

U.S. Environmental History

HIS 295-03; Spring 2009

Tuesday & Thursday, 12:45pm-2:05pm; ARH 120

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Office Hours: T, W, Th: 2:30-4:00pm

(and by appointment)

Course Overview

This course will introduce students to some of the central issues and debates in American Environmental History, ranging from the period of early colonial settlement to the present day. By focusing on the complex relationship between human communities and their surrounding environments, we will explore how the natural world has shaped the changing social, economic and political landscape of America, and conversely, how people have labored to transform, conserve, and appropriate nature to suit their own designs. Key topics will include: the shifting patterns of land use and resource management among Native American and settler communities; the ecological transformations wrought by commercial agriculture and industrial capitalism; the evolving role of the state in environmental policy; the growth of conservation and public health movements; and the changing ways in which people have conceptualized, portrayed, and interacted with the material world around them.

Required Texts

All required books are available for purchase at the Campus Bookstore. A copy of each text will also be available on Reserve at Burling Library.

Ted Steinberg, Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History (2009).

William Cronon, Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England, 2nd ed. (2003).

Donald Worster, Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West (1985).

Adam Rome, The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism (2001).

Course Requirements

Class Participation

Class discussion provides our main opportunity to examine and debate the complexities of environmental history. It is crucial, therefore, that students come to each class fully prepared to participate and discuss the topics at hand. This involves not only completing the assigned readings prior to class, but also taking some time to think through the particular issues and questions that emerge from each text. Since class participation will count for 20% of your grade, please make a serious effort to engage the readings and contribute your ideas, perspectives, and questions during each class.

Class Attendance

Please contact me if a medical or personal issue is preventing your class attendance, and have the relevant office (Health Services or Student Affairs) do the same.

Document Exercise & Narrative Exercise, due Feb. 6 & May 8

I will distribute the guidelines for these two assignments a week before each is due.

Three short papers (2-4 pages in length), due Feb. 18th, Mar. 13th, and Apr. 16th

These papers will require you to engage critically with a specific historical issue or primary source, drawing upon the course material to create your own analytical argument. I will post the topics on Pioneer Web about 10 days before each deadline. Students who wish to explore a topic of particular interest for their third paper may talk to me ahead of time about the possibility of doing so. All papers must be typed, double-spaced, and in a 12-point font with consistent footnotes or endnotes. Additional guidelines for the papers will be discussed in class.

Final exam (take-home), due May 15th

The final exam will be in essay format and will cover the material in the third section of the course (i.e. after Spring Break). Students will be expected to draw extensively upon the ideas and readings we discuss throughout this period. I will email the essay questions one week before the deadline.

Extensions & Late assignments: Late papers will receive a deduction of 1/3 of a letter grade per day. Exceptions may be made for legitimate medical or personal issues. Each student is also allowed a **one time** extension of three days to turn in an assignment without incurring any penalty. You should email me in advance so that I am aware that you plan to use your extension for a particular assignment. However, absolutely no final exams will be accepted after May 15th. The college requires that ALL coursework be submitted by the end of exam week unless you are taking an incomplete in the class.

Disabilities: If you have specific physical, psychiatric or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let me know early in the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Associate Dean and Director of Academic Advising, Joyce Stern, whose office is located in Rosenfield Center (x3702).

Grades:

Grades will be assigned according to the following formula:

Narrative Exercise	May 8	5%
Document Exercise	Feb. 6	5%
Paper #1	Feb. 16	20%
Paper #2	Mar. 13	15%
Paper #3	April 17	20%
Final Exam	May 15	15%
Class Participation		20%

Steady improvement over the course of the semester may be taken into account when assigning the final grades.

Class Schedule & Reading Assignments***I. Encountering Nature in the New World******Week 1***

Tuesday (Jan. 20): **The Nature of History and the History of Nature**

Reading Due: Cronon, "A Place for Stories," (Blackboard);
Steinberg, Down to Earth, preface (ix-xii).

Thursday (Jan. 22): **The Ecological World of Native Americans**

Reading Due: Steinberg, Down to Earth, prologue & ch. 1;
Krech, Ecological Indian, (Blackboard).

Week 2

Tuesday (Jan. 27): **Indigenous Patterns of Land-Use**

Reading Due: Cronon, Changes in the Land, ch. 1-3.

Thursday (Jan. 29): **Contact & Colonization: An Environmental Perspective**

Reading Due: Diamond, "Predicting Environmental History," (Blackboard);
Steinberg, Down to Earth, ch. 2;
Merchant, "Ecology and Contact," (Blackboard)

Week 3

- Tuesday (Feb. 3): **Transforming the Land**
 Reading Due: Cronon, Changes in the Land, ch. 4-6
- Thursday (Feb. 5): **Expansion & Conflict: The Cultural Ecology of Husbandry**
 Reading Due: Cronon, Changes in the Land, ch. 7;
 Anderson, "King Philip's Herd," (Blackboard).
- Friday (Feb.6): ***Document Exercise Due (4:00pm)***

Week 4

- Tuesday (Feb. 10): **Assessing the Colonial Land Ethic**
 Reading Due: Cronon, Changes in the Land, ch. 8;
 Donahue, "The Great Meadow," (Blackboard).
- Thursday (Feb. 12): **Work and the Rhythms of Pre-Industrial Life**
 Reading Due: Breen, Tobacco Culture, (Blackboard);
 White, The Organic Machine, (Blackboard).

II. Nature's Nation: The Environment & the Evolution of American Society**Week 5**

- Monday (Feb. 16): ***First Paper Due (4:00pm)***
- Tuesday (Feb. 17): **Commercial Life in the New Republic**
 Steinberg, Down to Earth, ch. 3-5;
 Merchant, "Farms and Cities," (Blackboard).
- Thursday (Feb. 19): **Little Market on the Prairie: Chicago & its Hinterlands**
 Reading Due: Cronon, Nature's Metropolis, (Blackboard).

Week 6

- Tuesday (Feb. 24): **Nineteenth-Century Conceptions of Nature**
 Reading Due: Cole, "American Scenery," (Blackboard);
 Miller, "Nature and the National Ego," (Blackboard);
 Merchant, "Nature and the Market," (Blackboard).
- Thursday (Feb. 26): **Nature, Work, and Culture**
 Reading Due: Johnson, "Sam Patch" (Blackboard).

Week 7Tuesday (Mar. 3): **How the West was Won**

Reading Due: Steinberg, Down to Earth, ch. 8;
 Worster, Rivers of Empire, pp. 3-60;
 Worster, "Cowboy Ecology," (Blackboard).

Thursday (Mar. 5): **Democracy and the Desert: Irrigation in the Arid West**

Reading Due: Worster, Rivers of Empire, pp. 63-125.

Week 8Tuesday (Mar. 10): **The Conservation and Preservation Movements**

Reading Due: Steinberg, Down to Earth, ch. 9;
 Merchant, "Resource Conservation & Wilderness
 Preservation," (Blackboard).

Thursday (Mar. 12): **Scientific Management and Reclamation**

Reading Due: Worster, Rivers of Empire, ch. 4.

Friday (Mar. 13): ***Second Paper Due (4:00pm)******Spring Break (March 16-March 27)*****III. *Nature's Crucible: Environmental Challenges & Modern Society*****Week 9**Tuesday (Mar. 31): **Reassessing the Origins of Environmental Reform**

Reading Due: Steinberg, Down to Earth, ch. 10;
 Rome, "Gender and Environmental Reform," (Blackboard).

Thursday (Apr. 2): **Science to the Rescue?: Ecology & Pesticides**

Reading Due: Merchant, "The Emergence of Ecology," (Blackboard);
 Russell, "Speaking of Annihilation," (Blackboard).

Week 10Tuesday (Apr. 7): **The Rise of Agribusiness**

Steinberg, Down to Earth, ch. 11 & 12;
 Worster, Rivers of Empire, ch. 5.

Wednesday (Apr. 8): ***Screening of New Deal Documentaries
(7:00pm-9:00pm)***

Thursday (Apr. 9): **The New Deal & Environmental Planning**
 Reading Due: White, Organic Machine, (Blackboard).

Week 11

Tuesday (Apr. 14): **King Corn: The Story of postwar Agriculture**
 Reading Due: Pollan, Omnivore's Dilemma, (Blackboard).

Thursday (Apr. 16): **The Hydraulic Empire of the West**
 Reading Due: Worster, Rivers of Empire, pp. 259-335.

Friday (Apr 17): ***Third Paper Due (4:00pm)***

Week 12

Tuesday (Apr. 21): **The Rise of Suburbia**
 Reading Due: Steinberg, Down to Earth, ch. 13;
 Rome, Bulldozer in the Countryside, pp. 1-86.

Thursday (Apr. 23): **The Problem of Waste Disposal**
 Reading Due: Rome, Bulldozer in the Countryside, pp. 87-118;
 Steinberg, Down to Earth, ch. 14.

Week 13

Tuesday (Apr. 28): **Environmentalism, Regulation, & Land Use**
 Reading Due: Rome, Bulldozer in the Countryside, pp. 153-219;
 Steinberg, Down to Earth, ch. 15.

Thursday (Apr. 30): **Protecting Nature**
 Reading Due: Rome, Bulldozer in the Countryside, pp. 221-270

Week 14

Tuesday (May 5): **Nature & Artifice in Modern Society**
 Reading Due: Price, Flight Maps, (Blackboard).

Thursday (May 7): **Environmentalism in a Global Age**
 Reading Due: Steinberg, Down to Earth, ch. 16;
 Merchant, "US in the Wider World," (Blackboard);
 Cronon, "Using Environmental History," (Blackboard)

Friday (May 8): ***Narrative Exercise Due (4:00pm)***

Exam Week (May 11-15)

Thursday (May 15): ***Take-home Final Due (4:00pm)***