

21A.441
Second Written Assignment
THE COLOMBIAN EXCHANGE

Contact between Europe and the Americas after 1492 led to what is called the Colombian Exchange, a movement of organisms between the Old and New Worlds, which had a huge impact on the ecology and economies of every part of the world. In this paper, you are to carry out a *modest* amount of research and write a *short, succinct* paper on the significance and impact of one organism.

Oral presentation Thursday 2/19/04; Paper due in class Tuesday 2/24/04

I cannot keep you from using the Internet, but you must base your conclusions primarily on published books and articles. The following are on reserve at the Humanities Library for this subject, and I have copies you can borrow overnight.

Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological Consequences of 1492* (1972, Greenwood Press)

Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (1986, Cambridge University Press)

Available in the Humanities Library Reference Collection:

Cambridge World History of Food (Reference catalogue no. TX353.C255 2000)

Specific sources are given below for some organisms.

CROPS AND OTHER USEFUL PLANTS

Potatoes. Michael Pollan, *Botany and Desire: A Plant's-Eye View of the World* (2001, Random House) Christine Kinealy, *The Great Irish famine : Impact, Ideology, and Rebellion* (2002, Palgrave), or other works on the Irish potato famine

Yucca manioc

Hot peppers

Sugar cane. Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (1985, Penguin)

Tomatoes

Quinine. Daniel Headrick, *The tools of empire : technology and European imperialism in the nineteenth century* (1981, Oxford), Lucile Brockway, *Science and Colonial Expansion: The Role of the British Royal Botanic Gardens* (1979, Academic Press).

Maize corn

Bananas

Apples. Pollan, *Botany and Desire*.

West African Rice: Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (2001, Harvard).

Coffee

Tobacco

Olive oil/bread/wine. See esp. Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism*.

Sweet potatoes

Rubber. Brockway, *Science & Colonial Expansion*.

Weed plants**LIVESTOCK, OTHER ANIMALS****Horses, Cows, Pigs**

Sheep. Elinor Melville, *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico* (1994, Cambridge).

Honey bees**DISEASES**

Epidemic disease Noble David Cook, *Born to Die: Disease and New World Conquest, 1492-1650* (1998, Cambridge) William McNeill, *Plagues and People* (1976, Doubleday); Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (1997, Norton).

In your research, you should be enterprising and look for relevant and useful sources, but you should also be economical of your time. If you need to consult one or more whole books, *don't* read them cover to cover but use the table of contents, index and quick skimming to find the main points and relevant information. Be critical in your reading: some sources are worthless or shallow. Don't accept everything you read uncritically.

In your paper, write only 3 pages, maximum 4. You will not do better by producing a full-fledged term paper or doctoral dissertation. You do not need to cover every fact about the organism you choose---in fact please don't! Decide what points are interesting and significant, and discuss those points succinctly and as intelligently as you can.

What are the significant characteristics of the crop or other organism that affect its use and transfer? (weight, nutritive content, portability, propagation, appeal or addictiveness, cultivation, etc. etc.

What was its impact on economies, the environment, history?

What was interesting about its transfer/use/cultural filtering or acceptance?

You may have so much to say about the organism you choose that you may narrow the topic down to discuss its impact on one region or country or one or a few significance aspects of its use or history. Better to discuss a few points intelligently and interestingly than many points in a boring or unrevealing way. Show your ability to think rather than digest.

You must cite your sources to back up your claims and give credit. Use the social science citation form, with citations in parenthesis at the end of a sentence, e.g.(Smith 1949:203-247) rather than in footnotes in the usual humanities form.