

# GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

Autumn semester 2012

## Seminar 1 – Personal Environmental History

If I say that I live in the “United States” or in “Canada,” in “British Columbia” or in “New Mexico,” I situate myself within a purely human set of coordinates. I say little or nothing about the earthly place that I inhabit, but simply establish my temporary location within a shifting matrix of political, economic, and civilizational forces struggling to maintain themselves, today, largely at the expense of the animate earth. The great danger is that I, and many other good persons, may come to believe that our breathing bodies really inhabit these abstractions, and that we will lend our lives more to consolidating, defending, or bewailing the fate of these ephemeral entities than to nurturing and defending the actual places that physically sustain us.

David Abram

Environmental History is about how people and society affects and has been affected by the surrounding world. The environment we live in and the way we use and abuse it is a product of history. The world as our older relatives grew up in was in many ways very different from the world we live in now. With what values and ideals do we look at the nature which surrounds us today? In what way does your relationship with nature differ from that of your parents and the generations that went before them? Did women and men have different relationships with the environment? How does it look today? Have you have perhaps moved from the countryside into the city?

Do you look at nature differently if you work as a physiotherapist, an economist or welder compared to a farmer, fisherman or lumberjack? How has your family influenced the nature around you? What natural resources did they use to sustain themselves then - and on which do you sustain yourself on today? If you have the opportunity to talk with your elderly relatives, parents and perhaps grandparents, we would like you to do it. Try going back in time as far as you can, but you should also feel free to immerse yourself in that which most interests you.

From which corners of the world does your family come from? Have you stayed in one place, wandered, or maybe spread? How has nature been used and impacted where you come from? Identify and describe the environment in which your family has lived and that you have lived or are currently living in.

Where has your family lived? What natural resources have sustained you? How have you been influenced by your surroundings and how have you influenced them? Try to create a timeline - not exact dates, but approximations (the first half of the 1800s, for example).

## Instructions

This is a free writing assignment. Feel free to write in a more literary form. You are free to choose to focus on what you think is important and interesting and want to focus on. Nothing is more right than anything else. The text should include approximately two pages (12pt, 1.5 line spacing).

You should **hand in you text** at the latest on **Thursday the 27<sup>th</sup> of September, 1pm** through Studentportalen at [www.studentportalen.uu.se](http://www.studentportalen.uu.se). Please write both your **name** and **task name** as the document name. For example `sara_klingstedt_sem1.doc`.

The Adobe connect\* **seminar** will be held on **Friday the 28<sup>th</sup> of September**. If you wish, you can share a digital picture such as that of relatives, a special environment, a news clippings etc. at the seminar. The **time** for the seminar **will be announced** on the course website <http://cemusstudent.se/geh-distance/>

Good luck and have fun!

### **Sara & Karin**

Course coordinators teaching assistants, Global Environmental History

\*Please remember to make sure that you have a headset prepared for the seminar, and that you have tested the headset together with the computer you will use!



Quotation Source: *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (Vintage),  
Pages: 267