

Spring 2011

HISTORY 608
Environmental History

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Office hours: Wednesdays, 2:30-5 p.m., or by appt.

Class Schedule:

Meetings: Tuesday 2:00-4:50 p.m., 375 McKenzie Hall

Introduction

Environmental history considers how humans and natural environments have interacted and reshaped each other in the past. As we explore the environmental history of the world, 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 science and technology shaped the environment? How have people struggled with each other over ways the environment should be treated and understood? What have been the intended and unintended consequences of their actions?

Students should leave the course with:

- An understanding of some of the major themes and questions of environmental history
- An understanding of the special methodologies employed in environmental history
- An understanding of the similarities and differences between the environmental histories of various parts of the world,
- An ability to critically analyze, discuss, and write about a text;
- An appreciation for the way historians of different eras and places grapple with the same theoretical and thematic questions

Readings

Edmund Burke and Kenneth Pomeranz, *The Environment and World History*

Mark Carey, *In the Shadow of Melting Glaciers: Climate Change and Andean Society*

Mark Cioc, *The Rhine: An Eco-Biography*

Jon Coleman, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America*

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*

David Louter, *Windshield Wilderness: Cars, Roads, and Nature in Washington's National Parks*

Nancy Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West*

Linda Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge*

Myrna Santiago, *The Ecology of Oil: Environment, Labor, and the Mexican Revolution, 1900-1938*

In addition, journal articles and primary sources will be posted on Blackboard or available through J-Stor.

Grading

Below are the course requirements and their relative weights in determining your final grade. *All requirements must be completed to earn a final grade in the course.*

Discussion Participation	30%
Book Précis/Reviews	35%
Final Paper	35%

REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:

All requirements must be completed in order to earn a final grade in this course.

- Book Précis. You will write a précis (1-2 page, single-spaced summary of the main issues and arguments) for 6 of the 9 books. Each précis should articulate the book's argument, summarize the author's main approaches, and offer a brief critique.
- Book Review. For 2 of the books, of your choice, you will write a formal book review, approximately 1000 words in length.
- Historiographical essay. You will select three books and two or three journal articles or chapters from an edited collection on a single environmental history topic of your choice, in consultation with me; if applicable, you may include a fourth book from the class reading list. You will then write a 15-20 page historiographical essay. Please schedule a meeting with me by the end of the fourth week to discuss topics and your reading list.
- Participation and discussion. This is a discussion-based course, and its success depends on your involvement and that of your fellow classmates. Each week, we will expect you to have critically read all assignments for the day and to discuss and raise questions about them. Always bring each week's readings to class. Each week, two of you will be asked to help lead the discussion by developing a two or three questions to help launch the conversation.
Students who arrive late for class, who repeatedly leave early, or who miss more than two class meetings may be dropped from the course at the instructor's discretion, without consultation.

Discussion Participation (30%)

Your participation is the key to the success of the class. Think of our discussions as lively conversations about issues of mutual interest to all of us. Our purpose is to explore, analyze, and reflect on the arguments made in the readings, the evidence they use to support those arguments, and the wisdom the authors impart (or the lack thereof). Our other purpose is to explore your own ideas about the issues raised in the readings. Come prepared to express your ideas and have them challenged by others.

I have four ground rules for discussion: (1) Come prepared for each class by critically reading all the assigned materials. Always bring each week's readings to class. (2) You must *participate* in our weekly conversations with thoughtful discussion. I value quality over quantity. (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.

For each set of readings, two of you will be asked to help lead the discussion by meeting in advance and developing two or three questions to help launch the conversation. These should be broad questions that will help us explore the readings' main themes, arguments, and methods.

Book Précis and Book Reviews (35%)

For 6 of the 9 assigned books, write a brief précis (1-2 pages, single-spaced). This should have two sections: (1) A statement of the author's thesis and a concise description of how the author develops the argument, the kind of evidence he or she uses, and any special methodologies the author uses. (2) A critical evaluation of the argument. A basic rule of thumb is to judge the book on its own terms. Pay attention to the author's purpose and critically evaluate whether it meets the goal the author set. What are the book's strengths and weaknesses? Did the author offer logical reasoning and sufficient evidence to support the thesis? Is the author's argument persuasive?

For 2 of the 9 books, of your choice, write a 1000-word book review (double-spaced). Guidance for the book reviews will be posted on Blackboard.

Additionally, each week the discussion leaders will be assigned the task of looking up two book reviews in an academic journal (such as *American Historical Review*, *Reviews in American History*, *Environmental History*, or *Environment and History*). During the discussion, you will be asked to report briefly on the gist of the review you read, focusing on the reviewer's comments on the value and significance of the work and on its major flaws, if any.

Final Paper (35%)

The final paper (15-20 pages) will be a historiographical essay on the topic of your choosing, in consultation with me. Please schedule a meeting with me by the end of the fourth week to discuss possible topics. For guidelines on writing a historiographical essay, please consult the information posted on Blackboard.

Class Policies

- *Honor.* Absolutely no academic dishonesty will be tolerated in this course. If you feel you do not fully understand the issue of plagiarism, please consult with me. **Any student discovered plagiarizing will receive an F for the course, end of story.** If you submit work you have done for other courses for credit, that work will receive an F for the assignment.
- *Attendance.* Attendance is required. Students who arrive late for class, who repeatedly leave early, or who miss more than two class meetings may be dropped from the course at my discretion, without consultation. Please come see me if there is a reason for prolonged or repeated absences that I should know about.
- *Make-up.* No make-up opportunities will be available, except in extreme circumstances such as a death in the immediate family or a major medical emergency. No extensions will be granted for papers, and no make-up opportunities for discussions will be offered. No extra credit opportunities will be offered. One exception: students who are passing the course and who are absent on documented university business (including attending professional conferences) have an automatic right to excused absences and to make up work.
- *Withdrawal.* No incompletes will be given. It is the student's responsibility to withdraw him- or herself from the course.

WEEKLY DISCUSSION TOPICS AND ASSIGNMENTS
(readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be posted on Blackboard)

- March 29 Introduction
 Reading assignment:
 White, "American Environmental History: The Development of a New Historical Field" *Pacific Historical Review* 54 (1985): 297-335. J-Stor:
<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.uoregon.edu/openurl?volume=54&date=1985&spage=297&issn=00308684&issue=3>
 *Worster, "Doing Environmental History," from Worster, ed., *The Ends of the Earth*
 *Cronon, "Kennecott Journey: The Paths Out of Town," from *Under an Open Sky*
 *Scott, excerpts from *Seeing Like a State*
- April 5 *Reading assignment:*
 Cronon, *Changes in the Land*
 Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," *Journal of American History* 78 (1992): 1347-76. J-Stor:
<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.uoregon.edu/openurl?volume=78&date=1992&spage=1347&issn=00218723&issue=4>
- April 12 *Reading assignment:*
 Burke and Pomeranz, *The Environment and World History*
 Richards, *The Unending Frontier* (on reserve) Read the Introduction, the Conclusion, and chapters 5 and 15.
- April 19 *Reading assignment:*
 Coleman, *Vicious*
 Walker, "Meiji Modernization, Scientific Agriculture, and the Destruction of Japan's Hokkaido Wolf," *Environmental History* 9 (2004): 248-74. J-Stor:
<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.uoregon.edu/openurl?volume=9&date=2004&spage=248&issn=10845453&issue=2>
- April 26 *Reading assignment:*
 Cioc, *The Rhine*
 Worster, "Hydraulic Society in California: An Ecological Interpretation," *Agricultural History* 56 (1982): 503-515. J-Stor:
<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.uoregon.edu/stable/3742550?seq=9>
- May 3 *Reading assignment:*
 Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares*
 Appuhn, "Inventing Nature: Forests, Forestry and State Power in Renaissance Venice," *The Journal of Modern History* 72 (2000): 861-89. J-Stor:
<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.uoregon.edu/stable/10.1086/318548>

- May 10 *Reading assignment:*
Santiago, *The Ecology of Oil*
Sabin, “‘A Dive into Nature’s Great *Grab-bag*’: Nature, Gender, and Capitalism in the Early Pennsylvania Oil Industry,” *Pennsylvania History* 66 (1999): 472-505. J-Stor:
<http://www.jstor.org.libproxy.uoregon.edu/openurl?volume=66&date=1999&spage=472&issn=00314528&issue=4>
- May 17 *Reading assignment:*
Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies*
*Langston, “Gender Transformed: Endocrine Disruptors in the Environment,”
from Scharff, ed., *Seeing Nature Through Gender*
- May 24 *Reading assignment:*
Louter, *Windshield Wilderness*
*Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness, or Getting Back to the Wrong Nature”
Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature
- May 31 *Reading assignment:*
Carey, *In the Shadow of Melting Glaciers*

Historiographical papers due by June 7, at 5 p.m.