

CENTRE FOR THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE SEMINAR SERIES 2010-2011 AUTUMN TERM

Tuesday 22 February 2011, (Week 7)
5.00 pm – Ramphal Building Room R.014

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Natural Enemy or Natural Ally? Medical Assessments of French Militarized Environments, 1857-2005



This paper looks at the links made between militarization, environment and health on French military bases and battlefields, from the creation of Châlons Camp in 1857 to the present day. Throughout this period, doctors and others have repeatedly assessed the health implications of the environments in which soldiers lived, trained, and fought. They have variously treated the environment as an obstacle to health (a natural enemy) or something that might improve health and well-being (a natural ally). The paper argues that this is part of a “more-than-human” history of war and militarization. These supposedly “human” activities in fact take place in, through and, at times, against the environment. Both entail intimate military engagements with the environment and are only made possible through an active mobilization of nature, including topography, climate, vegetation, and animals.



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