forests over the past 120 years. It will be published by Duke University Press in 2013; work for that project was supported by fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the UIC Institute for the Humanities. He recently released an edited volume called *A Land Between Waters* that highlights recent research on Mexican environmental history.

Eve Buckley (Assistant Professor of History, University of Delaware) studies Brazilian history and the history of science, medicine, health and environment in the twentieth century. She is interested in the use of science and technology to address problems of poverty and underdevelopment in postcolonial societies. Her current book project, provisionally entitled *Transforming Brazil's Desert: Drought, Poverty and Technocratic Tensions in Modern Latin America*, examines development projects in Northeast Brazil's hinterland drought zone, focusing on dam construction, the establishment of irrigated smallholder colonies, and public health surveys.

Vera Candiani (Assistant Professor of History, Princeton University) works in the region where social, economic and environmental histories intersect with the history of technology. Although her area of specialization is Colonial Latin America, most of the questions she asks force her to think and write comparatively, and to delve into the role of human interactions with the material world of dirt, plants, animals and energy through work and everyday objects in broad historical processes. Her first book, *Dreaming of Dry Land: Environmental Transformation in Colonial Mexico City*, is about one of the largest and most complex environmental engineering projects in the early modern era, which aimed to desiccate the lakes that used to surround the City of Mexico. Driven by the question of why our surroundings look the way they do, this book studies the social priorities embedded in the various structures and technological decisions that comprised the drainage project. In the process, it explains how colonization actually worked on the water, land and biota (humans included).

Mark Carey (Associate Professor of History, Clark Honors College, University of Oregon) specializes in environmental history and the history of science. Carey's research has focused on several topics: climate change, glacier-society interactions, natural disasters, mountaineering, water, and health/medicine. His goal is to understand dynamic interactions among people, knowledge systems, environmental perceptions, and natural processes. Carey's interdisciplinary research links many fields -- from history and geography to glaciology and climatology, medicine and recreation.

Sterling Evans (Louise Welsh Chair in History, University of Oklahoma) has research and teaching interests in the history of the trans-national Great Plains, the U.S-Mexican and U.S.-Canadian borderlands, agricultural history, and environmental history. These interests meet in his book *Bound in Twine: The History and Ecology of the Henequen-Wheat Complex for Mexico and the American and Canadian Plains*, which won the Theodore Saloutos Best Book Prize from the Agricultural History Society in 2008 and also the Caroline Bancroft Award in 2009.

Zephyr Frank's (Associate Professor of History, Stanford University) research interests include the social history of Brazil, Latin American economic history, wealth and inequality, geographical information systems (GIS), terrain of history, and spatial history.

Fred Freitas is a Ph.D. candidate in Latin American History at Stanford University studying the environmental and spatial history of the Southern Cone in the twentieth century. His research focuses on two bordering national parks in Argentina and Brazil. His goal is to contrast the divergent histories of environmental and social change at each side of the border. Besides being a historian, Frederico also has over a decade of experience in art direction for print media and motion graphics, which now inspires him to explore new forms of historical narratives through visual media. At Stanford, Fred works at the Spatial History Project where he is the principal investigator for the Boundaries of Nature Project, which gives him the opportunity to put together his two passions: design and history.

Sherry Johnson (Professor of History, Florida International University)'s research and teaching interests include Cuba and the Caribbean, environment and climate change, disasters such as hurricanes, medicine, women and gender, and social history. Her book *Climate and Catastrophe in Cuba and the Atlantic World in the Age of Revolution* draws on historical climatology, environmental history, and Cuban and American colonial history to innovatively integrate the region's experience with extreme weather events and patterns into the history of the Spanish Caribbean and the Atlantic world.

Claudia Leal is an associate professor in the department of history at the Universidad de los Andes in Bogota, Colombia. She holds a PhD in geography from the University of California Berkeley and is a founding member of SOLCHA, the Latin American and Caribbean Society for Environmental History. At the Universidad de los Andes she helped create and, for the last three years, has also directed a master's program in geography, which emphasizes the relationship between people and their environments from a social science perspective. Her research has focused on both the formation and the

present state of peasant societies in rainforest environments, and on the role of racial categorization in shaping Latin American societies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Tom Rogers (Associate Professor of History, Emory University) is interested in the ways labor and environmental histories intertwine, something most obvious in agrarian contexts but relevant elsewhere as well. He has also worked on and taught Afro-Latin American history and Caribbean history. His book *The Deepest Wounds: A Labor and Environmental History of Sugar in Northeast Brazil* was awarded the Warren Dean Prize from the Conference on Latin American History and the Henry A. Wallace Prize from the Agricultural History Society. Centering the experiences of workers, the book describes social and agro-environmental change in the sugarcane region of Pernambuco, Brazil. Adopting these two perspectives simultaneously allows for a richer understanding of the region's history, including the dramatic labor union mobilization and political activism that punctuated the 1960s and 1970s.

Myrna Santiago (History Chair, St. Mary's College) provided an analysis of labor and environment in the Mexican oil industry in her award-winning book *The Ecology of Oil: Environment, Labor and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1938*. It explores how environmental destruction, discrimination and racism, and labor activism played a role in the nationalization of the foreign oil companies that operated in Mexico until 1938.

Lise Sedrez is an environmental historian at Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro, where she is the editor of the academic journal *Topoi*. She has worked and published in the United States and Brazil, and is the co-editor of the series *Latin American Landscapes*, by the University of Arizona Press. Professor Sedrez's research interests include urban environmental history and history of disasters, and she is co-editor with Marco Armiero of *A History of Environmentalism: Local Struggles, Global Histories* (Bloomsbury, 2014).

John Soluri's (Associate Professor of History, Carnegie Mellon University) research and teaching explore the relationship between social and environmental change in Latin America with a particular focus on the commodification of biological organisms. He is currently researching and writing a book centered on animals, markets, borders, and environmental change in Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego (1800-2000). His book, *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States* (2005) won the George Perkins Marsh award for best book awarded by the American Society for Environmental History. He is a founding member of SOLCHA, the Society for Latin American and Caribbean Environmental History and a board member of Building New Hope, a Pittsburgh-based NGO promoting fair trade, small-scale agriculture and education in the Americas.

Matt Vitz (Assistant Professor, University of California, San Diego) has published his research in the *Hispanic American Historical Review* as well as *Estudios de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea de México* and has a forthcoming article in *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*. His book manuscript reinterprets Mexico City's rapid

twentieth-century growth as a series of social conflicts and scientific disputes over the material environment in which a technocratic-industrial urban vision eventually prevailed over more environmentally just alternatives springing from the politics of the Mexican revolution. The book unites social and political history with the theoretical and conceptual tools of urban political ecology to understand how diverse peoples have experienced urbanization and how urban power is created and contested through environmental change.

Emily Wakild's (Associate Professor of History, Boise State University) research interests include the social and environmental history of revolution in Latin America, the comparative history of conservation and science, and cultural understandings of climate history. For this work, she has been awarded several national awards including a National Science Foundation Scholars Award, a Fulbright-Hays Fellowship, and a National Endowment for the Humanities Summer Stipend. Her book, *Revolutionary Parks: Conservation, Social Justice, and Mexico's National Parks* (University of Arizona Press, 2011) received the Alfred B. Thomas Award for the best book on a Latin American subject by the Southeastern Council on Latin American Studies, the Charles A. Weyerhaeuser Award for the best book in forest and conservation history from the Forest History Society, and the Elinor Melville Award for the best book on Latin American environmental history from the Conference of Latin American History. At present she is working on a comparative history of transnational conservation and scientific research in Amazonian and Patagonian South America.

Mikael Wolfe (Assistant Professor of History, Stanford University) is an environmental historian of modern Mexico and Latin America focusing on the history of water control, agrarian reform, hydraulic technology, drought and climate change. In several published articles and in his book manuscript "Watering the Revolution: An Environmental and Technological History of Agrarian Reform in La Laguna, Mexico," he examines the role of technical actors or "técnicos" – in particular hydraulic engineers and agronomists – as mediators between the Mexican state, society and nature from the late 19th to 20th centuries. In his second book project, tentatively entitled "The Climate of Revolution: The case of Mexico," he analyzes the role of climate change, and in particular drought, on the coming, process and consequences of the Mexican Revolution. The book aims to integrate historical climatology with social history by contextualizing climate as one among numerous complex factors explaining how and why people make revolutions when and where they do.