

Fall 2015

# History 473

## American Environmental History

### to 1890

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*office hours:* Mondays and Wednesdays 3:45-5:30 p.m., or by appointment

*Lecture and discussion schedule:* Monday/Wednesday 2-3:20 p.m., 185 Lillis

#### *Introduction*

This course examines American environmental history from just before a sustained European presence to about 1890, which marks the beginning of the environmental regulatory era. Environmental history explores the past through an interdisciplinary approach that integrates insights from ecology, geography, anthropology, literature, art history, the history of science and technology, and landscape architecture. At its essence, environmental history considers how humans and their natural environments have interacted and reshaped each other through time. Those interactions undergird all of American history. To demonstrate that claim, we'll follow several paths of inquiry: How has the natural environment influenced human actions, decisions, and cultural and social development? How have people perceived or imagined the natural world? How have they reshaped and even reordered the natural environment? How have they struggled with each other over ways the environment should be treated and understood? What have been the intended and unintended consequences of their actions? What are the ethical implications of those actions? We'll also pay attention to the marks people leave on the physical landscape, and we'll consider how we might learn more about human history by using those marks as clues. To help us understand those clues, we will take a field trip at the end of the fourth week of the course.

***This course counts as a core humanities course for majors in Environmental Studies and Environmental Science*** due to its focus on environmental change through a historical perspective.

#### *Learning Outcomes:*

By the end of the term, you should be able to:

- Trace the history of changes to the American environment through the 19<sup>th</sup> century, over time
- Analyze and interpret “primary” sources of historical information
- Identify and critically assess an author’s argument or thesis
- Write an essay and develop your own argument, supported by evidence

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### **Course Requirements**

In addition to participating in class, this course involves extensive reading and writing, plus a half-day field trip and a final exam, as detailed below.

#### **Readings**

History is a literary field, and thus this course is reading-intensive. Historians, however, do not read books to commit data or formulas to memory, as scientists might. They look for arguments, persuasive evidence, and cogent analysis. A guide for critically reading history is posted on Canvas. *Reading assignments are listed at the end of each week but are due on the date of the writing assignment or on the date of the related lecture.* Anticipate reading 95 pages per week, though the actual number of pages may be more or less in a particular week. (Be sure to look ahead; you must read the books in their entirety by weeks 3, 5, and 8.)

<b>Books</b> (available at the Duck Store)
Jon T. Coleman, <i>Vicious: Wolves and Men in America</i> (2004)
Lissa Wadewitz, <i>The Nature of Borders: Salmon, Boundaries, and Bandits on the Salish Sea</i> (2012)
William Cronon, <i>Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West</i> (1992)
<b>Articles</b> (available on Canvas)
William Cronon, "Kennebott Journey: The Paths out of Town," in <i>Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past</i> (1992)
Nancy Shoemaker, "Mr. Tashtego: Native American Whalemen in Antebellum New England," <i>Journal of the Early Republic</i> 33 (2013): 109-32.
Grady Clay, "Strips" and "Sinks," from <i>Close-Up: How to Read the American City</i> (1973)
William Wyckoff, "Navigating Western Landscapes" and "Rivers and Riparian Corridors," from <i>How to Read the American West</i> (2014)
Travis Williams, excerpt from <i>The Willamette River Field Guide</i> (2009)
<b>Primary sources</b> (available on Canvas)
"The Raven" (Athapaskan) and "Turkey Makes the Corn and Coyote Plants It" (White Mountain Apache), in <i>American Indian Myths and Legends</i> , ed. by Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz (1985)
George Catlin, "Extinction of the Mandans," from <i>Letters and Notes on the Manners, Customs, and Conditions of the North American Indians</i> (1844)
Henry David Thoreau, excerpts from <i>Walden; or, Life in the Woods</i> (1854)

#### **Field Trip (25 pts.)**

On Friday, October 30, or Saturday, October 31, (your choice, via sign-up sheet) we will go on a half-day field trip to explore Eugene's Willamette River. We will learn to read the landscape and understand how Eugene's environment has changed over time. To prepare for this field trip, you will complete a set of readings beforehand. Participation in the field trip is mandatory and cannot be made up. Please make whatever arrangements necessary to ensure your participation. Please sign up for the date of your choice by October 21, on Canvas.

#### **Participation (25 pts.)**

Your participation grade will be based on your attendance and active participation in class discussions. I have four ground rules for discussion: (1) Come prepared for discussions by critically reading all the assigned materials, and always bring the books we read to class. (2) You

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must *participate* in our conversations with thoughtful discussion. (3) Don't try to lead the conversation astray in an effort to cover your lack of preparedness. (4) Show respect for your classmates' ideas, even—or especially—when they're different from your own.

**Attendance is required.** After the first two absences (including absences for illnesses, doctor's appointment, religious holidays, etc.), each absence will result in a loss of 5 points. **More than four absences may result in an F in the course.** Exceptions will be made only in the event of a documented university-sponsored activity or a protracted illness, at my discretion. **Please note:** if you have the flu or another contagious illness, we would all appreciate it if you would stay home. Email me and count those days among your two "excused" absences. I do not want documentation of your absences, except in the following instances: (1) you need to submit a late assignment or take a make-up exam; (2) you participated in a university-sponsored activity; (3) you've had a prolonged absence due to a contagious or protracted illness or another calamity that you can document. Leaving early or arriving after the lecture has begun may count as an absence. I keep attendance by beginning class with a question from the readings or lectures, which you answer on an index cards. These questions will help you prepare for the objective section of the final exam. **Please come prepared by purchasing a pack of 3 x 5 index cards.**

### ***Journals (25 pts. each, for a total of 50 pts.)***

For the readings on "Kennebunk Journey: The Paths Out of Town" (Week 1) and excerpts from *Walden* (Week 6), you will write a reflection journal entry of approximately 350 words on Canvas. Your entry must be posted before the class discussion on the given reading, as the assignment portal will "close" at 10 a.m. (Students who enroll after Week 1 may post that week's journal entry at a later date, by special arrangement with me.) For each set of readings, select one interesting aspect and record your reflections, thoughts, and insights. The journals do not need to be formal essays, though they should be structured by your own argument; beyond that, they need to show thoughtful reflection on relevant themes. They should be neither rants nor reviews. Do not gush. In assessing journals, I look for the following:

- Reading comprehension
- Use of historical evidence to support points
- Thoughtful reflection
- Evidence of critical and/or creative thinking
- Evidence of synthesis, analysis, and evaluation

To access the journal tool in Canvas, click on the assignment within that week's module. This will take you to a new screen. Click on the "Submit Assignment" button. A text box will open. Type your journal entry (or you can copy and paste from a Word file, or the like, where you've composed your journal entry). Then click the "Submit Assignment" button.

### ***Short Analytical Papers (50 pts. each, for a total of 150 pts.)***

For each of the three books, you will write an analytical paper of 750-1000 words and upload those papers through the Vericite folder in Canvas (see below). For your paper, analyze a theme or issue in the book that you think is important, interesting, provocative, or surprising. I will also provide a guide with a set of questions for you to think about as you read the book. The point is to think deeply about one of the issues that the author raises, or perhaps the book's argument or

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“big idea,” and analyze it. **Tip:** I am not looking for a “book report,” a synopsis of the book, or a discussion of whether or not you liked the book. I want analysis. Please consult Canvas for “Tips for Writing Essays,” which also contains a grading rubric.

### **Term paper (100 pts.)**

For the term paper, you will select a published primary source (such as nature writing, a journal, or a report) written by an American naturalist, botanist, or explorer in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. I will provide a list for you to choose from. You will read and analyze this source, using questions that I provide as guidance. You will then write a paper of 1,800-2,500 words (7-9 pages), plus bibliography, that makes an argument about the person’s ideas about nature, places those ideas within a broader historical context, offers a brief biographical sketch, and engages at least three passages of the document in a close textual analysis. You may find background information and guidance in my lectures and in the following books, all on reserve in Knight Library: Richard Judd, *The Untilled Garden*; Donald Worster, *Nature’s Economy*; Daniel Peterson, ed., *Early American Nature Writers*; Kathleen A. Brosnan, ed., *The Encyclopedia of American Environmental History*; and Douglas Cazaux Sackman, *A Companion to American Environmental History*. I will provide more detail about how to do this assignment in class and on Canvas. You must select your source by 5 p.m. on **Monday, Oct. 19**. Your paper is **due by 5 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 4, uploaded through Vericite on Canvas (see below)**. **Note:** Late final projects will be graded down 5 points for each day they are late, including weekends. I will accept no papers after the final exam.

A rubric for the term project is posted on Canvas. In brief, your essay will be judged on the basis of your choice of source material, the quality of your argument and evidence, the context you develop for the subject, your explication of at least three passages from your primary source, and the quality of the writing.

#### **FORMATTING PAPERS AND CITATIONS**

All papers should be double-spaced with one-inch margins and a Times New Roman 12-point font. Indent the beginning of each paragraph by 5 spaces. Do not add a space between paragraphs. (Microsoft’s default format is 1.5 spaces with an extra space between paragraphs, so you need to reset those defaults.) All papers should be uploaded through Vericite (see below).

If you’re identifying a quotation within an assigned reading that is the sole focus of the assignment (as with the short papers), simply cite the page number in parentheses at the end of the sentence. In all other instances (such as the term paper), please use the Chicago Manual of Style citation method (see Canvas).

#### **Uploading Papers through Vericite**

To upload a paper through Vericite, you must use either Google Chrome or Mozilla Foxfire as your browser. **You cannot use Safari.** To upload the paper, first go to that week’s module. Click on the assignment, then click on “Load essay on (assignment name).” A new tab will open. Click on the Submit Paper button. The instructions for uploading your file then appear. Once you’ve uploaded the file, be sure to click the “Submit Paper” button in the lower right hand corner. This tool will accept papers in almost any format.

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### **Final Exam (100 pts.)**

The final exam will have two sections: a matching-identification section and an essay section. In the matching section, you will match a name, place, or term to the best statement identifying it. In the essay section, you will write extended answers to two questions. You will have a choice of questions to answer, and you must write a coherent essay on each, drawing on the lectures and readings for the class. Each essay will be graded on the basis of the argument you make, the evidence you use to support your argument, your demonstrated understanding of the information and historical interpretations provided both in class and in the readings, and the overall coherence of the essay. We will discuss the exam format in more detail during an in-class review session. To help you focus your studying, I will give you a long list of possible questions and a list of names/places/terms from which the actual exam questions will be chosen.

### **Grading**

Below are the course requirements and their value in determining your final grade. Failure to undertake any component of the course may result in failure of the entire course. Note that **class attendance is required**, and 5 points will be deducted for each absence beyond the first two.

Short Analytical Papers on the Books	150 pts.
Term Project	100 pts.
Final Exam	100 pts.
Journals	50 pts.
Class Participation	25 pts.
Field Trip	25 pts.
TOTAL POSSIBLE POINTS	450 pts.

### **Grading Scale:**

441-450 = A+	423-440 = A	405-422 = A-
396-404 = B+	378-395 = B	360-377 = B-
351-359 = C+	333-350 = C	315-332 = C-
270-314 = D	<270 = F	

**My grading standards follow those adopted by the history department.** For more specific guidelines on how I grade essays and the term project, please consult the rubrics posted on Canvas.

A+: Work of unusual distinction. This grade is rarely awarded.

A: Work that distinguishes itself by the excellence of its grasp of the material and the precision and insight of its argument, in addition to being well executed and reasonably free of errors.

B: Work that satisfies the main criteria of the assignment and demonstrates command of the material, but does not achieve the level of excellence that characterizes work of A quality.

C: Work that demonstrates a rudimentary grasp of the material and satisfies at least some of the assigned criteria reasonably well.

D: Work that demonstrates a poor grasp of the material.

F: Work that is weak in every aspect, demonstrating a basic misunderstanding of the material and/or disregard for the assignment, or it is plagiarized.

For the department's official standards, see: <http://history.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/index.php>.

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**Extra credit** may be earned only if you have no more than two absences. You may earn 5 points of extra credit by writing a 350 word response/reflection paper for either or both of the two optional readings or by writing a 350 word review of one of the selected speakers whose talk is announced in class, or any combination of these. No more than a total of 10 points of extra credit may be earned.

### **Classroom Policies**

Please turn off all electronic devices (including computers, except for a documented disability) while in class. Ringing cell phones are my pet peeve. Please do not text-message in class. Please do not leave the room to take a call or respond to a message. All of these actions disturb your classmates and me. Repeated failure to turn off your electronic devices may result in dismissal from the classroom. I respectfully request that you arrive on time and stay until the end of class.

I do not accept graded course work after the class period for which the assignment is due, and a missed deadline will result in a 0 on the assignment. It is your responsibility to read the syllabus and know the due dates. I will always accept an assignment early, if you anticipate an absence. I do not accept emailed assignments; please plan ahead so that you successfully submit your work before class. “Make up” exams and late essays will be accepted only for a documented absence due to illness; a documented severe illness or death in your family; an unanticipated calamity; or a documented school-sponsored activity in which you are officially representing UO. If you anticipate an absence, you may submit your assignment in Canvas before it is due; if you need to submit “make up” work, please arrange with me to submit your work as soon as possible.

**I take plagiarism very seriously.** All work that you turn in must be your own. Any work submitted for credit that includes the words or ideas of anyone else must fully and accurately identify your source with a citation. Note that replacing words with synonyms, changing verb tense, stringing together phrases from a source, or other minor alterations do not qualify as paraphrasing. Even with a citation, failure to put quotation marks around direct quotations constitutes plagiarism, because it implies that the writing is your own. (By the way, submitting the same paper to more than one class for credit is also academic misconduct.) In the event of an act of plagiarism, I will impose sanctions, as provided in the Student Code of Conduct. **The minimum sanction will be an F on the assignment, but plagiarism can also merit an F in the course, even for a first offense.** See

<http://studentlife.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/StudentConductCode/tabit/69/Default.aspx#Academic Misconduct>. If you are confused about this or do not understand the consequences of academic dishonesty at the UO—or the ethical issues behind these university policies—please read these guidelines:

<http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>

**Accommodations:** If you have a **documented disability** and anticipate needing accommodations in this course, please see me right away. I also encourage you to contact the Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu for assistance with accommodations. If you need accommodation for

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**religious holidays** not recognized by the University of Oregon, please inform me at the beginning of the term.

I encourage you to come see me if any issues arise that create learning obstacles for you. Open inquiry, freedom of expression, and respect for difference are fundamental to a comprehensive and dynamic education, and I am committed to upholding these ideals.

***Canvas***

Please refer frequently to the course site on Canvas for announcements, reminders, and the following materials:

- Readings (other than the three required books)
- Book guides
- Note sheets (posted after lectures)
- Slides and videos (posted after lectures)
- Portals for submitting assignments
- Term paper guidelines (including project sign-up sheet, how to analyze primary sources, Chicago Manual of Style citation guide, and a link to the citation machine”)
- Field trip instructions
- Tips for critically reading history
- Tips for writing essays
- Tips for taking an essay exam
- Tips for avoiding plagiarism
- Example of an “A” essay
- Rubrics for grading essays and the final exam

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***SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND READINGS***

*Adjustments to the lecture schedule may occur at my discretion and will be announced in class.*

**Week 1: Beginnings**

**M** • (Sept. 28): In the Beginning

**W** • (Sept. 30): World of Native America

***Journals due on Canvas by 1 p.m.***

READING ASSIGNMENT (27 pp.):

William Cronon, “Kennecott Journey: The Paths Out of Town” (C)

“The Raven” (Athapaskan) and “Turkey Makes the Corn and Coyote Plants It” (White Mountain Apache) (C)

**Week 2: Ecological Imperialism**

**M** • (Oct. 5): Co-Invasions and the Columbian Exchange

**W** • (Oct. 7): Commodities of the Deep

READING ASSIGNMENT (25 pp.):

George Catlin, “Extinction of the Mandans” (C)

Nancy Shoemaker, “Mr. Tashtego: Native American Whalemen in Antebellum New England” (C)

Nancy Shoemaker, “Whale Meat in American History” (optional) (C)

**Week 3: Marking the Land**

**M** • (Oct. 12): Jefferson’s America

**W** • (Oct. 14): Discussion of *Vicious*/Term paper

***►Essay on Vicious due at 1 p.m.***

READING ASSIGNMENT:

Coleman, *Vicious* (entire—236 pp.)

**Week 4: Commodifying Land and People**

**M** • (Oct. 19): Owning Nature

***Selection of final project sources due on sign-up sheet by 5 p.m.***

**W** • (Oct. 21): Landscapes of Domination and Resistance

READING ASSIGNMENT ***in preparation for field trip next week (60+ pp.).***

University of Wisconsin, How to Read a Landscape (Skim the headlines and read whatever intrigues you): <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/landscapes.htm>

William Wyckoff, “Navigating Western Landscapes” and “Rivers and Riparian Corridors,” from *How to Read the American West* (C)

Travis Williams, excerpt from *The Willamette River Field Guide* (B)

Grady Clay, “Strips” and “Sinks” (C)

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### **Week 5: Destruction**

**M • (Oct. 26): Industrial Revolution**

**W • (Oct. 28): Animal Extinctions/discussion of *The Nature of Borders***

**►Essay on *The Nature of Borders* due by 1 p.m.**

**F • (Oct. 30): Field Trip to Willamette River (Group 1)**

**S • (Oct. 31): Field Trip to Willamette River (Group 2)**

**►Please note that participation in the field trip is mandatory**

#### **READING ASSIGNMENT:**

Wadewitz, *The Nature of Borders* (entire—174 pp.)

Dan Flores, “Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy: The Southern Plains from 1800 to 1850” (optional)

### **Week 6: Reaction**

**M • (Nov. 2): Nature Writers**

**W • (Nov. 4): Transcendentalists**

**Journals due on Canvas by 1 p.m.**

#### **READING ASSIGNMENT:**

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (excerpts) (51 pp.)

### **Week 7: Imagining Nature**

**M • (Nov. 9): Sublime and Picturesque**

**W • (Nov. 11): Landscaping Nature**

### **Week 8: Battling Nature**

**M • (Nov. 16): Landscapes of the Civil War**

**W • (Nov. 18): Agricultural Revolution/discussion of *Nature's Metropolis***

**►Essay on *Nature's Metropolis* due by 1 p.m.**

#### **READING ASSIGNMENT:**

Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis* (pp. xv-xix, 5-259, 341-385) (305 pp.)

### **Week 9: Bodies and Nature**

**M • (Nov. 23): Unhealthy Landscapes**

**W • (Nov. 25): DAY OFF—THANKSGIVING WEEKEND—WORK ON FINAL PAPERS**

### **Week 10: Endings**

**M • (Nov. 30): Sacred Spaces/Final exam study guides**

**W • (Dec. 2): Reflections/Review for Final**

**►Term paper due by 5 p.m., on Friday Dec. 4**

**FINALS WEEK ►T ♦ (Dec. 8, 2:45 p.m.): Final Exam**

<b>Due Dates</b>	
Journal entry for “Kennebunk Journey”	Sept. 30
Essay on <i>Vicious</i> due	Oct. 14
Select final project	Oct. 19
Sign up for field trip	Oct. 21
Essay on <i>The Nature of Borders</i>	Oct. 28
Field trip (mandatory)	Oct. 30 or 31
Journal entry on <i>Walden</i> excerpts	Nov. 4
Essay on <i>Nature's Metropolis</i>	Nov. 18
Term paper	Dec. 4