

ENVI 294/HIST 294
AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

Macalester College, Fall 2005
Olin Rice 301, MWF 2:20-3:20

Prof. Chris Wells

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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*
Ted Steinberg, *Nature Incorporated*
Paul Sutter, *Driven Wild*
Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl*
Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*
Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*

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>. 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 two weeks before they are due, and detailed information on the final paper will be made available 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. *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/>. I strongly encourage all of you to make use of this wonderful resource.

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.

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. For help on how to avoid plagiarism, see <http://www.macalester.edu/max/fym>.

Reading Schedule

All reserve items are marked **X**

WEEK 1: WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY? (59)

- W 9/7 Introductions
F 9/9 Pollan, *Second Nature*, 45-64. **X**
Cronon, "Kennecott Journey," 28-51. **X**
Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 3-20.

WEEK 2: IN THE WAKE OF COLUMBUS (81)

- M 9/12 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 21-38.
W 9/14 Bunting, *The Pacific Raincoast*, 1-35. **X**
F 9/16 Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 3-33.

WEEK 3: NEW MARKETS, NEW LANDSCAPES (147)

- M 9/19 Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 34-107.
W 9/21 Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 108-170.
F 9/23 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 39-51.

WEEK 4: WORK, CULTURE, AND ENVIRONMENT (145)

- M 9/26 Wood, *Black Majority*, 35-91. **X**
W 9/28 Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 85-141. **X**
F 9/30 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 55-88.

WEEK 5: INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTIONS (233)

- M 10/3 Steinberg, *Nature Incorporated*, 1-95.
W 10/5 Steinberg, *Nature Incorporated*, 99-134 and 166-239.
F 10/7 Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 23-54. **X**

WEEK 6: CHANGING VISIONS (130)

- M 10/10 Hughes, *American Visions*, 137-205. **X**
PAPER #1 DUE IN CLASS
W 10/12 Thoreau, *Walden*, "Where I Lived, and What I Lived For" and
"The Bean-Field." **X**
F 10/14 Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, 55-93. **X**

WEEK 7: WORK & ENVIRONMENT IN THE NEW SOUTH & OLD WEST (100)

- M 10/17 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 89-137.
W 10/19 Hudson, "Settlement of the American Grassland," 169-185. **X**
F 10/21 White, "Animals and Enterprise," 237-273. **X**

WEEK 8: CONSERVATION AND THE PROGRESSIVES (135)

- M 10/24 Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 96-181. **X**
W 10/26 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 138-156
and Freese, *Coal*, , 129-161. **X**
F 10/28 NO CLASS: FALL BREAK

WEEK 9: THE CITY, THE COUNTRY, AND SUBURBIA (108)

- M 10/31 Melosi, "Environmental Crisis in the City," 23-48. **X**
W 11/2 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 157-189.
F 11/4 Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias*, 103-154. **X**

WEEK 10: ASPHALT NATION (238)

- M 11/7 Sutter, *Driven Wild*, vii-99 and 142-193.
W 11/9 Sutter, *Driven Wild*, 194-263.
F 11/11 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 206-225.

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

- M 11/14 Kelman, *A River and Its City*, 157-196. **X**
W 11/16 Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 3-98.
F 11/18 Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 181-243.

WEEK 12: A NEW AWARENESS (168)

- M 11/21 Carson, *Silent Spring*, 1-37, 103-128, 187-198. **X**
PAPER #2 DUE IN CLASS
W 11/23 Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 3-92 (Part I: A Sand County Almanac).
F 11/25 NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 13: ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISM (117+)

- M 11/28 Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, 129-133 ("Thinking Like A Mountain"), 165-226 (Part III: The Upshot).
W 11/30 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 226-281.
F 12/2 Abbey, *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, 53-97. **X**

WEEK 14: FAT LAND (146)

- M 12/5 Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 190-205.
W 12/7 Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, 1-58.
F 12/9 Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, 59-132.

WEEK 15: CONCLUSIONS (168)

- M 12/12 Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, 133-224.
W 12/14 Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, 225-270.
F 12/16 Pollan, *Second Nature*, 209-238. **X**
and Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 282-285.

M 12/19 FINAL PAPER DUE BY 1 P.M. at Prof. Wells's office