

American Studies 335
New England
M, TH 3:30 - 4:50
GHH 109
Roger Williams University
Spring Semester 2010

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Week of March 8, 2010

For **Monday**, March 8

Review, in Joseph Wood, *The New England Village*,

Chapter 1, *The Colonial Encounter With the Land*, pp. 9 - 51.

Notes on Reading.

I'm assuming that many, if not most, of you have been pretty absorbed in completing your first paper, so I'm going to slow down the reading in *The New England Village* a bit. I know it can be dense going, but I'm hoping as you get used to his vocabulary and techniques you'll find him easier going. I hope our discussion Monday on the relativity of terms like "near" and "large" and "crowded" will help us making sense of this chapter and others, as well. Thinking about the book, its organization, and its techniques, I'm thinking some of you may benefit by the following strategy.

Before plowing into each assignment, take a few minutes to meditate on just the **bold faced chapter introduction**. In chapter one, this appears on page 9. There are a couple of terms which may make your eyes spin: for example **diachronic** and **synchronic**. At first don't worry about these. Read the rest of the introduction and ask yourselves, do I really need to know what diachronic and synchronic mean, or can I understand "I argue that New England's settlers were well prepared to employ New England's grasslands--you can see these salt marshes and freshwater meadows flying over New England today". and "Furthermore it was division of grasslands more than it was covenanted community, puritan ideology, or defensive precautions that shaped human geographical patterns and forms of agricultural settlement. New Englanders built New England villages on the human geographical foundations established by the first settlers raising cattle". anyhow?

If you get the gist of what follows, you can forget worrying about "diachronic" and "synchronic".

If you aren't quite sure about what "covenanted community, puritan precautions, or defensive precautions" mean, remember that he's saying that these did not shape the New England Village. Do you really need to understand these in order to understand what the last sentence (his thesis) says? If not, then you can decide to worry about those terms later. He may explain them in the chapter, or he may not. But knowing much about them in detail may not be all that important.

Once you've performed those preliminary meditations, proceed to spend a couple of minutes looking at the chapter subheadings. In Chapter one, these are:

- The Exceptionalist Tradition
- Cultural Context
- Emigrants
- Puritanism
- The New England Experience
- Land Types
- Settling Land
- Shaping New England's Cultural Geography
- The Settlement Landscape
- A Settlement Utopia

Some of these you may already know something about, some of them not. What you're doing at this point is trying to identify the places in the chapter which are likely to be more troublesome, and those parts which are likely to be less so.

Next, turn your attention to the illustrations and the captions!!!

First, do you understand the key to the maps or charts? If not, formulate questions which will help clarify what they mean, and make sure to ask those questions either in class or by e-mail.

Second, for figures which more or less illustrate the same point. Consider, for example, Figs 1.3, 1.5, 1.6, and 1.7. Do the captions of these illustrations direct your attention to the same things? Notice that he repeats the words Salt Marsh in three of the four of these. Is there a similar area in the other? (You'll probably notice that Fig. 1.4 also is captioned "salt marsh". From this, you can probably determine that salt marsh is pretty important.

Consider specialist terms in the illustrations which might be unfamiliar to you. For example "*Glacio-lacustrine zone*" appears in the text of Figures 1.9 and 1.10. Do you need to know the technical definition? Notice that with each illustration he discusses meadows. It would seem that meadows and glacio-lacustrine zones have something to do with each other. Perhaps "meadows" is all you need to know.

Figures 1.11 and 1.12 illustrate "intervales", one of which is "small". Can you guess what an "intervale" is from the information in the illustrations?

If you do decide you really need to be sure you understand intervale, that's the time to use a dictionary. I like to use online ones, myself.

Next. give your brain a rest. Grab a coffee, a coke, and/or a cookie, listen to your i-pod or watch a little (not too much) tube. Try not to think about the chapter. (Try NOT thinking about a pink elephant in ballet slippers sometime...and you'll see the advantage of the not thinking technique)..

Finally, read the chapter briskly. Don't get hung up on the technical language, note any troublesome points, form questions about them--as specific as possible--and bring them with you to class.

For *Thursday, March 11*

Read, In *Joseph Wood*,

Chapter 2, *Village and Community in the 17th Century*, pp. 52 - 70

You will need to understand what a "village" is, and note that this term is not synonymous with "town". Make sure you understand the relationship between towns and villages.

Two types of village are noted in this chapter, and you will have to be able to distinguish between the *Nucleated* and *Dispersed* types. We've talked about this a little before. You should have a sense of what kinds of conditions called each type into being, and also a sense of which type predominated.

The relationship between *village* and *community* is also important, and will become even more important when we begin using our next book, "A Very Social Time".