

# HIS 334 Environmental History of the United States

Fall 2016: T, TH 3:30-4:45, MHRA 1214

*All the facts in natural history taken by themselves, have no value, but are barren like a single sex. But marry it to human history, and it is full of life.*

-Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Nature*, 1836



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Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 1:30-3:00 and/or by appointment

## **Course Objective**

In this course you will examine the interaction of humans and nature in American history from the colonial period to today. The approach will be roughly chronological, with emphasis on selected issues, events, and persons. The course will consider three large themes: 1. The way that Americans (of different sorts) have thought about nature and the relationship between people and nature. 2. The history of the human impact on nature and of nature's impact on people in the area now known as the United States. 3. The roles of government, industrialization, pollution, resource management, and the modern environmental movement in shaping the way that Americans interact with the environment.

## **Course Requirements**

Class meetings are devoted primarily to lecture, with periodic discussions of readings and videos seen in class. I use PowerPoint to supplement my lectures with outlines and images, but they are not posted on Canvas nor online. Students are expected to attend all classes and to keep up with the reading assignments which will serve as the basis for class discussions. Students are required to come to class prepared; assigned readings completed, assignments completed on time. When you come to class you should be prepared to take notes and to discuss the topics of the day. Attendance will be taken, and each absence above three (3) that is not excused by the Athletic Dept., Dean of Students, or medical doctor will result in one-half letter grade subtracted from the final course grade. ALL assignments must be completed; failure to complete even one graded assignment will result in an F in the course. Late assignments are NOT accepted.

## **Student Learning Goals**

Upon successful completion of this course students should be able to:

1. Describe broad knowledge of American Environmental history [Historical Comprehension]
2. Comprehend and critique primary sources from the period [Historical Analysis]
3. Analyze, critique, and synthesize the writings of modern scholars [Historiography]
4. Synthesize material read from a variety of sources to produce a larger analytical conclusion [Historical Interpretation]

## **Required Books**

Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role In American History* (3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2013)  
Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (any edition)  
Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness* (any edition)

## **Writing Assignments**

Instructions for all writing assignments will be handed out separately.

## **Academic Integrity Policy**

Refer to the UNCG Undergraduate Bulletin (<http://sa.uncg.edu/handbook/academic-integrity-policy/>). Plagiarism (to take the work of another and present it as your own) is absolutely not allowed and will be punished according to UNCG guidelines, including failure of assignments and/or the course.

## **UNCG Writing Center**

Location: 3211 MHRA

<https://writingcenter.uncg.edu/>

From the Writing Center website: "The purpose of the Writing Center is to enhance the confidence and competence of student writers by providing free, individual assistance at any stage of any writing project. Staff consultants are experienced writers and alert readers, prepared to offer feedback and suggestions on drafts of papers, help students find answers to their questions about writing, and provide one-on-one instruction as needed."

## **Grading Summary**

Article Summary Papers 5% each =	25%
Documentary Film Papers 2% each =	10%
Leopold-Abbey Paper	25%
Mid-term Exam	20%
Final Exam	<u>20%</u>
	100%

Letter grades assigned as follows:

97-100	A+
93-96	A
90-92	A-
87-89	B+
83-86	B
80-82	B-
77-79	C+
73-76	C
70-72	C-
67-69	D+
63-66	D
60-62	D-
<60	F

## **Schedule**

Week 1	What is Environmental History?
8/23-8/25	American Indian Ecology
	Reading: <i>Down to Earth</i> pp. ix-Chapter 1
	Watch the video clip defining environmental history by environmental historian Donald Worster: <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJfwVXWP6X4">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJfwVXWP6X4</a>
	<b>Article:</b> Denevan, William M. 1992. "The Pristine Myth: The Landscape of the Americas in 1492," <i>Annals of the Association of American Geographers</i> 82, no. 3: 369-385.

- Week 2  
8/30-9/1  
Columbian Exchange: New Animals, Plants, and Diseases  
Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapter 2  
**Documentary Film #1:** *1492 the Columbian exchange - America before Columbus*, episode 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WrgDVTYG0z4>  
**Article:** Alfred Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation in America," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Vol. 33, No. 2 (Apr., 1976), pp. 289-299
- Week 3  
9/6-9/8  
Colonial America & Nature  
Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapter 3  
**Documentary Film #2:** *America Before Columbus*, part 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9PTcGa-RQo>  
**Article:** Katherine A. Grandjean, "New World Tempests: Environment, Scarcity, and the Coming of the Pequot War," *The William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 68, No. 1 (January 2011), pp. 75-100
- Week 4  
9/13-9/15  
Industrialization and Plantation in Antebellum America  
Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapters 4-5  
**Article:** Taylor, Alan. 1998. "'Wasty Ways': Stories of American Settlement," *Environmental History*. 3, no. 3: 291-310.  
**Article:** Stewart, Mart A. 2007. "From King Cane to King Cotton: Razing Cane in the Old South," *Environmental History* 12, no. 1: 59-79.
- Week 5  
9/20  
The Civil War  
Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapter 6  
**Article:** Brady, Lisa M. 2005. "The Wilderness of War: Nature and Strategy in the American Civil War," *Environmental History* 10, no. 3: 421-447.
- 9/22  
Disease, especially in the South  
Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapter 7
- Week 6  
9/27  
Disease cont.  
**Documentary Film #3:** *Influenza, 1918*  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tdr4GE-Y74Q>  
Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapter 7  
**Article:** Duffy J. 1971. "The History of Asiatic Cholera in the United States," *Bulletin of the New York Academy of Medicine* 47, no. 10: 1152-68.
- 9/29  
Americans Go West  
Film: The West: Episode 3, The Speck of the Future  
[http://uncg.worldcat.org/title/west-episode-3-the-speck-of-the-future/oclc/122266333&referer=brief\\_results](http://uncg.worldcat.org/title/west-episode-3-the-speck-of-the-future/oclc/122266333&referer=brief_results)

- Week 7  
10/4-10/6 The Developing American West & Relationship to Industrialization  
Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapter 8  
**Article:** Dan Flores, "Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy: The Southern Plains from 1800 to 1850," *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 78, No. 2 (Sep., 1991), pp. 465-485
- Week 8  
10/11 Review for Mid-term Exam
- 10/13 MID-TERM EXAM**
- Week 9  
**10/18 NO CLASS: FALL BREAK**
- 10/20 Natural Disasters in U.S. History  
Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapter 9  
**Article:** Steinberg, Theodore. 1997. "Do-It-Yourself Deathscape: The Unnatural History of Natural Disaster in South Florida," *Environmental History* 2, no. 4: 414-438.
- Week 10  
10/25 Invasive Species & The Death of the Chestnut Forests  
Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapter 10  
**Article:** Lutts, Ralph H. 2004. "Like Manna from God: The American Chestnut Trade in Southwestern Virginia," *Environmental History* 9, no. 3: 497-525.
- 10/27 The Urban Environment: Chicago as an Example  
Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapter 10  
**Article:** Tarr, Joel A. 2002. "The Metabolism of the Industrial City: The Case of Pittsburgh," *Journal of Urban History* 28, no. 5: 511-545.
- Week 11  
11/1-11/3 The Conservation Movement vs. Wilderness Preservation  
Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapter 11  
Start Reading Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac & Abbey, Desert Solitaire*  
**Article:** Cronon, William. 1996. "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1, no. 1: 7-28.
- Week 12  
11/8-11/10 Wilderness Protection & Toxic Pollution after WWII  
Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapters 12  
Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac & Abbey, Desert Solitaire*  
**Documentary Film #4: Rachel Carson's Silent Spring**  
**Article:** Buhs, Joshua B. 2002. "The Fire Ant Wars: Nature and Science in the Pesticide Controversies of the Late Twentieth Century," *Isis; an International*

*Review Devoted to the History of Science and Its Cultural Influences* 93, no. 3: 377-400.

Week 13      The Post-WWII Environmental Movement  
11/15-11/17    Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapter 13  
                  Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* & Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*  
**Documentary Film #5:** *Green Fire: Aldo Leopold and a Land Ethic for Our Time*  
**Article:** Mossman, Mark. 1998. "The Rhetoric of a Nature Writer: Subversion, Persuasion, and Ambiguity in the Writings of Edward Abbey," *Journal of American Culture*. 20, no. 4: 79-85.

Week 14  
**11/22            LEOPOLD-ABBIEY PAPER DUE**

11/22            Environmental Racism & Environmental Justice  
                  Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapter 14  
                  Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* & Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*  
**Article:** Eileen Maura McGurty. 1997. "From NIMBY to Civil Rights: The Origins of the Environmental Justice Movement," *Environmental History*. 2, no. 3: 301-323.

**11/24            NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING**

Week 15            Backlash against the Environmental Movement & Modern Problems  
11/29-12/1        Reading: *Down to Earth* Chapters 15-16

**Final Exam      Thursday, December 8 @3:30**