

HISTORY/GEOGRAPHY/ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 460

FIRST PAPER ASSIGNMENT: A CATALOGUE OF NEEDFUL THINGS FOR PLANTERS IN NEW ENGLAND

This first paper assignment for 460 is meant to be an exercise in using a primary document to supply supporting evidence for a historical argument that you develop using your reading of *Changes in the Land*, other course assignments, and in-class lectures. Although it counts for only a small portion of your final grade—only 5%—it constitutes a very important opportunity for you to show us your argumentative and writing skills, and for us to give you feedback on how you can improve these. Our hope is that by doing this we can help you write an even better final place paper.

The assignment is simple—deceptively so. Accompanying this prompt is a brief document from Francis Higginson from letters associated with his book *New-England's Plantation*, published in London in 1630 as part of the promotional efforts surrounding the work of the Massachusetts Bay Company in colonizing the lands around Boston. Entitled “A Catalogue of Such Needful Things as Every Planter Doth or Ought to Provide to Go to New England,” it is simply a list of items Higginson thought colonists should bring with them. But because you’re reading an entire book about colonization, and because we’ve been talking a lot about how tools and technologies like these items relate both to the environment and to human cultures, there will likely be many ideas and connections that occur to you as you ponder Higginson’s list.

It’s important that you choose a clear *focus* this paper rather than try to talk about everything that interests you about these items. Reflect on what the document says, think about which parts of *Changes in the Land* or other parts of the course you think it best exemplifies, develop a thesis, and then write a very brief essay (no more than two double-spaced pages unless you’re an Honors undergraduate or a graduate student, in which case you have 3-4 pages for the assignment) using evidence from this document to support your claims. (You can also refer to secondary sources and course lectures if that’s helpful, but your principal source should be Higginson.) The paper is due at the start of lecture on Monday, October 2.

Please write your essay as well as you can so we have a sense of your best writing skills. Write a draft, print it out, edit it on paper, maybe even read it out loud to see how well it sounds (often our ears are better at hearing problems with prose than our eyes are at seeing them), revise again, and submit the best, most polished work you can. That way we’ll know how we might help as you move toward doing serious work on your final paper.

A link to the original nineteenth-century compilation in which this document appeared can be found at:

<http://books.google.com/books?id=IcASAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA266#v=onepage&q&f=false>

For a little background about Higginson himself, the entry in Wikipedia is reasonably reliable:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Higginson

4. What to Bring: A Checklist

The Reverend Francis Higginson was among the first group of settlers in Massachusetts Bay. He arrived in 1629 and made his home at Salem. He subsequently became minister to the congregation of that town. Higginson was also the author of one of the earliest books on the settlement of this region. His little volume entitled *New England's Plantation* was published in London in 1630. It contained, among other things, a wealth of practical advice for future migrants. The "catalogue" of "needful things," printed below, is interesting both for what is included and for what is left out. On the whole it appears to be a sensible list. One wonders, though, how much use a settler would have for a sword and suit of armor?

A Catalogue of Such Needful Things as Every Planter Doth or Ought to Provide to Go to New England (1630)

FRANCIS HIGGINSON

<i>Victuals for a whole year for a man, and so after the rate for more.</i>	1 gallon of aqua-vita,
8 bushels of meal,	1 gallon of oil,
2 bushels of peas,	2 gallons of vinegar,
2 bushels of oatmeal,	1 firkin of butter.

Francis Higginson, "New England's Plantation" (London, 1630), in Alexander Young, ed., *Chronicles of the First Planters of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay* (Boston, 1846), pp. 266-267.

Apparel.

1 Monmouth cap,
3 falling bands,
3 shirts,
1 waistcoat,
1 suit of canvas,
1 suit of frieze,
1 suit of cloth,
3 pair of stockings,
4 pair of shoes,
2 pair of sheets,
7 ells of canvas, to make a bed and bolster,
1 pair of blankets,
1 coarse rug.

Arms

1 armor, complete,
1 long piece,
1 sword,
1 belt,
1 bandoleer,
20 pound of powder,
60 pound of lead,
1 pistol and goose shot.

Tools

1 broad hoe,
1 narrow hoe,
1 broad axe,
1 felling axe,
1 steel handsaw,
1 whipsaw,

1 hammer,

1 spade,
2 augers,
4 chisels,
2 piercers, stocked,
1 gimlet,
1 hatchet,
2 frowers,
1 handbill,
1 grindstone,
1 pickaxe,
nails, of all sorts.

Household Implements

1 iron pot,
1 kettle,
1 frying pan,
1 gridiron,
2 skillets,
1 spit,
wooden platters,
dishes,
spoons,
trenchers.

Spices.

Sugar,
Pepper,
Cloves,
Mace,
Cinnamon,
Nutmegs, Fruit.

Also, there are diverse other things necessary to be taken over to this plantation, [such] as books, nets, hooks and lines, cheese, bacon, kine, goats, etc.