

Environmental Studies (ENVS) 80.1—Environmental Histories: Ecological, Cultural and Political Change

MWF 11:15 am – 12:20 pm (11)
X-Hour: Tues Noon—1 pm
008 Steele

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Course Description

Ever wonder why every major river in the world is dammed? Or how the United States' system of national parks came about? Or why, more broadly, human beings continue to engage in unsustainable practices despite overwhelming evidence of such practices' negative environmental impacts? As present-day environmental problems and conflicts over resources become more and more complex, the need to understand the political, cultural, economic and technological circumstances under which problems have emerged and evolved over time—in short, their history—becomes increasingly important. This advanced research seminar focuses on the concepts and methodologies of environmental historians working within a variety of historical and geographical contexts, from the largely hidden history of national park creation in the western United States to the millennia-long ecological histories of Africa, Latin America and Asia. Each student will be expected to co-facilitate class discussions and produce an original research project on a particular aspect of environmental history. Readings, discussions and assignments will work towards three complementary goals: how to critically interpret the material transformations of “nature” over time; how to understand changing ideas of what “nature” is within different cultural contexts; and how to insert an historical perspective into current debates over sustainability and the politics of the environment.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Evaluation

Attendance and Participation in class	20%
Reading Reactions (reaction papers)	20%
Research Project:	60%
Project proposal and description	5%
Annotated bibliography	15%
Final research paper	40%

Attendance and Class Participation

This course requires and *depends* on your diligence throughout the term, rather than a marathon session at the end. This is an advanced seminar, and each student is expected to engage in a sustained, serious way with all assigned readings, and to actively prepare for and participate in seminar discussions each week. Class discussion will revolve around readings and your reaction papers, which are due periodically throughout the term (see below). I expect your punctuality and presence in every class; your commitment to read closely and arrive prepared for discussion; and notification in advance if you will, on the rarest occasion, need to miss a class. Please contact me if you would like a more precise definition of how I “grade” course participation.

In sum, prepared students are fundamental to engaging and thought-provoking discussions. I will rarely (if ever) lecture in the Seminar. Having said this, I do recognize that students have different learning styles and will make every effort to accommodate these differences. Please talk to me early in the term if you have a concern in this regard. *Each student will also serve as co-facilitator for one class period.* This will be arranged later in the term.

Reading Reactions

You must write a summary and critique of the readings assigned for **12 discussion periods** over the course of the term. These summaries form the basis of class discussion and are handed in (hard copy) at the end of each class. In some instances I will ask that you email these to me at least one hour prior to class. Schedule your reading accordingly.

These two-page (double-spaced, 12 pt font, regular margins) submissions consist of questions and reactions formulated around the assigned readings. We will build our course discussions around these written reactions. Although you will include some descriptions of the texts, the emphasis in these papers should be on your analysis of the arguments. Thinking deeply about the assumptions and intellectual frameworks of the readings in these papers is of utmost importance; such questioning will further your own interpretations and add depth and vitality to our class conversations.

Your short essay should include:

- a) a concise (1 paragraph) summary of the main points of the readings. What are the main arguments? What strategies do the authors use to make their point? What are the research questions? What methods are employed? What theories are used? What data are mustered?

b) your own critical analysis of the pieces. What questions or issues do the assigned readings raise in your mind? What things do the authors do well, or not so well? Are there points of agreement and disagreement between you and the text?

c) at least three well-conceived, well-articulated, and non-rhetorical questions pertaining to the readings. These questions can be broad in scope, meaning you may query a particular theme across the readings, or quite specific (e.g., you may have questions about a certain passage or argument in a text).

Research Project

This research project is your opportunity to undertake an original project in the field of environmental history. The first step for this assignment is to identify a research topic and present a research proposal. This will be due some time early in the term. The second step is to identify literature regarding this topic or theme and to develop an annotated bibliography. This bibliography will facilitate construction of your research paper, the third step in this research project. There are several goals associated with this project: to identify and explore a topic of interest broadly concerned with environmental history; to think critically about questions of historiography and historical research; and to engage with primary sources of information. I will have specific descriptions of each stage of the research process as the term progresses, and we will carve out significant chunks of time during in-class discussion for developing each student's research focus. It is never too early to contemplate a topic of research, which could range from the very local (e.g., an environmental history of the Upper Connecticut Valley) to the global (e.g., an environmental history of climate change). My role will be to assist you in refining and developing your research topic.

Required Readings

We will be reading books and supplemental articles over the ten weeks of the course. Fortunately, environmental history as a whole has been the beneficiary of some remarkably gifted writers. Here are the required texts (at Wheelock Books):

McNeill, J. R. 2000. *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.

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

All of the articles for the course will be posted on our Blackboard site or will be emailed directly to the students. These will provide insights into the field of environmental history and expose you to a diversity of themes.

Academic Honor Principle

“Fundamental to the principle of independent learning are the requirements of honesty and integrity in the performance of academic assignments, both in the classroom and outside. Dartmouth operates on the principle of academic honor, without proctoring of examinations. Any student who submits work which is not his/her own, or who commits other acts of academic dishonesty, violates the purposes of the College and is subject to disciplinary actions, up to and

including suspension or separation. For the complete text, refer to the Green Pages of the *Student Handbook* or <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~uja/>." (from Principles of Community, Dartmouth College, available at: <http://www.dartmouth.edu/~upperde/principles/>).

Disabilities and special circumstances

In general, please feel free to discuss with me questions relating to disabilities (including the so-called "hidden" ones such as chronic illness and learning disabilities) at the earliest possible moment. I will make every effort to ensure an adequate learning environment. I also realize that some students may wish to take part in religious observances that occur during this academic term. Should you have a religious observance that conflicts with your participation in the course, please come speak with me before the end of the second week of the term to discuss appropriate accommodations.

Course Schedule (readings refer to materials to be read prior to class)

[Please note the following schedule is subject to change.]

Important Dates

- 11 April Research project proposal
- 25 April Annotated bibliography
- 21 May Research paper

Date	Topic	Readings and assignments
Week One		
26 March (W)	Introduction to environmental history	No readings
28 March (F)	Introduction (cont.)	Hughes (2006); Sorlin and Warde (2007); McNeill, Preface (xxi-xxvi) and Ch 1 (3-17)
Week Two		
AIR		
31 March (M)	Reaction Paper #1	McNeill, Ch's 3 & 4
2 April (W)	Reaction Paper #2	
4 April (F)		Discussion: research projects
Week Three		
WATER		
7 April (M)	Reaction Paper #3	McNeill, Ch 5; Daley and Griggs (2006)
9 April (W)	Reaction Paper #4	Arnold (2007); Weil (2006)
11 April (F)	Research in environmental history (special library session)	Hughes (2006), Ch 1; DUE: Research project proposal
Week Four		
14 April (M)	VIDEO: <i>Cadillac Desert</i>	McNeill, Ch 6; Reisner (1991), Ch's 2 & 4
15 April (Tu)	WILD(ER)NESS preview Reaction Paper #5	Cronon (1997); Oelschlaeger (1991), Ch 1
16 April (W)	NO CLASS (Geographers Meeting)	Work on sources
18 April (F)	NO CLASS (Geographers Meeting)	Annotated bibliography
Week Five		
WILD(ER)NESS/CONSERVATION		
21 April (M)	Reaction Paper #6	Jacoby, Intro, Ch. 1; McNeill, Ch 7
23 April (W)	Reaction Paper #7	Jacoby, Ch's 2-3
25 April (F)		DUE: Annotated Bibliography

Week Six		
28 April (M)		Jacoby, Ch's 4-6
30 April (W)	Reaction Paper #8	McNeill, Ch 8;
2 May (F)		Jacoby, Ch's 7-8, Epilogue;
Week Seven	TECHNOLOGIES	
5 May (M)		McNeill, Ch 10;
7 May (W)	Reaction Paper #9	McEvoy (1988); Hurley (1997)
9 May (F)		McCarthy (2001)
Week Eight	IDEAS/NATURE	
12 May (M)		Schwartz (2007)
14 May (W)	Reaction Paper #10	Carey (2007); Tsutsui (2007)
16 May (F)		Norwood (1993); Rome (2006)
Week Nine		
19 May (M)		Rollins (2006); Hays (1997)
21 May (W)	Conclusions?	McNeill, Ch 12; DUE: Research Paper
23 May (F)		Research Project presentations/discussion
Week Ten		
26 May (M)	NO CLASS (Memorial Day)	
28 May (W)	Last Day	Research Project presentations/discussion

