

HISTORY OF THE ENVIRONMENT – SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, CULTURE

HISTORY 392-21

Tuesdays & Thursdays, 4:00PM - 5:20PM, University Hall 312

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OFFICE HOURS: THURSDAYS, 1:30-3:30 AND BY
APPOINTMENT
LOCATION: HARRIS HALL 231



COURSE DESCRIPTION

From the industrial revolution to the establishment of major urban spaces to the recent oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the natural environment has undergone profound changes ever the past 250 years. This course introduces students to major approaches in the history of the environment. Broadly speaking, environmental history examines interactions between humans and their environments; culture and nature; technology and the land. We will examine these dichotomies from a historical perspective to see how notions of nature, progress, science, and conservation have shaped our understanding of the land and ourselves. Since this is a vast field, we will take a topical

approach and focus on especially relevant themes, such as wilderness, parks, frontiers, catastrophes, cities, and food.

The course is roughly divided into two parts. The first (weeks 1-3) introduces students to the topic of environmental history and offers a brief survey of attitudes towards nature from some influential thinkers of the late eighteenth through nineteenth centuries, including Alexander von Humboldt and Charles Darwin. The second part (weeks 4-9) offers a thematic approach to some major issues in the history of the environment spanning from roughly the seventh century to the present. Special emphasis in this part of the course will be given to the kinds of sources different authors use and the types of stories about nature to which these lend themselves. Students should note that this is neither a course in environmental science nor in current environmental policy. Rather, it is a history class. This means exercising historical empathy and judging our historical actors by the terms of their particular time and place. In doing so, we are especially interested in seeing how attitudes about the environment and its inhabitants are historically contingent.

REQUIREMENTS

-Participation: 20%

Active and meaningful **participation** in seminar will be considered a significant part of your performance in this course. You are expected to be on time and to have prepared for discussion. Remember to bring hard copies (books or readings) with you to facilitate discussion.

-Presentations: 10%

Students will sign up for one session, for which they will give a **brief presentation** on the assigned readings. These should **not summarize** the readings but instead introduce the major themes or aspects that you found especially interesting, difficult, or problematic. There are no right or wrong answers to this exercise and you will not be penalized for pointing to aspects of the readings you found difficult or unclear. We will try to address these as class. In addition, the presenter will raise a few (3-5) questions to jump-start the discussion. Remember, you will get a much more interesting discussion if your questions do not readily lend themselves to yes/no answers. The questions can be about content or about the method of a given author. Presentation should be no longer than 5-10 minutes and the presenters will turn in a one-page summary of your presentation (i.e. the major themes and questions) at the end of class.

-Written Work: 70%

-Four Response Papers, 1-2 pages on any aspect of a given week's readings. You choose the weeks and turn in the papers at the **beginning of class in hard copy or by email**. 20%

-Mid-term Paper, 7-10 pages, topics will be handed out at least one week before due date. Papers due **Friday, January 28, 5pm via email**. 20%

-Final Paper, 10-15 pages, topics will be handed out at least 10 days before the due date.
Papers due **Thursday, March 17, 9pm via email**. 30%

READINGS

You are required to have completed the week's readings prior to the indicated class meetings (jot down questions and relevant pages in your notes in preparation for class). Please also remember to bring hard copies of the readings with you to class to facilitate discussion.

The following texts are available for purchase at Northwestern University Bookstore and are on Two-Hour Library Reserve:

-William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992).

-John Soluri. *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006).

All other readings are available online or on Blackboard as indicated. Readings on Blackboard are filed by week under Course Documents.

WRITING RESOURCES

History Writing Center

Location: Cafe in Main Library

Hours: Tuesdays, Library Cafe, 5-8 pm; Wednesdays, Harris 221, 2-4:45 pm, or by appointment

Contact: historywriting@northwestern.edu

A NOTE ON PLAGIARISM

Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and will not be tolerated in this class. Anyone suspected of such infractions will be referred to the Dean's Office at which point formal disciplinary proceedings will be initiated.

Full Chicago-style footnotes are expected on all writing assignments (except the presentation summary notes). For a useful summary of Chicago citation practices, refer to Purdue University's Online Writing Lab Website:

Purdue <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/717/01/>

Before your mid-term paper is due, we will have an in-class discussion about writing and citation practices. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to ask.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

Any student with a documented disability requesting accommodations is required to speak directly to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (Evanston campus: 847-467-5530; Chicago campus: 312-503-4042) preferably within the first two weeks of class. All discussion will remain confidential.

SYLLABUS

PART I - CONCEPTIONS OF NATURE

Week 1: Course Introduction/Environmental History

- 1/4: Introduction
Syllabus and Course Mechanics
- 1/6 Introduction to Environmental History
Donald Worster, "Ecological History;" William Cronon, "Ecological Prophesies;" Alfred W. Crosby, "Ecological Imperialism," in *Major Problems in American Environmental History*, edited by Carolyn Merchant (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1993), pp. 2-22. [21]

Week 2: Nature and Empire

- 1/11
Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism 1600-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1-15, 309-348. [55]
 - 1/13 [Elise]
Alexander von Humboldt, *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent During the Years 1799-1804* (New York: AMS Press, Inc, 1966 [1819]), translated by Helen Maria Williams, volume 4, pp. 129-166. [38]
- Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism*, 349-379. [31]

Week 3: Darwin's Entangled Bank

- 1/18
Robert Clinton Stauffer, "Ecology in the Long Manuscript Version of Darwin's Origin of Species and Linnaeus' Oeconomy of Nature," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 104:2 (April 1960), pp. 235-241. Blackboard. [7]
- Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life* (1859). Edited by John W. Burrow. (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), "Struggle for Existence," pp. 114-129. Blackboard and Online. [16]
<http://site.ebrary.com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/lib/northwestern/docDetail.action?docID=10015405>

- 1/20

Robert M. Young, "Malthus and the Evolutionists; the Common Context of Biological and Social Theory," in *Darwin's Metaphor: Nature's Place in Victorian Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1985), 23-55. Blackboard. [33]

Daniel P. Todes, "Darwin's Malthusian Metaphor and Russian Evolutionary Thought, 1859-1917," *Isis* 78 (1987): 537-553. Blackboard. [17]

PART II – TOPICS IN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

Week 4: Changes in the Land: Animals and People

MID-TERM PAPERS DUE TO T-MUNZ@NORTHWESTERN.EDU: FRIDAY, JANUARY 28, 2011, 5 PM

- 1/25

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), pp. 19-53, 69-81, 82-107, 159-170. [76]

- 1/27

"James Fenimore Cooper Laments the 'Wasty Ways' of Pioneers, 1823," (from *The Pioneers, The Works of James Fenimore Cooper*. 25 vols. London: George Routledge and Sons, 1895, vol. 4, Ch. 22, pp. 247-257) in Merchant (ed.), *Major Problems*, pp. 175-177. [3]

"John James Audubon on Shooting Birds," (from *Delineations of American Scenery and Character*. New York: G. A. Baker and Co., 1926, pp. 181-187), in Merchant (ed.), *Major Problems*, pp. 172-175. [3]

Andrew Isenberg, "The Wild and the Tamed: Indians, Euroamericans, and the Destruction of the Bison," in *Animals in Human Histories*, edited by Mary Henninger-Voss (Rochester, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2002), pp. 115-143. [29]

Jim Robbins, "Historians Revisit Slaughter on the Plains," *The New York Times*, November 16, 1999. [4]
<http://www.nytimes.com/1999/11/16/science/historians-revisit-slaughter-on-the-plains.html?emc=eta1>

Week 5: The West and the City

- 2/1

William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992), Prologue: 5-9, Dreaming the Metropolis: 23-46, Rails and Water: 55-93. Required Text and on Reserve. [68]

- 2/3

Upton Sinclair, "Upton Sinclair on the Chicago Stockyards, 1905," (from *The Jungle* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1905, pp. 24-26, 33-35), in Merchant (ed.), *Major Problems*, pp. 299-301. Blackboard. [3]

Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, Annihilating Space: Meat, 207-213 and 218-259; Gateway City: 263-295. Required Text and on Reserve. [82]

Week 6: Getting Away: Parks and Recreation

- 2/8

John Muir, *Our National Parks* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1901), 1-15, 30-36. [23]

"Frederick Law Olmsted on the Value of Parks," (from "The Yosemite Valley and the Mariposa Big Trees," in *Landscape Architecture*, 43 (1952): pp. 14, 17, 22-23) in Merchant (ed.), *Major Problems*, pp. 384-385. Blackboard. [2]

Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Univ. of Cambridge Press, 1994), The Value of Varmint: pp. 258-290. [33]

- 2/10

Theodore Roosevelt, "Conservation," in *T. Roosevelt, The New Nationalism*, edited by W. E. Leuchtenburg (Prentice Hall, 1961), pp. 49-76. [27]

William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1: (1996), pp. 7-28. Blackboard. [22]

Week 7: Managing the Forests

- 2/15

Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, The Wealth of Nature: Lumber, pp. 148-206. Required Text and on Reserve. [59]

- 2/17

Albert Ebner, *German Forests: Treasures of a Nation* (New York: German Library Information, 1940), pp. 117-124.

Franz Heske, *German Forestry* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), pp. 1-43, 173-185.

Michael Imort, "Eternal forest – Eternal Volk" in *How Green were the Nazis? Franz-Josef Bruggemeier* (et.al. ed.), (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 42-72. [31]

Week 8: Food and Consumption

- 2/22

John Soluri. *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States*. University of Texas Press, 2006, pp. 41-116. Required Text and Online; Reserve pending. [76]
<http://site.ebrary.com.turing.library.northwestern.edu/lib/northwestern/docDetail.action?docID=10245673>

- 2/24

Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (Penguin, 2006), Industrial, pp. 15-47, 57-84. [61]

Week 9: Environment and Catastrophe

- 3/1

In-Class Viewing of "The Plow that Broke the Plains," Pare Lorentz, 1936, 25 min.

James C. Malin, *The Grasslands of North America* (Lawrence, Kansas: James C. Malin, 1948), pp. 120-138, 151-168. [37]

Paul B. Sears, *Deserts on the Move* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935), pp. 81-92, 119-131, 157-169, 197-231. [73]

- 3/3

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring, with an Introduction by Vice President Al Gore* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co. [1962] 1994, Selections.

Vera Norwood, "The Nature of Knowing: Rachel Carson and the American Environment," *Signs* 12 (1987): 740-760. [21]

Week 10: Reading Period

Extended Office Hours, TBA

FINAL PAPERS DUE TO: T-MUNZ@NORTHWESTERN.EDU ON THURSDAY, MARCH 17, 2011, 9 PM