

University of Florida
Department of History / Center for European Studies
Fall 2014

Oil, Gold, and Chocolate

A World History of Material Cultures and Resources

EUH 5934

Michael Schuering

M 8 - 10, Keene-Flint 101

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Globalization became a force of history through the appropriation of resources and material goods. The quest for wealth through trade and empire building had profound effects on entire countries and their respective cultures. The hunger of the industrialized world for food, fuel and raw materials subjected entire regions to economic and political instability. In recent times, however, fears of scarcity and want have also grown in wealthy parts of the world. Especially the constant demand for cheap energy along with perceptions of environmental decay have encouraged historians to look back on the history of material cultures that threaten to deplete the planet's resources rapidly and irretrievably.

This course will focus on the political and cultural history of goods and resources by following the substances themselves through history. Each section will deal with one specific substance or product. These will guide the course work through a multidisciplinary narrative, including the history of technology, the environment, and consumption. Students are required to pick one substance / product and construct a historical account combining a variety of perspectives and methods. They will be required to give a presentation in class and submit a substantial (25 pages) paper following a well defined research plan.

Grading:

Presentation 30%

Final Paper: 40%

Participation: 30%

Participation requires regular reading responses via email consisting of two questions about the respective text assigned which the instructor will specify in class. The response should be mailed at 7pm the day before class.

Course policies:

Students who miss class more than two times unexcused will fail.

During class, phones, computers, and tablets have to be switched off and stored in bags/briefcases.

Plagiarism is not tolerated. Students who plagiarize in any of the writing assignments will fail. The instructor will inform the university about such behavior. The principles of academic honesty will be explained in class. Consult the university policies on rules of conduct here: <http://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>

Requirements for class attendance and make-up exams, assignments, and other work in this course are consistent with university policies that can be found at: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.

Schedule:

January 12th, Introduction, Theory, Methods

January 26th, WATER (Material tba)

February 2nd, WOOD

Joachim Radkau: Wood. A History (Cambridge UK, Polity Press 2012)

February 9th, OIL (Material tba)

February 16th, SUGAR (Material tba)

February 23rd, COFFEE (Material tba)

Mark Pendergast: Uncommon Grounds. The History of Coffee and how it transformed the World (New York, Basis Books 1999)

March 9th, CHOCOLATE

Sophie D. and Michael D. Coe: The true History of Chocolate, Thames & Hudson 2007)

March 16th, CARBON (Material tba)

March 23rd, ALUMINUM

Sarah Nichols (Ed.): Aluminum by Design (New York / Pittsburgh, Henry A Adams, 2000)

March 30th, IRON (Material tba)

April 6th, GOLD (Material tba)

April 13th, URANIUM

Tom Zoellner: Uranium. War, Energy, and the Rock the Shaped the World (London, Penguin 2010)

April 20th, PLUTONIUM

Jeremy Bernstein: Plutonium. A History of the World's most dangerous Element (Ithaca NY, Cornell UP 2007)

