

HIST 301 / ES 304: Place in American History

Spring 2013

MW 10:00-11:25, Hawthorne-Longellow 311

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Office hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 2:30-3:30, and by appointment

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Course Description and Objectives

This course examines the theme of place in nineteenth and twentieth century U.S. history, with special emphasis on the U.S. South. We'll investigate place as a set of physical and biological characteristics, as a product of the interaction between humans and the environment, and as a social and cultural construct.

You should leave this course with an article-length (5,000-10,000 word) historical essay, based on primary source research; an improved sense for the meaning of place in American history, as well as the technical challenges of conjuring place in historical writing; a stronger awareness of your role as a citizen of particular places — and in particular with more historically-oriented ways of seeing the places you visit and inhabit; and an improved ability to write lean, muscular — perhaps even sparkling — prose.

Readings

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

Ray, Janisse. *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*. Reprint. Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2000.

Stegner, Wallace. *Wolf Willow: A History, a Story, and a Memory of the Last Plains Frontier*. New York: Penguin Classics, 2000.

Kyvig, David and Myron Marty. *Nearby History: Exploring the Past Around You*. 3rd Edition. Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2010.

Assignments

1. Exercises (30%)
2. Participation (10%)
3. Research Paper (60%) (Primary Source Interpretation, Prospectus, Thesis Paragraph, Rough Draft, Comments, Final Draft)

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.

As a general rule, it also means no screens: no laptops, iPads, Kindles, etc. Instead, you’ll take notes by hand and bring readings to class so that you can refer to them during discussion. *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-).

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

(subject to change)

Week 1. Jan 21-23. A Place on Earth

Monday: Introduction to Course.

Wednesday:

- Dan Flores, “Place: An Argument for Bioregional History,” *Environmental History Review*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (Winter, 1994), 1-18.
- William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative,” *The Journal of American History* 78, no. 4 (March 1, 1992): 1347–1376.
- Anne Whiston Spirn, “Prologue” and “Dwelling and Tongue: The Language of Landscape,” from *The Language of Landscape* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 10-26.
- Kyvig and Marty, Chapter 3, “Traces and Storytelling”

- Optional: Tim Cresswell, "Defining Place," from *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 1-14.

Week 2. Jan 28-30. Wilderness

Monday: Stegner, *Wolf Willow*, all

Wednesday: First hand observations

- Kyvig and Marty, "Landscapes and Buildings" and "Oral Documents"
- First-hand observation exercise due (bring 6 copies)

Week 3. Feb 4-6. Paradise

Monday: Shore and Cemetery

- Connie Y. Chiang, "Monterey-by-the-Smell: Odors and Social Conflict on the California Coastline," *Pacific Historical Review* 73, no. 2 (May 1, 2004): 183-214.
- Dan Buettner, "The Island Where People Forget to Die," *The New York Times*, October 24, 2012, sec. Magazine.
<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/28/magazine/the-island-where-people-forget-to-die.html>.
- Aaron Sachs, "American Arcadia: Mount Auburn Cemetery and the Nineteenth-Century Landscape Tradition," *Environmental History* 15, no. 2 (April 1, 2010): 206-235.

Wednesday: Boosters and Pictures

- Kyvig and Marty, "Visual Documents"
- Exercise: Reading between the lines

Week 4. Feb 11-13. City

Monday: Klinge, *Emerald City*, all

Wednesday: Newspapers!

- Town newspapers via Library of Congress "Chronicling America"
- Kyvig and Marty, "Published Documents"

Week 5. Feb 25-27. Grid

Monday:

- James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, excerpt.
- Kate Brown, "Gridded Lives: Why Kazakhstan and Montana Are Nearly the Same Place," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 1 (February 1, 2001): 17-48.

Wednesday: Maps. Census Statistics.

- Kyvig and Marty, "Unpublished Documents"

Week 6. Feb 18-20. Farm

Monday:

- Nelson, *Pharsalia* excerpt
- Donahue, *The Great Meadow* excerpt;

- Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, excerpt

Wednesday: ****Prospectus Due****

Week 7. Mar 4-6. Prospectus Week

Monday: Prospectus Workshops

Wednesday: Prospectus Workshops

Week 8. Mar 25-27. Janisse Ray

Monday: Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, all

FRIDAY: Writing Workshop with Janisse Ray

Week 9. Apr 1-3. Works in Progress

Monday: No Class

Wednesday: Bring 6 copies of 2-3 pages of your work in progress

Week 10. Apr 8-10. Works in Progress

Monday: No Class

Wednesday: Bring 6 copies of 2-3 pages of your work in progress

Week 11 Apr 15-17. Rough Drafts

Monday: No Class

Wednesday: ****Rough Draft Due****

Week 12. Apr 22-24. Rough Draft Workshops

Monday: Draft Workshops

Wednesday: Draft Workshops

Week 13. Apr 29-May 1. Draft Workshops

Monday: Draft Workshops

Wednesday: Draft Workshops

Week 14. May 6-8. Wrap-up

Monday: Native to this place?

- bell hooks

- Wendell Berry

Wednesday: Wrap-up

Final Exam: Thursday, May 16, 2013, 2:00 p.m.

****Final draft due by 9:00am Friday, May 17, 2013****