

HIST 322: US ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY, SPRING 2017

Dr. Jason Sellers

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

Office: 218 Monroe Hall

Class times/locations: TR 12:30-1:45, Monroe 112

Office Hours: MWF 12:30-1:30, TR 2-3, and by appointment

Course description:

Environmental history assumes that human experience develops in dialogue with dynamic natural environments; natural constraints shape the limits of human action, and human activity impacts natural surroundings. This class, then, will consider how human populations have interacted with their environments from their early arrivals in North America through the 20th century, and address the results of this exchange for both culture and nature. We will examine the interplay of humans and environments in the context of colonization and settlement, economic development, social and political formation, and changing ideas about the natural world.

Course objectives and outcomes:

Students in this course will acquire/develop:

- Understanding and appreciation of the discipline's diverse methods and processes.
- Ability to locate, read critically, and analyze primary sources and modern scholarship.
- Ability to synthesize research findings.
- Comprehension of historical process.
- Ability to make discipline-specific oral presentations to groups.
- Ability to write with clarity about the past, and to communicate in a group setting.

This course counts towards the History major.

Readings:

Required texts:

Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, & Science in New England*, 2d. ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

Christopher Morris, *The Big Muddy: An Environmental History of the Mississippi and its Peoples from Hernando de Soto to Hurricane Katrina* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Matthew Klingle, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

Linda Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

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

**Presentation/book review titles are available through the library; ask me if you need help with using interlibrary loan.

Grading and Participation:

Participation*: 20%

Presentation and book review: 20% (10% each)

Primary source evaluation: 15%

Current events reflection: 5%

Paper: 20%

Final exam (take-home and in-class portions): 20%

*Attendance will be taken regularly, and you are expected to attend having completed the assigned reading for that day so that you can contribute to discussions. After the second absence, additional absences will result in the loss of 1/10 of your participation points. Although I will sometimes lecture briefly, the majority of the class will be discussion, and so effective participation will be an important and substantial part of your overall grade. If it becomes clear from discussions that students are not completing the readings, I reserve the right to substitute reading quizzes (graded P/F) in place of simple attendance. To avoid quizzes, please actively contribute to conversations with your questions and ideas. I realize some students tend to be quieter in class, and I encourage those of you who are to meet with me early in the term to discuss how we can facilitate your participation.

This class will not have additional extra credit assignments. However, you may revise one written assignment for a higher grade and turn it in within one week of the original assignment's return. If you elect to do so, you will need to submit the new assignment and a short (1/2 page) description of how you revised your work (see handout on Canvas), and include the original assignment with my feedback. It may be helpful to meet with me to make sure you understand what needs to be addressed. This option is not available if the original submission was late.

Students who have missed more than 5 classes, and/or who have not submitted any passing work by Week 7, will be reported as *unsatisfactory* on mid-semester reports.

Numerical grades in this course correspond to the following letter grades: A (93-100); A- (90-92); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D+ (67-69); D (60-66); F (59 and below). I do not round grades, so for instance, a 79.7% is a C+.

Assignments:

*More detailed descriptions and grading breakdowns will be posted on Canvas.

(1) Presentation and book review: You will work in groups of 2-3 to put together a 15-minute content presentation based on your reading of an additional book. Along with that presentation, you will write a short (2-3 pages) book review critically assessing the book itself.

(2) Primary source evaluation: In a short paper (3-4 pages) due Thursday of Week 7, you will summarize your source and its origins; consider how its production reflects the concerns of an individual, group, or institution with which it is connected; consider what arguments about environmental history it makes explicitly, or might support with careful reading; consider what further evidence would supplement this source; and address any other relevant elements.

- (3) Paper: In a more substantial paper (6-8 pages) due Thursday of Week 14, you will use multiple sources to address one of the larger topics/questions that run throughout our course.
- (4) Current events reflection: Watch the news for current/ongoing current events related to the environment (this does not need to be confined to the United States), and write a short, informal paper (about 2 pages). This can be completed at any time, but you'll need to briefly share it with the class when you submit the write-up.
- (5) Final exam: This will be based in part on an activity we do during our first day of class, and will require you to draw on multiple readings from throughout the semester as well as your own background/personal history. We will spend some time preparing for this in our final class meeting, and it will entail both take-home and in-class sections.

If you think you may need an extension, you *must* request it in advance; I will not grant extensions after assignments are due. I prefer your assignments be submitted electronically via Canvas or email, but hard copies are acceptable as well. 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.

Class and Reading Schedule:

* While I will sometimes lecture briefly, most of our time in class will consist of discussions, which depend on your ability to engage with the readings. To facilitate that engagement, please bring the readings (or at least your meticulous notes) to class so that you may refer to them as we discuss—it is fine to load them on your laptop, e-reader, tablet, etc.

Week 1: Environmental history

T 1/17: Introductions, syllabus, and environmental biographies

Th 1/19: Considering the field

Paul S. Sutter, "The World with Us: The State of American Environmental History," *The Journal of American History* 100, no. 1 (June 2013): 94-119.

J.R. McNeill, "The State of the Field of Environmental History," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources* 35 (Nov. 2010): 345-374.

Lecture and discussion: More approaches to environmental history—time scales, cultural and material, interdisciplinary studies

Week 2: Systems of thought

T 1/24: Ecology and History, and Native North America

Carolyn Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, & Science in New England*, 2d. ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), Prefaces and ch. 1

Lecture: Pleistocene die-offs and Indian burning

Primary sources: Colonists' impressions of New England [Canvas], Crying Indian

http://www.aef.com/exhibits/social_responsibility/ad_council/2278

Th 1/26: Colonial revolution

Introducing the Book Review/Presentation assignment

Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions*, 29-145

Lecture: The South Atlantic Counterpoint

Week 3: Systems of thought

T 1/31: Capitalist revolution

Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions*, 149-279

Primaries: Southern agriculture (Canvas)

Th 2/2: Primary source workshop and research

Colonial conservation measures and excerpts from the King James Bible [Canvas]

Planning/researching for Primary Source Analysis assignment (bring tablets/laptops if possible)

Week 4: Regional approaches

T 2/7: Rivers

Dan Flores, "Place: An Argument for Bioregional History," *Environmental History Review* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 1-18.

Christopher Morris, *The Big Muddy: An Environmental History of the Mississippi and its Peoples from Hernando de Soto to Hurricane Katrina* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), Introduction.

Lecture: Marine zones and river valleys, sedentism, and complex societies

Th 2/9: Adapting to a wet valley

Morris, *Big Muddy*, chs. 1-5

Week 5: Regional approaches

T 2/14: Drying the valley

Morris, *Big Muddy*, chs. 6-10

Lecture: The Upper Mississippi

Th 2/16: Other rivers/regions

Morris, *Big Muddy*, ch. 11

W. Jeffrey Bolster, "Putting the Ocean in Atlantic History: Maritime Communities and Marine Ecology in the Northwest Atlantic, 1500-1800," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 1 (February 2008): 19-47.

Presentation: James D. Rice, *Nature and History in the Potomac Country: From Hunter-Gatherers to the Age of Jefferson* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009) OR Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996)

Week 6: Studying species

T 2/21: Grasslands and Indians

Andrew C. Isenberg, *The Destruction of the Bison: An Environmental History, 1750-1920* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), Introduction-ch. 3

Lecture: Pacific whales: habitats, systems, and regions

Th 2/23: Conquest

Isenberg, *Destruction of the Bison*, chs. 4-5

Primary: Plenty Coup on the buffalo [Canvas]

Presentation: Jon T. Coleman, *Vicious: Wolves and Men in America* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004)

***Week 7: Studying species; Human and natural systems on the Great Plains**

T 2/28: Preservation

Isenberg, *Destruction of the Bison*, ch. 6

Website reading: <http://www.yesterland.com/buffalo.html>

Lecture: California's redwoods, American expansion, and eugenics [from Stern, *Eugenic Nation*]

Presentation: Joseph E. Taylor, *Making Salmon: An Environmental History of the Northwest Fisheries Crisis* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999)

*Th 3/2: Dust Bowl

Films: *The Plow That Broke the Plains* (1936), excerpts from *The Grapes of Wrath* (1938)

Presentation: Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*, 25th anniversary edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004)

*Primary Source Analysis assignment due

Week 8: Spring break 3/6-3/10

Week 9: Human and natural systems

T 3/14: Building the irrigated landscape

Lecture: The Hohokam and southwestern irrigation

Primaries: John Wesley Powell on reclamation, western boosters and boom towns [Canvas]

Presentation: David Iglar, *Industrial Cowboys: Miller & Lux and the Transformation of the Far West, 1850-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005)

Th 3/16: Building the irrigated landscape; telling stories

Selections from Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Irrigated Landscape in the American West* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009) [Canvas]

Discussion: Environmental biographies, and paper topics/ideas

Week 10: Urban developments

T 3/21: Cities

Matthew Klingle, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007), Preface-ch. 3.

Th 3/23: Cities

Klingle, *Emerald City*, chs. 4-6.

Week 11: Urban and suburban

T 3/28: Cities

Klingle, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle*, ch. 7-Epilogue.

Primaries: Jane Addams on Chicago's garbage, Upton Sinclair on the Chicago stockyards [Canvas]

Th 3/30: Suburbs and cities

Lecture: California's fire ecology and Malibu

Primaries: Smokey Bear <http://www.smokeybear.com/vault/>

Presentation: Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

Week 12: Conservation and its social implications

T 4/4: Forest/Adirondacks

Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), Preface-ch. 3

Th 4/6: Mountains/Yellowstone

Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, chs. 4-6

Presentation: Lisa M. Brady, *War Upon the Land: Military Strategy and the Transformation of Southern Landscapes during the American Civil War* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2012)

Week 13: Conservation and its social impacts

T 4/11: Desert/Grand Canyon

Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, chs. 7-Epilogue

Th 4/13: Preservation and conservation

Primaries: John Muir, Gifford Pinchot, others on Hetch Hetchy; Joaquin Miller on the California Gold Rush

Presentation: Kathryn Morse, *The Nature of Gold: An Environmental History of the Klondike Gold Rush* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010)

Lecture: The Los Angeles River and geographies of disorder and disease [from Deverell, *Whitewashed Adobe*]

***Week 14: Bodies and environments**

T 4/18: Bodies and environments, disease and landscape

Linda Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), Introduction-ch. 3

Primary: Bodies and environments in the colonial era [Canvas]

*Th 4/20: Fighting disease

Nash, *Inescapable Ecologies*, chs. 4-5

Presentation: Edmund Russell, *War and Nature: Fighting Humans and Insects with Chemicals from WWI to Silent Spring* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001)

*Paper due in class or via email/Canvas by midnight 4/16

Week 15: Environmentalism and the future of Environmental History

T 4/25: Environmentalism

Robert Gottlieb, "The Next Environmentalism: How Movements Respond to the Changes Elections Bring—From Nixon to Obama," *Environmental History* 14, no. 2 (April 2009), 298-308

Adam Rome, "The Genius of Earth Day," *Environmental History* 15, no. 2 (April 2010), 206-235

Primaries: <http://www.earthday.org/>, Wilderness Act of 1964

Presentation: James Rodger Fleming, *Historical Perspectives on Climate Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Th 4/27: The future of Environmental History

From *Environmental History* 10, no. 1 (January 2005): Michael Bess, "Artificialization and Its Discontents," 31-33; Ramachandra Guha, "Movement Scholarship," 40-41; Marcus Hall, "True Environmental History," 42-43; Michael Lewis, "Transformative Environmental History," 53-55; Christine Meisner Rosen, "The Business-Environment Connection," 77-79; John Soluri, "History's Freaks of Nature," 94-95

Discussion: Final exam, environmental biographies, and closing thoughts

Final Exam: R 5/4, 12-2:30pm