

Thomas D. Rogers
History
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HIST 190: A History of Hunger

I applied to the Piedmont Project in order to think through a class I will debut next year: A History of Hunger. The problem of hunger has clear links to environmental, economic, and social sustainability and I aim to teach the class from that perspective, helping students explore how hunger is both individually experienced and systemically produced. I am also excited about incorporating agricultural history, given that so few students think about or have an opportunity to study farming.

The Piedmont workshop changed my approach to the class's planning in two important ways. I shifted my planning toward teaching method and I focused more on framing techniques. Instead of just picking up new content areas to include—new ways to think about agriculture, for example, or alternative definitions of sustainability—I thought much more about how I might interact with the students and shape their interactions with each other. That is, I focused more on *how* to teach rather than *what* to teach. The two days of the workshop left me impressed by the leader's skill in quickly fostering a community out of the two dozen of us in attendance. We moved through discussions about a range of issues linked to sustainability but we would not have learned as much if we hadn't so quickly established a climate of trust and respect.

We began the workshop with discussions about language. We tried to establish a shared definition of sustainability, for instance, and strategies to describe it. I was reminded that crisis language is profoundly demobilizing and demoralizing. Framing sustainability issues as a litany of crises, from environmental degradation to social and economic inequality, leaves researchers, analysts, and students feeling more helpless than energized. But focusing on how communities (human and non-) seek to thrive or restore balance can encourage people to continue asking questions about sustainability.

So in a sense my most important lessons from the workshop have not found direct expression in my syllabus. I mention that students will work collaboratively, but I do not mention how I intend to build community in the seminar from the first day. We will begin with an exercise much like one used in our workshop. I will ask students to describe their home towns without using place names. Working outward from students' roots and knowledge base is a well-known Freirean educational strategy. The exercise has the double advantage of reminding each student of how s/he thinks about the natural world and of connecting them to each other. Further, it sets a tone for students, hopefully preparing them to approach familiar questions from new angles.

As I move through the rest of the semester, I have resolved to make no assumptions about what students know about the discipline of history, about the process of agricultural change, about the question of hunger, or about any other theme from the course. At the workshop, we were asked to explain the big questions of our discipline and it struck me as an excellent exercise for first-year students to witness. So I have incorporated primary sources into every week's readings and we will use those as a primer for discussing historical methods.

I will see the course as a success if students come away with new ideas about how to effectively engage in the classroom, strategies for reading historical sources, and a narrative of hunger's place in the past two hundred years of history.

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A History of Hunger HIST 190 – Freshman Seminar

Course Description:

Hunger as a problem is a modern concept. Before the nineteenth century, hunger was generally seen as a simple fact of life faced by some portions of society. This course examines the history of hunger as a conceptual category, tracking its changing meanings through the past two hundred years. It also examines the history of hunger as lived experience, attending to both acute episodes (famines) and chronic hunger. Finally, the course explores agricultural development and modernization from the fertilizer revolution of the 1830s, through the mid-twentieth century's Green Revolution, and up to the food price spikes of the 2000s. We will pay comparatively more attention to the history of the Americas, but the processes we study were global in scope and merit study at a large geographical scale. We will divide the semester into units focusing on specific historical eras and we will study basic themes, such as food production, distribution, and access, as well as scarcity.

Required Texts:

Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). ISBN: 9780674050785
Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World* (London: Verso, 2001). ISBN: 1859843824
John H. Perkins, *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution: Wheat, Genes, and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). ISBN: 9780195110135
James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007). ISBN: 9780674026780

Learning Objectives:

By the end of the semester, students will grasp the range of ways to understand “hunger”: as a technical measure of malnutrition, as a socially constructed status, as a function of historical processes in food systems, as the result of acute environmental and political events, etc. Further, students will synthesize the place of hunger in various moments of the past two hundred years of world history. Students will identify links between global political and economic history and patterns of agrarian development, as well as these processes' impacts on populations. Students will be able to outline the social and environmental dynamics of food systems and their stability as well as fragility.

Methodologically, students will hone their facility with reading and interpreting primary sources, learning how to situate them and use them to make arguments.

Student and Faculty Expectations:

Together, students and faculty cultivate a productive and respectful learning environment. We expect to grant all ideas thoughtful evaluation and to allow each other the space to present questions. Students should always attend class and should arrive prepared for a discussion after completing the appropriate reading assignment.

I expect class work to be prepared on time. Occasionally, unforeseen issues intervene in our lives. Part of approaching a class with professionalism involves planning ahead so that these obstacles do not prevent us from completing work on time. In the case of medical or family emergency please provide me with simple documentation of the issue. For work submitted late without documentation, I will grade down by a letter grade for each day it is overdue (so, for instance, a paper that earned a 92 would fall to an 82 if it arrives a day late). I will not accept work more than three days late.

I prefer to communicate through personal conversation and email. I encourage all students to attend my office hours or make an appointment for another time—I spend a good deal of time in my office and can accommodate visits outside of my posted hours. I look forward to interactions outside of class. I will respond promptly to emails but will not necessarily return phone calls.

Our schedule may well change in some minor ways and I reserve the right to revise the syllabus and adapt our itinerary as such measures become necessary. If changes are made, they will be announced to the class with plenty of time to allow for preparation and adjustment.

Academic Conduct and Plagiarism:

The university's policies on academic honesty and misconduct as described in Emory University's code of academic conduct and the honor code will be rigorously enforced in this course. Paraphrasing or quoting another's work without citing the source is a form of academic misconduct. Even inadvertent or unintentional misuse or appropriation of another's work (such as relying heavily on source material that is not expressly acknowledged) is considered plagiarism. If you have any questions about using and citing sources, please see me for clarification. Everyone should be familiar with the honor code: http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/policy/honor_code.html. Other policies of the College may be found in the College Catalog: <http://college.emory.edu/home/academic/catalog/index.html>

Students with Disabilities:

Any student with a university-documented disability should confer with the professor so that we can arrange suitable classroom accommodations. If you have yet the register a disability, you can do so with the office of Access, Disability Services, and Resources (<http://equityandinclusion.emory.edu/access/index.html>).

Grading:

Participation (<i>be present!</i>)	15%
Response papers (3 of the 4 windows)	15%
Paper proposal and bibliography	5%
Literature review	5%
Rough draft and peer review	20%
Research presentation	10%
Research paper	30%

Preparation and participation are crucial for a small seminar. In the interest of cultivating an energetic, lively, and focused discussion each week, we all need to come to class prepared and ready to contribute. Two students will lead discussion each week. These coordinators should circulate a list of discussion questions by no later than 5:00 pm on the day before class.

Several in-class writing assignments, in addition to three one-page reading response papers, will help students practice writing. The responses are due on or before time windows that will be identified on the first day of class. The bulk of the semester's work revolves around a collaborative research paper. Students will work in pairs on these projects. Three preliminary exercises—a proposal, including a preliminary bibliography, and a literature analysis, followed by a rough draft and peer review—will help make the paper stronger. These will train students in the process of constructing a longer-form paper and in the skills of giving and receiving criticism. I seek to gauge the degree to which students carefully and creatively deploy ideas from class and I value the effort put into expressing original ideas clearly. Students should concentrate on formulating independent positions, developing arguments, and articulating them clearly. Ideas can exert great power, but unleashing that power demands lucid, skillful presentation.

Class Schedule: Reading(s) for each class day appear after the date. Readings from books you have not purchased are accessible through electronic reserves from the library home page.

Part I: Introduction

Week One: Class themes and organization
Primary Source: USDA, Food Access Research Atlas,
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas.aspx>

Week Two: James Vernon, *Hunger*, chs. 1-2
Primary Source: *The Hungry Forties: Life Under the Bread Tax*

Part II: Agricultural Revolution in the 19th Century

Week Three: Vernon, chs. 3-8
Primary Source: Karl Marx, "Reaction of the Agricultural Revolution on Industry"

Week Four: Gregory T. Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World*, chs. 2-3, 5
Primary Source: Guano advertisements, 1880s

Part III: Imperialism and Political Famine

Week Five: Mike Davis, *Late Victorian Holocausts*, chs. 1-6
Primary Source: “Report of the Indian Famine Commission”

Week Six: Davis, chs. 7-12
Primary Source: Rockefeller Foundation Health Survey of Brazil

Part IV: A New Quantification of Hunger

Week Seven: Vernon, ch. 4
Nick Cullather, *The Hungry World*, ch. 1
Primary Source: Wilbur Olin Atwater, *A Treatise Upon the Science of Nutrition*

Week Eight: Reading pause and research update

Part V: The Cold War and the Green Revolution

Week Nine: Cullather, chs. 2-6
Joseph Cotter, *Troubled Harvest: Agronomy and Revolution in Mexico, 1880-2002*
Primary Source: Norman Borlaug, “Nobel Prize Acceptance Speech”

Week Ten: Cullather, chs. 7-10
Perkins, *Geopolitics and the Green Revolution*, chs. 1-2
Primary Sources: Josué de Castro, address to the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 1972; and excerpts, *The Geopolitics of Hunger*

Week Eleven: Perkins, chs. 3-7
Primary Source: Peruvian government fishmeal pamphlets

Part VI: Hunger in the Age of Agribusiness

Week Twelve: Jean Ziegler, *Betting on Famine: Why the World Still Goes Hungry*
Primary Source: The Farm Bill (U.S.)
<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=farbill>

Week Thirteen: Sharman Apt Russell, *Hunger: An Unnatural History*
Primary Source: World Bank, “A Note on Rising Food Prices” (2008)

Part VII: Finale

Week Fourteen: Thanksgiving

Week Fifteen: Paper presentations