



Svartáarkot, Culture - Nature

SVARTÁRKOT

CULTURE – NATURE

Local Environments - Global Impacts

Environmental and agricultural history of Iceland in global context

Basic information

Time: June 20-28 2009 (additional work over the Internet)

Registration deadline: April 30, 2009

Level: Undergraduate

Credit units: 10 ECTS

Chief supervisor: Árni Daníel Júlíusson PhD, Reykjavik Academy

Assistant supervisor: Björk Þorleifsdóttir, Reykjavik Academy

Guest lecturer: Professor Donald Worster, University of Kansas

Language: English

Price:

Tuition \$ 770 (US)

Excursions, board, accommodation etc. \$ 1,550 (US)

Total: \$ 2,320 (US)

(Travel to location not included)

Course description

How did and does the different kinds of agriculture use the environment? How does industrial society use the environment. What is the effect of the environment (climate, germs, volcanism) on different kinds of societies? The emphasis will be on the area around Svartáarkot, NE-Iceland, and how this history can be viewed and analyzed.

The course deals with agricultural and environmental history, using the environment and cultural landscape of the Svartáarkot area for reference. The basic idea is to compare two periods in the environmental history of the area, one before the onset of modernisation, and the other after modernisation sets in during the 19th century.

The first period offers fascinating insight into the effects of man on an untouched landscape. The settlement of Iceland occurred in the 9th century AD, at a similar time as other large oceanic islands like New Zealand and Madagascar were settled. Iceland was the last country in Europe to be settled. The effects of the settlement will be reviewed, with discussion of examples of deforestation and desertification in the Svartáarkot area. The development of the cultural landscape and of land use will be followed through the ages.



The effects of the environment on man in the pre-modern period will also be discussed. Ocean ice, volcanic eruptions and the cooling of the climate all led repeatedly to severe subsistence crises in Þingeyjarsýsla, where Svartárkot is located, and indeed in all of Iceland. The plague ravaged the countryside two times in the 15th century and examples of farm desertion will be examined.

The second period offers a modern contrast to the pre-modern period. Modernity first became apparent in Iceland in agriculture, with expansion of farm production observable from the beginning of the 19th century. The expansion of agricultural productivity was connected to increase in shipping and the growth of cities in Europe, especially Copenhagen. This expansion directly affected society and environment in Svartárkot and all of Þingeyjarsýsla. All kinds of environmental challenges followed, increase in grazing producing desertification on a larger scale than before. The environmental challenge of industrialisation followed in the 20th century in the form of whaling, power extraction from rivers and waterfalls, the building of aluminium smelters and environmental effects of tourism. How does modern capitalism organize environmental use in Þingeyjarsýsla?

The effects the environment has on man have been greatly reduced by modernity. How this was done will be reviewed, but also the growing danger of global warming. How will the Svartárkot area be affected?

Learning objectives

The student will

- acquire familiarity with the different kind of environmental challenges faced by pre-modern and modern societies.
- understand the concept of a difference between the effects of environment on man and the effects of man on the environment.
- understand how pre-modern (feudal) societies influence and regard their environment, and how this changes as capitalism gains ground.

Programme

Preparations on the Internet

Prep. day (Friday June 19, 2009)

Official culture, in Reykjavík museums. Afternoon: A scholarly buffet - 4-6 scholars present in 15 minutes each, an interesting aspect of Icelandic culture in past and present. Flight to Akureyri and bus to Kiðagil in the evening.

Day 1 (Saturday June 20, 2009)

Humans and environment in Iceland 900-2009

08.00	Breakfast
09.00	Departure for orientation tour in Bárðardalur valley Svartárkot – Aldeyjarfoss - Hrafnarbjargarvöð
12.00	Packed lunch at Hrafnarbjargarvöð



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- 13.30 Arrival in Kiðagil
14.00 Lecture on the impact of humans on the Icelandic environment 900-2009
Lecturer: Árni Daníel Júlíusson
17.00 Housekeeping and student project work outline
18.00 Dinner

Day 2 (Sunday June 21, 2009)

Environment and people in Iceland 800-1800

- 08.00 Breakfast
09.00 The environmental impact on Icelandic society to 1800
Lecturer: Björk Þorleifsdóttir
12.00 Lunch
14.00 Disappearance of woods, erosion, Little ice age.
Lecturer: Árni Daníel Júlíusson
17.00 Student project work
18.00 Dinner



Day 3 (Monday June 22, 2009)

Global and local environmental history

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.00 Environmental historical overview
Lecturer: Professor Donald Worster
- 12.00 Lunch
- 13.00 Icelandic society and environment
Various lecturers, panel.
- 18.00 Dinner

Day 4 (Tuesday June 23, 2009)

Excursion day -Cultural landscape, material culture

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.00 Departure for Aldeyjarfoss and Goðafoss
- 12.00 Lunch
- 14.00 Manors and tenants (at Laufás manor, Grenjaðarstaður manor),
Lecturer: Árni Daníel Júlíusson
- 19.00 Dinner

Day 5 (Wednesday June 24, 2009)

Excursion day – tourism, electricity

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.00 Departure for Mývatn: Dimmuborgir, Námaskarð, Krafla
- 13.00 Lunch at Mývatn
- 15.00 Departure for Mývatnsöræfi, Grímsstaðir
- 18.00 Dinner.

Day 6 (Thursday June 25, 2009)

Impact of society on environment, environment on society, 19th and 20th centuries

- 08.00 Breakfast
- 09.00 Lecture on the impact of society on environment and vice versa
Lecturer: N.N.
- 12.00 Lunch
- 14.00 Lecture on environmental history



18.00

Lecturer: N.N.
Dinner



Day 7 (Friday June 26, 2009)

Excursion day – Whale Day

08.00	Breakfast
09.00	Lecture on whaling and fishing <i>Lecturer: N.N.</i>
11.00	Departure for Húsavík.
12.00	Lunch in Húsavík
13.00	Group work on whaling
16.00	Whale watching on Skjálfandaflói bay
18.00	Dinner and accommodation in Kaldbakskot

Day 8 (Saturday June 27, 2009)

Aluminium industry and Kárahnjúkar

08.00	Breakfast
09.00	Industrial Use of the Environment: Effects on Conservation, Society and Ecosystems <i>Lecturer: Ragnhildur Sigurðardóttir</i>
12.00	Lunch
13.00	Discussion
18.00	Barbecue

Day 9 (Sunday June 28, 2009)

Tourism and cultural heritage

08.00	Breakfast
09.00	Lecture: To be decided. <i>Lecturer: N.N.</i>
12.00	Lunch
13.00	Discussion

The trip home

Written assignments back home