HIST 473
American Environmental History to 1890

Instructor: Steve Leone
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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 12 PM - 1:15 PM
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Meeting Period: MTWR, 2:00-3:50PM (June 23 – July 20)
Meeting Location: LIL 255

Aims

At its core Environmental History is an exploration of the ways that humans and their environments have shaped or been shaped by one another. Strong interdisciplinary interests ranging from geology to geography to name only two mark environmental History. During our time together, we will ask and explore several larger questions: How has the environment shaped human actions, cultural systems, and social development? How has the human mind conceived of the natural world surrounding them? How have humans altered or changed the natural environment of the United States? How have human struggles and conflicts reordered or been shaped by environmental factors? Ideally, by the end of the course we will have demonstrated the myriad ways that the history of America is inseparable from its natural environment.

Course Objectives

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

- Trace the history of changes to the American environment over time
- Analyze and interpret “primary” sources of historical information
- Identify an author’s argument or thesis
- Write an essay and develop your own argument and support it with historical evidence

Books (Please Purchase if Possible)


Course Requirements/Grade Components

1. Two short analytical papers, one for each book listed above (Each 25%)
2. A final in class exam in our last meeting period (30%)
3. Participation (20%)

Short Analytical Papers: For each of the two major books we are investigating you will write a 1000 word analytical response essay. Within these responses, you will analyze a major thematic idea, the author’s argument, or some other issue you find provocative or interesting. The goal is to reflect and think about the works that you are reading, not to write a book report or review. I will provide questions to help guide your reading.

Final Exam: The final exam will consist of an identification, short answer section and an Essay component that will cover both the readings and major ideas we have discussed throughout the course.

Participation: Participation matters greatly in this course and as such, I have placed a significant value on it to reward those who are active and constructive during our class time together. Key to your participation grade will be keeping up with the assigned readings that will form key parts of our in class discussions. Finally, attendance will be taken each class.

Late Work Policy

If you have an emergency, please contact me before the due date of any assignment passes. For each DAY an assignment is late, your grade will drop a half letter grade. No late assignments for the class will be accepted after the date of our final exam.

Classroom Policies

- Please refrain from side conservations while in class, any outside conservation will distract the other students who are actively engaged in class.
- Please put your cell phones on silent or turn them off completely before class starts, also no texting/emailing or reading texts/email during class.
- You may use laptops but if you do please place yourself in the back row so you will not distract the other students around you. Additionally, I reserve the right to forbid laptops in the classroom if it becomes apparent that they are being used for purposes other than note taking (social networking I am looking at you).
- Please try your best to avoid being late.

Class Preparation

Like all history classes, this course requires significant reading and preparation. It is critical that you take the time to carefully read the assigned textbook, understand all of the key terms highlighted in each paragraph, and outline the major themes developed in the readings. Everyone reads at a different pace, but you should budget your time wisely to prepare for each class.
S. Leone/HIST 473 Syllabus

Academic Integrity

The University of Oregon has detailed policies regarding academic misconduct. It is critical that you learn these rules, because the consequences of breaking them are severe. Basically, you commit misconduct if you represent another’s work as your own (plagiarism). Most students know that when they ask a friend to write (or significantly edit) their papers, cut-and-paste text from a website, hand-in a paper they find or purchase online, or look at another student’s answers while taking a test, they are breaking the rules. However, many well-intentioned students do not realize that even borrowing information without properly attributing the source is also a breach of academic honesty. Any evidence of academic dishonesty will result in failure of the assignment and possible further discipline from University authorities.

Accommodations

If you require any accommodation, please inform me as soon as possible. Students with disabilities, including learning disabilities, requiring assistance and/or accommodation should speak with Disability Services in as soon as possible. Examples of accommodations include allowances for documented learning differences or disabilities or excused absences for participation in sports or other university-sanctioned extra-curricular activities.

Course Websites

We will be using the Blackboard site for this course actively. You will be asked to submit assignments to Blackboard/SafeAssign. If you do not have access to the site, please let me know.

I reserve the right to make any changes to this syllabus at any time with reasonable notice to you. Changes will be announced in class and through Blackboard. It is your responsibility to be aware of any changes in assignments, readings, and due dates. For these reasons, it is imperative that you check your email account associated with the University of Oregon frequently, at least once a day.

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Schedule of Lectures and Readings

June 23 – Introductions & A Question: What is Environmental History?

June 24 – Nature in Native America
Readings:
Matthew Klingle, Chap. 1 “All the Forces of Nature Are on Their Side” (pp. 12-23) from Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle [Blackboard]

June 25 – Ecological Imperialism
Readings:
Ted Steinberg, Chap. 2 “A Truly New World” (pp. 22-40) from Down to Earth [Blackboard]

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June 26 – Colonization, Conflicts and the Commodification of New World Nature
Readings:

June 30 – The Birth of Nature’s Nation
Readings:
John Locke, Second Treatise on Government, Chap. 5 “Of Property”
http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/locke/locke2/locke2nd-a.html
Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Virginia, “Query 13”

July 1 – Imagining Nature in the Early Republic
Readings:
Richard W. Judd, Chap. 2 “Rambles in Eden” (pp. 55-93) from The Untilled Garden: Natural History and the Spirit of Conservation in America, 1740-1840 [Blackboard]

July 2 – Revolutions in Industry, Revolutions in Nature
Readings:
William Cronon, Changes in the Land (entire)
Critical Response Essay 1 Due on Blackboard via SafeAssign

July 3 – King Cotton: Domination, Resistance, and Nature in the American South
Readings:
Solomon Northrup, Twelve Years A Slave, excerpts [Blackboard]

July 7 – The Nature of Disunion
Readings:
Megan Kate Nelson, Chap. 4 “Battle Logs: Ruined Forests” (pp. 103-159) from Ruin Nation: Destruction in the American Civil War [Blackboard]

July 8 – Animal Extinctions
Readings:
George Catlin, “Buffalo Country” (excerpts) [Blackboard]
John James Audubon “Missouri River Journals” (excerpts) [Blackboard]

July 9 – Redefining Wilderness: Romantics and Transcendentalists
Readings:
Henry David Thoreau, Walden; or Life in the Woods (excerpts) [Blackboard]

July 10 – Beautifying the Land: Parks and Cemeteries
Readings:
Aaron Sachs, Chap. 4 “Sleepy Hollow: A Young Nation in Repose” (pp. 96-136) from Arcadian America: The Death and Life of an Environmental Tradition [Blackboard]
July 14 – Urban Nature
Readings:
Ari Kelman, A River and Its City (entire)
Critical Response Essay 2 Due on Blackboard via SafeAssign

July 15 – Dispossessing Natives in the Name of Wilderness
Readings:
Mark David Spence, Chap. 3 “First Wilderness: America’s Wonderland and Indian Removal From Yellowstone National Park” (pp. 55-70) from Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks [Blackboard]

July 16 – On the Precipice of the 20th Century
Readings:
William Cronon, “Kennecott Journey: The Paths out of Town,” (pp. 28-51) from Under and Open Sky: Rethinking America’s Western Past [Blackboard]

July 17 – In Class Final Exam