

HIST 471E7: AMERICAN WILDERNESS, SPRING 2016

Dr. Jason Sellers

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*please allow 24 hours on weekdays/48 hours on weekends

Office: 218 Monroe Hall

Office Hours: MWF 1:00-2:30, Tuesday 3:30-4:30, and by appointment

Class time/location: TR 12:30-1:45, Monroe 211

Course Description:

This course will historicize American conceptions of “wilderness,” and explore the ways in which—as environmental historian Michael Lewis writes—“wilderness is simultaneously a real thing and a human construction.” It will consider various Americans’ competing definitions of wilderness, how their attitudes about it have changed over time, and how those contrasting definitions and developing attitudes shaped interactions among people, and between humans and the natural world. We will follow an arc from colonial encounters, to 19th-century romantics, to 20th-century activists and the repercussions of the 1964 Wilderness Act, and finally the place of wilderness in contemporary American culture, in the process considering how historians of different generations have utilized and critiqued the concept itself.

Learning outcomes:

1. Comprehension of historical process
2. Ability to synthesize research findings
3. Understanding of the discipline’s methods and processes
4. Ability to write with clarity about the past

Readings:

Required texts available for purchase at the UMW Bookstore:

1. Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac (Outdoor Essays & Reflections)* (Ballantine Books, 1986)
2. Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 5th ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2014)
3. Michael Lewis, ed., *American Wilderness: A New History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007)
4. Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999)
5. James W. Feldman, *A Storied Wilderness: Rewilding the Apostle Islands* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011)
6. James Morton Turner, *The Promise of Wilderness: American Environmental Politics since 1964* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012)
7. Dan Brockington, *Fortress Conservation: The Preservation of the Mkomazi Game Reserve, Tanzania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002)
8. Jon Krakauer, *Into the Wild* (Anchor, 1997)

*Additional required readings (academic articles and primary sources) listed on the schedule below will be accessible through the library website or posted on Canvas.

Grading:

Reading and class participation: 20%

Leading class discussion: 15%

Research paper/peer evaluation: 45%

Research presentation: 10%
Final exam/discussion: 10%

Students who have missed more than 2 classes, have not been active participants in class discussions, and/or who have not submitted any passing work by Week 7, will be reported as *unsatisfactory* on mid-semester reports.

Assignments:

Reading and Class Participation (20%): All readings listed on the syllabus are required. Some are available for purchase at the UMW Bookstore, while others (articles, primary sources, selections and excerpts) will be posted as PDFs on Canvas. Readings should be completed by the day on which they are listed on the schedule, and students should bring the readings to class with them, either on paper or in electronic form.

Students are expected to actively participate in the collective learning experience of the course. You will be graded on your willingness and ability to contribute to class discussion, and whether your comments demonstrate active thought about the readings and discussions (rather than whether what you say is “right” or “wrong”). Your grade will also reflect your attendance and your level of preparedness for class discussion. I would be happy to meet with individual students to discuss strategies for participating more actively.

Each student will complete a weekly evaluation of the discussion leader/s and her/his own participation; I will provide the template for these evaluations, which should be submitted electronically by 5pm on Friday.

Leading Class Discussion (15%): Every student will be required to lead class discussion once during the semester. This will involve three steps. (1) Post a 200-300-word response on Canvas by 6 PM the night before class. This response should reflect on the reading and its relationship to the larger themes of the class/other readings, and it should pose questions/directions for discussion in class. (2) Lead discussion in class; student discussion leaders should be prepared with questions to prompt discussion, and with explanations/responses, etc. (3) Post a 500-word summary of the class discussion on Canvas by 6 PM on the Sunday after class.

Students *must* meet with the professor prior to leading class discussion in order to plan their advance post and discussion; failure to do so will result in a 10% penalty on this assignment. Students will be able to sign up as discussion leaders during the first week of class.

Research Project (Proposal and bibliography: 10%; 10-12 page Research Paper: 25%; Peer evaluation: 10%): Students will use our in-class discussions and assigned readings to develop an original research topic related to “American Wilderness,” and write an 10-12 page paper. A project proposal and bibliography will be due no later than Week 7. Students will submit a draft of their paper Week 11, which will be peer-reviewed by a classmate, with the peer-review comments due Week 12. The final paper and a one-paragraph assessment of your peer-reviewer’s helpfulness will be due Week 13.

Research Presentation (10%): In the final week of class, students will make a brief (10 minutes) presentation, focusing on content and argument rather than the research process. These presentations will serve as the basis of the final exam/discussion.

Final Examination (10%): The class will meet on the scheduled exam date to reflect on research

presentations, and their connection to each other as well as to the content of the course as a whole. You will prepare for this final discussion by producing—at home, and in advance—a written response of 4-5 pages, which you will turn in for a grade. You should draw on your notes from the presentations, as well as the discussion summaries posted on Canvas by discussion leaders.

Extensions: If you think you may need an extension, you *must* request it in advance; I will not grant extensions after assignments are due. I will accept either paper or electronic submissions (MS Word or PDF format). If the assignment is not in my possession in some form at the time it is due, it will be considered late. Late assignments will receive an automatic deduction of one-third of a letter grade, and an additional deduction every day thereafter; I will not accept assignments that are more than one week late.

While I am willing to discuss assignment grades with students, you will need to wait at least 24 hours and have carefully reviewed my comments on your work. You have one week after the return of graded assignments to speak with me; after one week, grades are final.

Requirements for written assignments:

All assignments should adhere to the department's standard style: 1" margins; 12 pt. Times New Roman font; a title page including the paper title the author's name (centered, all caps), course number and title, instructor, and date; pages numbered consecutively through all materials, excluding title page; and a bibliography conforming to the *Chicago Manual of Style*. For more information on proper bibliographic format for your sources, consult Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers*, or an equivalent abridgement of the *Chicago Manual of Style*. [Note the most recent versions of the *Chicago Manual of Style* (16th) and Turabian (7th) include updated information for electronic citations. Be sure to use the newest editions.] A helpful UMW library guide to citations is available at <http://libguides.umw.edu/content.php?pid=245752&sid=2029722#6812498>

Students with Disabilities:

The Office of Disability Resources has been designated by the University as the primary office to guide, counsel, and assist students with disabilities. If you receive services through the Office of Disability Resources and require accommodations for this class, make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss your approved accommodation needs. Bring your accommodation letter with you to the appointment. I will hold any information you share with me in strictest confidence unless you give me permission to do otherwise. If you have not contacted the Office of Disability Resources and need accommodations, I will be happy to help you contact it. The office will require appropriate documentation of disability. The office is located in 401 Lee Hall, and can be reached by phone at 540.654.1266 and email at ods@umw.edu.

Honor System:

Please write and sign the University of Mary Washington honor pledge ("I hereby declare upon my word of honor that I have neither given nor received unauthorized help on this work") on every written assignment. More information about the Honor System is available at <http://students.umw.edu/fredericksburghonorcouncil/> You are welcome to discuss your work on assignments with classmates and work together to refine your writing, but your ideas and language must be your own.

Reading and Discussion Schedule: [* = Student-Led Class Discussion]

Week	Readings & Assignments [due on the date listed]
<i>Introduction</i>	
Week 1: Introductions	T 1/12: Introduction R 1/14: Everyday images of Wilderness (please bring laptops/tablets), current events in Oregon Discussion-leader sign-ups
Week 2: Ideas of Wilderness and Nature	T 1/19: Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature;” Henry David Thoreau, “Walking;” excerpts from John Audubon; selected 19th-century paintings R 1/21: William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature;” William Denevan, “The Pristine Myth: The Land of the Americas in 1492;”
<i>Historical approaches—wilderness as place</i>	
Week 3: American Expansion	*T 1/26: New England: Perry Miller, <i>Errand Into the Wilderness</i> ; Samuel Danforth, “A Brief Recognition of New-England’s Errand into the Wilderness;” selected maps/engravings *R 1/28: West/frontiers: Frederick Jackson Turner, <i>The Frontier in American History</i> ; James Fenimore Cooper, <i>The Pioneers</i> ; Jack London, <i>Call of the Wild and White Fang</i> ; John Gast painting and other selected images
Week 4: Developing a Land Ethic	*T 2/2: Aldo Leopold, <i>A Sand County Almanac</i> R 2/4: Introducing the research project, brainstorming topics
Week 5: Attitudes	*T 2/9: Roderick Frazier Nash, <i>Wilderness and the American Mind</i> , Preface-ch. 11 *R 2/11: Nash, <i>Wilderness and the American Mind</i> , chs. 12-16, Epilogue
<i>Current literature—wilderness as concept</i>	
Week 6: Wilderness in American History	*T 2/16: Michael Lewis, ed., <i>American Wilderness: A New History</i> , chs. 1-7 *R 2/18: Lewis, ed., <i>American Wilderness</i> , chs. 8-14, Epilogue
Week 7: Wilds, Woods, and Human Practice	*T 2/23: Military: Selections from: Thomas Desjardin, <i>Through a Howling Wilderness</i> ; Gordon Rhea, <i>The Battle of Wilderness</i> ; selected primary source accounts, National Parks Service websites and images R 2/25: Recapping the class; sharing research topics Proposal and bibliography due
[Spring Break]	
<i>Creating and defining wilderness</i>	
Week 8: African Americans, Indians, and Whites in the Wilderness	*T 3/8: Elizabeth Blum, “Power, Danger, and Control: Slave Women’s Perceptions of Wilderness in the Nineteenth Century;” Kimberly Smith, “What is Africa to Me? Wilderness in Black Thought, 1860-1930;” Cassandra Johnson and J.M. Bowker, “African-American Wildland Memories;” S. Max Edelson, “The Nature of Slavery;” excerpts from Melvin Dixon, <i>Ride Out the Wilderness</i> ; selected images of slave rebellions *R 3/10: Knowledge/familiarity in diplomacy and natural science: Selections from James Merrell, <i>Into the American Woods</i> ; John Bartram, <i>Travels</i> ; Luther Standing Bear, <i>The Land of the Spotted Eagle</i> ; Susan Scott Parrish, “Indian Sagacity,” in <i>American Curiosity: Cultures of Natural History in the Colonial British Atlantic World</i>

Week 9: National Parks and People	*T 3/15: Mark Spence, <i>Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks</i> R 3/17: Wilderness and wildlife photography; http://www.vawilderness.org/ and National Wildlife Fund
Week 10: Creating/Recreating Wilderness	*T 3/22: James Feldman, <i>A Storied Wilderness: Rewilding the Apostle Islands</i> R 3/24: Rewilding movement: http://rewilding.org/rewildit/ and https://www.rewildingeurope.com/ , https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rewilding_%28conservation_biology%29 and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rewilding_%28anarchism%29 (start reading for Week 11—it's a long book)
Week 11: 1964 Wilderness Act	*T 3/29: James Morton Turner, <i>The Promise of Wilderness: American Environmental Politics Since 1964</i> , Introduction-ch. 5 *R 3/31: Turner, <i>The Promise of Wilderness</i> , chs. 6-10, Epilogue Research paper draft due
<i>Seeking Wilderness</i>	
Week 12: Exporting Wilderness Abroad	*T 4/5: Dan Brockington, <i>Fortress Conservation: The Preservation of the Mkomazi Game Reserve, Tanzania</i> R 4/7: Discussing drafts and review comments Peer review comments due
Week 13: Finding Wilderness	*T 4/12: Jon Krakauer, <i>Into the Wild</i> , pgs. 1-97 *R 4/14: Krakauer, <i>Into the Wild</i> , pgs. 98-end; 2015 update from Krakauer, http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/chris-mccandless-died-update Final research paper due
Week 14: Research Presentations	T 4/19: Research Presentations R 4/21: Research Presentations
Final exam/discussion	T 4/26, 12-2:30pm 4-5 page reflection on the presentations and course