HIST 6410 – Readings in American Environmental History
Spring 2016

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Office Hours: Wednesdays 2-3 pm and by appointment

Required Texts

Brian Donohue, The Great Meadow: Farmers and the Land in Colonial Concord
Jeffrey Bolster, The Mortal Sea: Fishing the Atlantic in the Age of Sail
Convery Bolton Valencius, The Lost History of the New Madrid Earthquakes
Andrew Isenberg, The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920
Christopher Jones, Routes of Power: Energy and Modern America
Michael Rawson, Eden on the Charles: The Making of Boston
Linda Nash, Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge
Susan Strasser, Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash
Robert Wilson, Seeking Refuge: Birds and Landscapes of the Pacific Flyway
Donald Worster, Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s
Geoff Cunfer, On the Great Plains: Agriculture and Environment
Bartow Elmore, Citizen Coke: The Making of Coca-Cola Capitalism
Nick Cullather, The Hungry World: America’s Cold War Battle against Poverty in Asia
Ellen Spears, Baptized in PCBs: Race, Pollution, and Justice in an All-American Town

Scope of the Course and Required Work

I have designed this course to be a broad introduction to the field of American environmental history. My major goal is to have each of you become broadly knowledgeable about American environmental historiography and to prepare each of you to teach an American environmental history course to undergraduates. The reading load is heavy, and you will be expected to read carefully all of the assigned readings for each week. The reading load for each week varies, so please plan ahead – particularly for the two class meetings when we will be reading two books (January 25 and April 4).

Aside from doing the reading, you will write weekly reaction essays of 2 pages in length maximum! The purpose of these essays is to promote discussion of the assigned readings, so you should focus on issues in the readings that you found provocative, problematic, or otherwise worth discussing. These essays should not simply regurgitate the authors’ arguments. Rather, you should personally engage the authors in a dialogue as a way of setting up discussion. These essays are due at the beginning of class and, accept under extraordinary circumstances, late essays will not be accepted.
Over the course of the semester, you will also complete **two book reviews** of approximately 5 pages in length. I will ask people to sign up for specific weeks and books. The books will generally be chosen from among the list of “Suggested Readings” that I provide for each week, though if you want to read something off the list that’s fine too (with my approval). On weeks when you have a book review due, you will write a five page review that discusses both the optional book in the context of the required readings for that week (you must read the required readings for that week as well). These reviews can and should be critical, but your first task is to summarize arguments and to place the works historiographically. These reviews are due to me, via email as a Word attachment, by **noon on Mondays**, and I will then send them electronically to everyone. In class, you will be asked to briefly present the additional book you have reviewed and to answer any questions we might have about your review. On days when you have a book review due, you do not have to complete a reaction essay.

I will also ask each of you to write **one lecture** based upon one of the assigned books for the course. In this case, the goal will be to distill the book into a lecture for an undergraduate audience, though you may also need to provide broader framing that is suitable to the larger topic. The lecture should be a fully developed script rather than an outline, and it should be accompanied by a PowerPoint/Keynote/Prezi presentation that outlines the lecture and provides illustrations. During the week in which you complete your lecture, you do not have to complete a reaction essay.

I will also ask each of you to serve as a **discussion co-leader** once during the semester (I will be the other co-leader). Prior to the class for which you will serve as co-leader you will need to meet with me to plan the discussion.

There will be two end-of-the-semester products for this course. For the first one, you will have a choice between:

1) Writing a 5000-word **historiographical essay** on a specific topic or question of your choosing within the larger frame of environmental history. Historiographical essays should discuss at least five additional books as well as additional articles as necessary/relevant (and any books/articles that you have read for the course that are relevant). If you choose this option, I will ask you for a statement of topic and short bibliography by **February 15**.

2) Producing a substantially **annotated syllabus** in Environmental History. If you choose the syllabus, you should produce a portfolio-ready syllabus that includes a brief introductory essay about the course and how you chose to organize it, a 14-week syllabus with lecture topics, readings, and annotations explaining what will be covered, etc.

These will be due on **Friday, April 29 by 5 pm**.

The second end-of-the-semester product will be a **take-home essay exam** of approximately 5000 words that will ask you to synthesize the readings from the semester. You will be sent a question via email on **Friday, April 29**, and the essay will be due back to me by **Wednesday, May 4 at 5 pm**.
Grading Breakdown

Weekly Reaction Essays 20%
Book Reviews 10%
Class Lecture 10%
Take Home Essay Exam 20%
Histoiographical Essay/Syllabus 20%
Attendance 10%
Participation 10%

Course Schedule

January 11 – Introduction

Read:


Suggested:

- Andrew Isenberg, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Environmental History*
- Doug Sackman, ed., *A Companion to American Environmental History*
- Mark Fiege, *The Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States*
- Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature’s Role in American History*
- David Christian, *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History*
- Daniel Lord Smail, *On Deep History and the Brain*
- Edmund Russell, *Evolutionary History: Uniting History and Biology to Understand Life on Earth*

January 18 – NO CLASS – MLK Day
January 25 – Early America
Read:
- Donahue, *The Great Meadow*
- Cronon, *Changes in the Land*

Suggested:
- Virginia Anderson, *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America*
- Jennifer Anderson, *Mahogany: The Costs of Luxury in Early America*
- Joyce Chaplin, *Subject Matter: Technology, the Body, and Science on the Anglo-American Frontier, 1500-1676*
- Jon T. Coleman, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America*
- Eric Sanderson, *Mannahatta: A Natural History of New York*
- Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas*
- Mart Stewart, ‘What Nature Suffers to Groe’: Life, Labor, and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680-1920

February 1 – Oceans/Maritime History
Read:
- Bolster, *The Mortal Sea*

Suggested:
- Joseph Taylor, *Making Salmon: An Environmental History of the Northwest Fisheries Crisis*
- David Igler, *The Great Ocean: Pacific Worlds from Captain Cook to the Gold Rush*
- Gregory Cushman, *Guano and the Opening of the Pacific World: A Global Ecological History*
- Christine Keiner, *The Oyster Question: Scientists, Watermen, and the Maryland Chesapeake Bay since 1880*
- Christopher Pastore, *Between Land and Sea: The Atlantic Coast and the Transformation of New England*
- Carmel Finley, *All the Fish in the Sea: Maximum Sustainable Yield and the Failure of Fisheries Management*
- Lisa Wadewitz, *The Nature of Borders: Salmon, Boundaries, and Bandits on the Salish Sea*
- Connie Chiang, *Shaping the Shoreline: Fisheries and Tourism on the Monterey Coast*
- Helen Rozwadowski, *Fathoming the Ocean: The Discovery and Exploration of the Deep Sea*

**February 8 – The History of Science and Environmental History**

**Read:**

- Valencius, *The Lost History of the New Madrid Earthquakes*
- Paul Sutter, “Nature’s Agents or Agents of Empire? Entomological Workers and Environmental Change during the Construction of the Panama Canal,” *Isis* 98 (December 2007): 724-754

**Suggested:**

- Mark Barrow, *Nature’s Ghosts: Confronting Extinction from the Age of Jefferson to the Age of Ecology*
- Robert Kohler, *All Creatures: Naturalists, Collectors, and Biodiversity, 1850-1950*
- Richard Judd, *The Untilled Garden: Natural History and the Spirit of Conservation in America, 1740-1840*
- Ben Cohen, *Notes from the Ground: Science, Soil, and Society in the American Countryside*
- Susan Parrish, *American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World*
- Albert Way, *Conserving Southern Longleaf: Herbert Stoddard and the Rise of Ecological Land Management*
- Etienne Benson, *Wired Wilderness: Technologies of Tracking and the Making of Modern Wildlife*
- Peter Alagona, *After the Grizzly: Endangered Species and the Politics of Place in California*
February 15 – Native Americans and the Environment

Read:

- Isenberg, The Destruction of the Bison

Suggested:

- Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos*
- Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History*
- Jared Farmer, *On Zion’s Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape*
- Lewis, David Rich, *Neither Wolf Nor Dog: American Indians, Environment, and Agrarian Change*
- Robbie Ethridge, *Creek Country: The Creek Indians and Their World, 1796-1816*
- Marsha Weisiger, *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country*
- Elizabeth Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People*
- Joshua Reid, *The Sea Is My Country: The Maritime World of the Makahs*
- Andrew Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest*
- Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place*

February 22 – Energy and Transportation

Read:

- Jones, *Routes of Power*

Suggested:

- Thomas Andrews, *Killing for Coal: America’s Deadliest Labor War*
- Brian Black, *Pertrolia: The Landscape of America’s First Oil Boom*
- Timothy LeCain, *Mass Destruction: The Men and Giant Mines that Wired America and Scarred the Planet*
- Paul Sabin, *Crude Politics: The California Oil Market, 1900-1940*
- Christopher Wells, *Car Country: An Environmental History*
- Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy: Political Power in the Age of Oil*
- Chad Montrie, *To Save the Land and People: A History of Opposition to Surface Coal Mining in Appalachia*
- David Nye, *Consuming Power: A Social History of American Energies*
- Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River*

**February 29 – Urban Environmental History**

**Read:**
- Rawson, *Eden on the Charles*

**Suggested:**
- William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*
- Catherine McNeur, *Taming Manhattan: Environmental Battles in the Antebellum City*
- Matthew Klingle, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle*
- Ted Steinberg, *Gotham Unbound: The Ecological History of Greater New York*
- Dawn Biehler, *Pests in the City: Flies, Bedbugs, Cockroaches, and Rats*
- Ari Kelman, *A River and Its City: The Nature of Landscape in New Orleans*
- Mike Davis, *The Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*
- David Schuyler, *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth Century America*
- Brosnan, Kathleen. *Uniting Mountain and Plain: Cities, Law, and Environmental Change along the Front Range*
- Craig Colten, *An Unnatural Metropolis: Wresting New Orleans from Nature*
- Lincoln Bramwell, *Wilderburs: Communities on Nature’s Edge*
- Aaron Sachs, *Arcadian America: The Death and Life of an Environmental Tradition*
- Clay McShane and Joel Tarr, *The Horse in the City: Living Machines in the Nineteenth Century*
March 7 – Health and the Environment

Read:

- Nash, Inescapable Ecologies

Suggested:

- Margaret Humphreys, Malaria: Poverty, Race, and Public Health in the United States.
- Conevery Bolton Valencius, The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and their Land
- Gregg Mitman, Breathing Space: How Allergies Shape Our Lives and Landscapes
- Nancy Langston, Toxic Bodies: Hormone Disruptors and the Legacies of DES
- Michelle Murphy, Sick Building Syndrome and the Problem of Uncertainty: Environmental Politics, Technoscience, and Women Workers
- Christopher Sellers, Hazards of the Job: From Industrial Disease to Environmental Health Science
- Kathryn Shively Meier, Nature’s Civil War: Common Soldiers and the Environment in 1862 Virginia

March 14 – Pollution/Nature and Culture

Read:

- Strasser, Waste and Want
- Jennifer Price, “A Brief Natural History of the Plastic Pink Flamingo,” from Flight Maps (I’ll provide a PDF)

Suggested:

- Suellen Hoy, Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness
- David Stradling, Smokestacks and Progressives: Environmentalists, Engineers, and Air Quality in America, 1881-1951.
- Joel Tarr, The Search for the Ultimate Sink: Urban Pollution in Historical Perspective.
- Daniel Schneider, Hybrid Nature: Sewage Treatment and the Contradictions of the Industrial Ecosystem
- Andrew Kirk, *Counterculture Green: The Whole Earth Catalogue and American Environmentalism*
- William Philpott, *Vacationland: Tourism and Environment in the Colorado High Country*
- Finis Dunaway, *Natural Visions: The Power of Images in American Environmental Reform*
- Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Encounters with Nature in Modern America*
- Cindy Ott, *Pumpkin: The Curious History of an American Icon*
- Phoebe Young and Marguerite Shaffer, eds., *Rendering Nature: Animals, Bodies, Places, Politics*
- William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*

**March 21-25 – Spring Break**

**March 28 – Conservation/Environmental Management State**

**Read:**

- Wilson, *Seeking Refuge*

**Suggested:**

- Mark Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks.*
- Nancy Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland Northwest*
- Nancy Langston, *Where Land and Water Meet: A Western Landscape Transformed*
- Theodore Catton, *Inhabited Wilderness: Indians, Eskimos, and National Parks in Alaska*
- Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight Against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement*
- Char Miller, *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism*
- Thomas Andrews, *Coyote Valley: Deep History in the High Rockies*
- Gregg Mitman, *Reel Nature: America’s Romance with Wildlife on Film*
- Claire Strom, *Making Catfish Bait Out of Government Boys: The Fight Against Cattle Ticks and the Transformation of the Yeoman South*
- Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West*

**April 4 – Agriculture/New Deal Conservation**

*Read:*

- Worster, *Dust Bowl*
- Cunfer, *On the Great Plains*

*Suggested:*

- Paul Sutter, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Gullies: Providence Canyon and the Soils of the South*
- Sarah Phillips, *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal*
- Steven Stoll, *Larding the Lean Earth: Soil and Society in Nineteenth Century America*
- James Giesen, *Boll Weevil Blues: Cotton, Myth, and Power in the American South*
- Drew Swanson, *A Golden Weed: Tobacco and Environment in the Piedmont South*
- Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West*

**April 11 – Business/Capitalism**

*Read:*

- Elmore, *Citizen Coke*

*Suggested:*

- Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*
- Erik Loomis, *Out of Sight: The Long and Disturbing Story of Corporations Outsourcing Catastrophe*
- David Igler, *Industrial Cowboys: Miller & Lux and the Transformation of the Far West, 1850-1920*
- Thomas McCarthy, *Auto Mania: Cars, Consumers, and the Environment*
- Thomas Jundt, *Greening the Red, White, and Blue: The Bomb, Big Business, and Consumer Resistance in Corporate America*

**April 18 – America and the World**

Read:

- Cullather, *The Hungry World*

Suggested:

- Jacon Hamblin, *Arming Mother Nature: The Birth of Catastrophic Environmentalism*
- Stephen Macekura, *Of Limits and Growth: The Rise of Global Sustainable Development in the Twentieth Century*
- Frank Zelko, *Make It a Green Peace: The Rise of Countercultural Environmentalism*
- Dorsey, *Whales and Nations: Environmental Diplomacy on the High Seas*
- John Soluri, *Banana Cultures: Agriculture, Consumption, and Environmental Change in Honduras and the United States*
- Richard Tucker, *Insatiable Appetite: The United States and the Ecological Destruction of the Tropical World*
- Ian Tyrrell, *Crisis of a Wasteful Nation: Empire and Conservation in Theodore Roosevelt’s America*
- Matthew Connelly, *Fatal Misconception: The Struggle to Control World Population*
- David Biggs, *Quagmire: Nation-Building and Nature in the Mekong Delta*
- Sterling Evans, *Bound in Twine*
- Edward Melillo, *Strangers on Familiar Soil: Rediscovering the Chile-California Connection*
April 25 – Environmentalism/Environmental Justice

Read:

- Spears, *Baptized in PCBs*

Suggested:

- Eileen McGurty, *Transforming Environmentalism: Warren Country, PCBs, an the Origins of Environmental Justice*
- Elizabeth Blum, *Love Canal Revisited: Race, Class, and Gender in Environmental Activism*
- Paul Sabin, *The Bet: Paul Ehrlich, Julian Simon, and the Gamble over Earth’s Future*
- Paul Milazzo, *Unlikely Environmentalists: Congress and Clean Water, 1945-1972*
- Finis Dunaway, *Seeing Green: The Use and Abuse of American Environmental Images*
- James Morton Turner, *The Promise of Wilderness*
- Brian Drake, *Loving Nature, Fearing the State: Environmentalism and Antigovernment Politics before Reagan*