

MACALESTER COLLEGE  
FALL 2016

TR 9:40-11:10  
Olin-Rice 300

ENVI/HIST 340

# U.S. URBAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

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*Office hours: Tue 1:50-2:50, Fri 10:50-11:50, and by appointment.*



In the minds of many Americans, cities are places where nature is absent—places where nature exists only in the crevices and on the margins of spaces dominated by technology, concrete, and human artifice. This course confronts this assumption directly, drawing on scholarship from the relatively young field of urban environmental

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

history to uncover the deep interconnections between urban America and the natural world. Among other things, we will examine how society has drawn upon nature to build and sustain urban growth, the implications that urban growth has for transforming ecosystems both local and distant, and how social values have guided

urbanites as they have built, rearranged, and responded to the world around them. Using the Twin Cities as a backdrop and reference point, we will attempt to understand the constantly changing ways that people, cities, and nature have shaped and reshaped one another throughout American history.



## PARTICIPATION

Participation grades will be based on attendance, participation in discussions, and completion of in-class activities. Discussions are the driving force in this class, so it is vital that everyone arrive prepared to discuss the day's material. Be advised that this course has an appropriately heavy reading load for a history seminar. I have chosen readings for readability and interest, but please plan ahead, because completing the readings is vital to the success of this course. Our goal will be to analyze issues revolving around people's relationships with the urban environment, to explore connections between events, to answer questions, to clear up confusion, to discuss major themes, and above all to engage with the readings and what they contain. If you are uncomfortable speaking in class, asking a good question can be as valuable a means of participating as delivering a long-winded oration. Participation does require being in the room (regular attendance) and contributing to the discussion (engaging the assigned readings), however, so please do participate.



## RESOURCES AND POLICIES

**Many wonderful resources** exist that will help you with this class. The *MAX Center*, located in Kagin, has peer tutors available to help students in all stages of writing. You may drop in or call x6121 (day) or x6193 (evening) for an appointment. Find them at [www.macalester.edu/max/](http://www.macalester.edu/max/), and see their writing resources at [www.macalester.edu/max/writing/](http://www.macalester.edu/max/writing/). Please also spend some time perusing Prof. Zachary Schrag's helpful advice for doing well in history courses at [historyprofessor.org/](http://historyprofessor.org/)

**Academic dishonesty** erodes the basic foundations of higher education: exchange, debate, and the thoughtful consideration of what we know, how

we know it, and why it matters. It has no place in this course. For Macalester's policies on academic integrity, see [bit.ly/1mKrAKF](http://bit.ly/1mKrAKF). For help on avoiding plagiarism, see [bit.ly/1mJTGG4](http://bit.ly/1mJTGG4). For the Quick Guide to the Chicago Manual of Style, the citation system used by historians, see [bit.ly/2bMMLxf](http://bit.ly/2bMMLxf) (requires login).

In some circumstances, course design may pose barriers to a student's ability to access or demonstrate mastery of course content. **Reasonable academic accommodations** can be implemented in such cases. If you think you need an accommodation for a disability, contact Robin Hart Ruthenbeck at x6220.

## WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Writing assignments are a serious component of this course, and should represent your best efforts to think through the issues involved in polished, carefully edited, thoughtfully considered prose. Because this course meets Macalester's general education requirement for argumentative writing (WA), we will spend some time in class together discussing the conventions of good argumentative writing and practicing ways to hone our writing skills. You will also revise your final paper based on feedback both from me and from classmates in your peer-review group.

*Late Work Policy:* A standard late penalty of one-third of a letter grade per day will apply for the book review, research proposal, and peer-review draft, and one full letter grade per day for the final paper. *For all but the final paper, however, as long as you turn in work when it is due, even if it is not completed to your satisfaction, you may indicate then that you would like a penalty-free extension of three days to work on it further. (For the final paper you may request just one penalty-free day.) I will always approve such requests with no questions asked.* You may also discuss known problems with me ahead of time; in some cases I will extend the deadline or arrange a reduced penalty.

## GRADING

*Your grade for this course will be calculated as follows:*

|                              |     |
|------------------------------|-----|
| Book review (1,000 words)    | 10% |
| Research proposal (4-5 pgs.) | 10% |
| Digital StoryMap or Timeline | 15% |
| Research paper (12-15 pgs.)  | 35% |
| Peer review participation    | 5%  |
| Class participation          | 25% |

## REQUIRED TEXTS

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

Michael Rawson, *Eden on the Charles*  
 William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*  
 Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside*  
 Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities*  
 David Owen, *Green Metropolis*

## MOODLE

*Our Moodle site ([moodle.macalester.edu](http://moodle.macalester.edu)) is a crucial resource for this class. In addition to duplicating the information in this syllabus, it houses our up-to-date daily reading schedule, with links to PDFs of all readings that are not from required texts. It is also where I will post more detailed descriptions of course assignments, and where you will submit your written assignments.*

## EMAIL & OFFICE HOURS

*You can always reach me by email. I will usually get back to you quickly, and always within 24 hours. My regular office hours are Tue 1:50-2:50, Fri 10:50-11:50, and by appointment. I also occasionally schedule additional extra office hours. You can reserve a slot to talk to me in my office at <http://tinyurl.com/Wells-office-hours>. If you cannot make my scheduled office hours, give me a handful of times that will work for you that I can check against my schedule. Talking to students is one of my favorite things about being a professor. No question is too small, and no pretext to talk is too flimsy: if you want to talk, we can talk.*

## WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (cont'd)

**The Research Paper:** Research papers should be on a topic of your own choosing that deals with some aspect of the historical relationship between people and the U.S. urban environment, and should be 12-15 pages in length. This paper should be based on a mixture of primary and secondary sources, should address historical questions and utilize historical methodologies, and should represent your best efforts to think through the issues involved in polished, carefully edited, thoughtfully considered prose. All of the other graded class assignments are designed to build toward this one as you identify your interests, develop your line of inquiry, conduct your research, and formulate your ideas. Due via Moodle on Wednesday, Dec. 14, by 12:00 pm (noon).

**The Book Review:** Identify and read a book that addresses some aspect of the relationship between people and the urban environment and assess it in a 1,000-word critical review. (A list of pre-approved titles is posted on Moodle; please run books not on this list by me first. You should consider this a chance to explore a potential topic for your research paper.) In your review, you should at minimum address the following: What is its argument? What are its greatest strengths and weaknesses? Please read Schrag, "How to Write a Review" (available at <http://historyprofessor.org/>) before tackling this assignment.

**The Research Proposal:** Your 4-5 page research proposal should include all of the following: 1) a working title, 2) a concise review of the most important literature on your topic, cited using Chicago style, and framed with an eye toward explaining how the scholarly conversation you are summarizing has pointed you toward 3) the specific research question that you intend to try to answer with your research. It should also have 4) a short discussion of the sources you will use to answer your question and the research approach you will take. It is often helpful, but is not required, to discuss briefly any potential problems or roadblocks that you anticipate and how you are thinking about solving them.

**The Digital StoryMap or Timeline:** Using either Timeline JS ([timeline.knightlab.com](http://timeline.knightlab.com)) or StoryMap JS ([storymap.knightlab.com](http://storymap.knightlab.com)), you will create a digital presentation consisting of 10-12 slides as a way to share your preliminary research and working argument. Additional details will be discussed in class; for a full description of the assignment, see Moodle.

**The Peer-Review Draft of the Research Paper:** Fully completed drafts of your research paper—with the same level of polish and completeness that you would typically reserve for a final draft—are due via Moodle on Friday, Nov. 25, at 5 pm. Of the 35% of your total grade allocated to your research paper, 5% will reflect the completeness and formal characteristics (e.g., footnotes, full sentences, etc.) of the review draft, according to the rubric posted on Moodle. (Note that this assessment will not focus on the quality of the ideas or argumentation in the review draft.) The remaining 30% allocated to your research paper will assess the quality of the final version of your paper, including its ideas, argumentation, and overall effectiveness.

**The Peer-Review Process:** All students will meet with their peer-review groups between Monday 11/28 and Sunday 12/4, to provide feedback on the peer-review drafts submitted by your group members on Nov. 25. (We will discuss this assignment further in class; peer review guidelines are posted on Moodle.)



# DRAFT READING SCHEDULE: FOR THE OFFICIAL SCHEDULE, SEE OUR MOODLE SITE

## UNIT I. THE RISE OF URBAN AMERICA

### WEEK 1: INTRODUCTIONS

R 9/1 What is Urban Environmental History?

### WEEK 2: (RE)MAKING THE CITY IN NATURE (157)

T 9/6 Price, "Thirteen Ways of Seeing Nature in LA," 220-44. X

R 9/8 Rawson, *Eden on the Charles*, Prologue-ch. 2.



### WEEK 3: THE CITY COMPLETE (153)

T 9/13 Rawson, *Eden on the Charles*, chs. 3-4.

Read first four reviews of Rawson (on Moodle) X

R 9/15 Rawson, *Eden on the Charles*, ch. 5 and Epilogue.

Read final four reviews of Rawson (on Moodle) X

### WEEK 4: BUILDING THE FRONTIER CITY (92)

T 9/20 Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, Prologue and ch. 1.

R 9/22 Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, ch. 2.

**Book Review due via Moodle at the beginning of class**



### WEEK 5: NATURE TO MARKET (163)

T 9/27 Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, chs. 3-4.

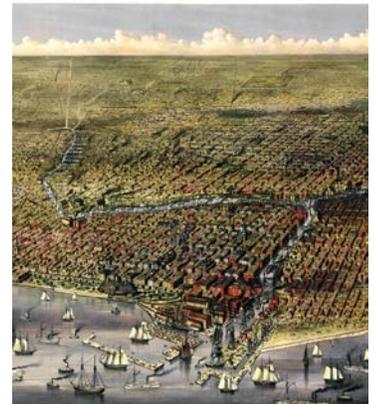
R 9/29 Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, ch. 5

**You are strongly encouraged to attend this year's International Roundtable events on Urban Sustainability, 9/29-10/1.**

### WEEK 6: THE GEOGRAPHY OF CAPITAL (122)

T 10/4 Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, chs. 6-7.

R 10/6 Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*, ch. 8 and Epilogue.



## UNIT II. ENGINEERING THE ENVIRONMENT

### WEEK 7: CRISIS AND INTERVENTION (108)

T 10/11 Steinberg, "Death of the Organic City," 157-72. X

Melosi, "Environmental Crisis in the City," 3-28. X

**Research Proposal due via Moodle at the beginning of class**

R 10/13 Schultz and McShane, "To Engineer the Metropolis," 389-411. X

Wells, *Car Country*, 5-25, 65-67, & 86-104. X

### WEEK 8: THE LUNGS OF THE CITY (83)

T 10/18 Young, "The American Park Movement," 1-30. X

Spirn, "Constructing Nature," 91-113. X

Hou, "Garden and Forest," 813-42. X

R 10/20 NO CLASS: FALL BREAK



### WEEK 9: SEPTIC-TANK SUBURBIA (152)

T 10/25 Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside*, chs. Intro-2.

R 10/27 Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside*, chs. 3-4.

### WEEK 10: SUBURBAN NATURE (118)

T 11/1 Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside*, chs. 5-7 and Conclusion.

R 11/3 In-class discussion of completed Digital Timeline or StoryMap assignment.

**Link to Digital Timeline or StoryMap due via Moodle at the beginning of class**

UNIT III: RACE, CLASS, AND URBAN ECOLOGY

WEEK 11: ECOLOGY AND INEQUALITY (174)

- T 11/8 Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities*, chs. 1-4.  
R 11/10 Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities*, chs. 5-7.

WEEK 12: PULLING IT TOGETHER (28)

- T 11/15 Davis, "The Case for Letting Malibu Burn," 1-36. X  
R 11/17 NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 13: URBAN ANIMALS (100)

- T 11/22 McShane and Tarr, "Thinking About Horses," 1-17. X  
Benson, "The Urbanization of the Eastern Gray Squirrel  
in the US," 691-710. X  
R 11/24 Biehler, "The Ecology of Injustice," 149-76. X  
Klinge, "Masses of Self-Centered People," 230-264. X  
F 11/25 **Peer-Review Draft of the Research Paper Due via Moodle by 5 pm**



WEEK 14: THE GREENEST CITY? (201)

- T 11/29 Owen, *Green Metropolis*, chs. 1-2.  
R 12/1 Owen, *Green Metropolis*, chs. 3-4.  
11/28-12/4: **Peer Group Meetings using Peer Review  
Checklist (available on Moodle)**



WEEK 15: THE URBAN ECOSYSTEM (155)

- T 12/6 Owen, *Green Metropolis*, chs. 5-6.  
R 12/8 Rawson, "The March of Bricks and Mortar," 844-50. X

WEEK 16: REVISED PORTFOLIOS DUE

- W 12/14 **Final revised paper with cover letter due by 12:00 pm (noon)**

