

ENVI 234-01/HIST 234-01
U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

Macalester College, Fall 2007
Olin-Rice 301, MWF 2:20-3:20

Prof. Chris Wells

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Office Hours: Wed 3:30-4:30, Thurs 2:30-3:30
and by appointment

Course Description:

People have always had to contend with the natural world, but only recently have historians begun to explore the changing relationships between people and their environments over time. In this course, we will examine the variety of ways that people in North America have shaped the environment, as well as how they have used, labored in, abused, conserved, protected, rearranged, polluted, cleaned, and thought about it. In addition, we will explore how various characteristics of the natural world have affected the broad patterns of human society, sometimes harming or hindering life and other times enabling rapid development and expansion. By bringing nature into the study of human history, and the human past into the study of nature, we will begin to see the connections and interdependencies between the two that are often overlooked.

Required Readings:

The following books are available for purchase at the college book store:

Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth*
William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*
Isenberg, *Mining California*
Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl*

Copies of all other readings, marked with an **X**, are available as e-reserves through the library. Access them at <http://www.macalester.edu/library/resources/reserves/index.html>, or through the course's Moodle website (see below). One hard copy of each reserve reading will also be available at the library reserves desk.

Grading: Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

First and second papers (5-7 pages)	20% each
Final paper (8-10 pages)	30%
Participation	30%

Paper topics for the first two papers will be distributed via our course's Moodle website (see below) two weeks before they are due; I will also post detailed information on the final paper on Moodle later in the semester. The writing assignments are a serious component of this course, and should represent your best efforts to think through the issues involved and to produce polished, carefully edited, thoughtfully considered prose. Papers are due, either in hard copy, by email, or through Moodle, by the beginning of class on the day listed in the syllabus. *You will be assessed a late penalty of one-third of a letter grade for each 24-hour period that your paper is late, so plan accordingly.*

The MAX Center offers drop-in consultancy on writing projects, and can provide helpful feedback and advice on your work before it is due. The center is located on the first floor of Kagin Commons, and is open for tutoring Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., and from Sunday through Thursday from 7:00 p.m. until 10:00 p.m. Find them on the web at <http://www.macalester.edu/max/>, and be sure to check out the writing handbook at <http://www.macalester.edu/max/writinghandbook/index.html>. I strongly encourage all of you to make use of the Max Center's wonderful resources.

Participation grades will be based on class attendance and participation in discussions. Discussions are the driving force in this class, so it is particularly important that everyone comes to class prepared to discuss the day's material. Our project in class meetings will be to explore connections between events, to answer questions, to clear up any confusion, to discuss the major themes of the course, and above all to engage with the readings. For those who are less comfortable than others speaking in class, remember that asking a good question is often as valuable a means of participation as delivering a long-winded oration. If you are having trouble speaking, however, please talk to me outside of class so that we can develop a strategy for improvement. Laptops may be used during lectures, but should not be used during class discussions.

Regular attendance is required in order to receive a passing grade for the course, regardless of how well you do on your written assignments.

Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. All of your written work should reflect your own ideas, and should properly attribute the work of others who you engage. On avoiding plagiarism, see <http://www.macalester.edu/max/writinghandbook/plagiarism.html>.

Our course's Moodle website duplicates much of the information in this syllabus, including the reading schedule and assignment due dates. It also serves as the distribution system for paper prompts, and provides a direct link to our course's e-reserves. Go to <http://moodle.macalester.edu/>, and login using your Macalester username and password. After logging in, click on the link to American Environmental History in the My Courses section. Anything posted to the forums will automatically be emailed to everyone registered for the course. Click on each assignment to get the paper prompts, beginning two weeks before the paper is due; there is also an option here to submit your papers to me in electronic form.

Reading Schedule

All **reserve items** are marked **X**

WEEK 1: WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY? (55)

- W 9/5 Lecture 1: What Is Environmental History? Three Case Studies
F 9/7 Worster, "Transformations of the Earth," 1087-1106. **X**
Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, ix-20.
Pollan, "Nature Abhors a Garden," 45-64. **X**

WEEK 2: IN THE WAKE OF COLUMBUS (66)

- M 9/10 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 21-38.
W 9/12 Krech, "Eden," 73-99. **X**
F 9/14 Krech, "Deer," 151-171. **X**

WEEK 3: NEW MARKETS, NEW LANDSCAPES (168)

- M 9/17 Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 3-33.
W 9/19 Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 34-107.
F 9/21 Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 108-170.

WEEK 4: COMMODITIES AND INDUSTRY (79)

- M 9/24 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 39-51.
W 9/26 Cronon, "Dreaming the Metropolis," 23-54. **X**
F 9/28 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 55-88.

WEEK 5: CHANGING VISIONS (63)

- M 10/1 Lecture 2: The Romance of the Wild: Culture, Nature, & Industrialization
PAPER #1 DUE BY START OF CLASS
W 10/3 Thoreau, *Walden*, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For" and
"The Bean-Field." **X**
F 10/5 Cronon, "Rails and Water," 55-93. **X**

WEEK 6: WORK & ENVIRONMENT IN THE NEW SOUTH & OLD WEST (99)

- M 10/8 Kirby, "Environmental View on the Civil War," 1-11. **X**
Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 89-115.
W 10/10 Hudson, "Settlement of the American Grassland," 169-185. **X**
Flores, "Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy," 465-85. **X**
F 10/12 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 116-138.

WEEK 7: THE RISE OF THE URBAN-INDUSTRIAL WEST (173)

- M 10/15 Isenberg, *Mining California*, 3-51.
W 10/17 Isenberg, *Mining California*, 53-98.
F 10/19 Isenberg, *Mining California*, 101-178.

WEEK 8: CONSERVATION AND THE PROGRESSIVES (135)

- M 10/22 Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 96-181. **X**
W 10/24 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 138-156.
F 10/26 NO CLASS: FALL BREAK

WEEK 9: URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY (114)

- M 10/29 Melosi, "Environmental Crisis in the City," 23-48. X
Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 157-172.
W 10/31 Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*, 103-154. X
F 11/2 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 206-225.

WEEK 10: CONSUMER NATION (91)

- M 11/5 Sutter, "Knowing Nature through Leisure," 19-53. X
W 11/7 Strasser, "Having and Disposing in the New Consumer Culture," 161-201. X
F 11/9 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 175-189.

WEEK 11: THE ECOLOGY OF "NATURAL" DISASTERS (196)

- M 11/12 Kelman, "An Act of God," 157-196. X
W 11/14 Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 3-98.
F 11/16 Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 181-243.

WEEK 12: A NEW AWARENESS (0)

- M 11/19 Lecture: Green Dreams: Post-World War II Environmental Politics
W 11/21 In-class showing of *Rachel Carson: An American Experience*
PAPER #2 DUE BY START OF CLASS
F 11/23 NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 13: GREEN POLITICS (81)

- M 11/26 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 239-261.
Wells, "Environmental Movement," 101-102. X
W 11/28 Rome, "'Give Earth a Chance,'" 525-554. X
F 11/30 Rothman, "Environment Reaches the Government," 109-134. X

WEEK 14: IMPERIAL NATURE (110)

- M 12/3 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 262-281.
W 12/5 Speth, *Red Sky at Morning*, 77-116. X
F 12/7 Roberts, *The End of Oil*, 91-140. X

WEEK 15: CONCLUSIONS (122)

- M 12/10 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 190-205.
Schlosser, "What's in the Meat," 193-222. X
W 12/12 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 226-238
Grossman, "Not in Our Backyard," 182-210. X
F 12/14 Pollan, "The Idea of a Garden," 209-238. X
and Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 282-285.

**M 12/17 FINAL PAPER DUE BY 1 P.M., ELECTRONICALLY BY EMAIL
OR MOODLE, OR IN HARD COPY AT MY OFFICE.**