

HIST 242 / ES 203 Environment and Culture in North American History

Spring 2013

MW 1:00-2:25, Searles 217

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Course Description and Objectives

This course surveys North American environmental history from pre-colonial times to the present, with an emphasis on that region that became the United States. We will consider the main concerns of environmental historians – how the environment has shaped human activity, how people and their technologies have shaped the environment, and how various human ideas about the natural world have changed over time – while examining key episodes in American environmental history. In the process, we'll challenge two common assumptions: that history is only a matter of human activity, and that environmental issues have no human history.

You should leave this course with the tools to think critically about human-environment interactions from pre-Columbian times to the present, as well as an improved ability to think deeply, read intelligently, and write lucidly.

Readings

Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. Revised. New York: Hill and Wang, 2003.

Hurley, Andrew. *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995.

Spence, Mark David. *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Wilder, Laura Ingalls. *Little House on the Prairie*. New York: HarperCollins, 1994.

Assignments

1. Participation (10%)
2. Quizzes (10%)
3. Journals (10%)
4. Papers 1 and 2 (30%)
5. Exams (40%)

Expectations

Attendance. Come to class. If for some reason you can't — for sickness or athletic events or a death in the family, etc — I expect you to contact me in advance, to provide appropriate documentation of the reason for your absence (e.g. a doctor's note), and to be responsible for making up any work you missed. If you participate in Bowdoin athletics, please note that it is your responsibility to inform me in advance of how your schedule may affect your participation in the course and to make a plan for making up missed work. *If you miss more than 5 classes, you will fail the class.*

Participation. I expect that you will be present not just physically but mentally as well — having read and completed any assignments for the day's discussion, and then listening, asking questions, offering your own ideas and challenging others — including mine. I expect that class discussions may be intense at times, but I also expect that you will treat your classmates — as well as the characters we study and the authors we read — with civility and respect at all times.

Technology. We'll discuss this more in class, but I encourage you to take notes by hand in this course. Aside from the obvious distractions (and no, you can't check Facebook *and* take good notes, much as your subconscious mind would like you to believe otherwise), studies have shown that handwritten notes can help you remember more. On discussion days, leave the laptops and tablets in your bag. *Note that this means printing out e-reserves in advance.* Please contact me if you're nearing your printing limit for the semester.

Communication. I will be in my office most Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and welcome visits — though it's always best to make an appointment in advance. I try my best to respond to email and phone messages within 24 hours, except on weekends.

Academic Honesty. Using someone else's words or ideas as your own is a serious violation of the Bowdoin honor code. You are responsible for reviewing and following the Academic Honor Code and Social Code as set out in the Bowdoin Student Handbook, 2012-13. If you are at all uncertain about plagiarism, talk with a librarian or with me.

Grading.

All assignments must be completed in order to pass this course.

You may be required to give an oral defense of assignments you turn in, and your performance on this oral defense may affect your grade on the assignment and in the class.

Unless otherwise noted, assignments are due at the beginning of class. Late papers will be marked down a grade level per day (e.g. From B to B-).

With the exception of quizzes, I give letter grades, not number grades, which roughly translate as follows: A 94-100, A- 90-93, B 87-89, B 83-86, B- 80-82, C+ 77-79, C 73-76, C- 70-72, D 60-69, and F < 60.

Schedule of Classes

Please note: this syllabus *will* change over the course of the semester, including the readings (except for the books, which will remain as they are). Plan to read 50-100 pages a week.

Week 1. Jan 21-23.

Monday: Introduction to Course. Martin Luther King Jr. and Environmental History

Wednesday: Discussion: Cronon, "Kennecott Journey," and Matthews, "Out of the Wilderness"

Week 2. Jan 28-30.

Monday: Lecture: Old World, New World

Wednesday: Discussion: Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 3-81

Week 3. Feb 4-6.

Monday: Lecture: An Environmental History of Settlement

Wednesday: Discussion: Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 82-170, and Primary Documents

Week 4. Feb 11-13.

Monday: Lecture: An Environmental History of Slavery

****Paper #1 Due****

Wednesday: Discussion: Olmsted, Northup, Stewart

Week 5. Feb 18-20.

Monday: Lecture: Industrialization in the 19th Century

Wednesday: Discussion: Thoreau, Marsh, etc.

Week 6. Feb 25-27.

Monday: Museum Visit

Wednesday: Lecture: Conservation (Read Spence, 3-70)

Week 7. Mar 4-6.

Monday: Discussion: Spence, *Dispossessing Wilderness*, 71-140

Wednesday: **Midterm Examination**

Week 8. Mar 25-27.

Monday: Lecture: Leisure & Consumption in the Early 20th Century

Wednesday: Film: *The Plow that Broke the Plains*

Week 9. Apr 1-3.

Monday: Lecture: New Deal Nature

Wednesday: Discussion: Wilder, *Little House on the Prairie*, all.

Week 10. Apr 8-10.

Monday: Lecture: World War II and Environmental Patriotism

****Paper #2 Due****

Wednesday: Discussion: Leopold and Carson

Week 11. Apr 15-17

Monday: Lecture: Atoms and Chemicals

Wednesday: Discussion: Hurley, xxiii-45

Week 12. Apr 22-24

Monday: Lecture: Environmentalism

Wednesday: Discussion: Hurley, 46-182

Week 13. Apr 29-May 1

Monday: Lecture: Nature at the Mall

Wednesday: Discussion: Journals

**** Journal Collection Due ****

Week 14. May 6-8.

Monday: Lecture: Hurricane

Wednesday: Wrap-Up

Final Exam: May 17, 2013, 2:00 p.m.