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 traditional history often overlooks.

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. The First Two Papers (5-7 pages each) ask you to synthesize and extend your understanding of key ideas, themes, and developments from class readings, lectures, and discussions. I will post a prompt for each on Moodle two weeks before it is due. The Final Paper asks you to integrate your own historical research with what you have learned about the themes and questions of environmental history. Drawing on course materials and themes, you will select a place in the U.S. that you know well (or can research easily) and write an 8-10 page interpretive essay on it and its environmental history.

Late Work Policy: A standard late penalty of one-third of a letter grade per day will apply for the first two papers, and a full letter grade per day for the final paper. For the first two papers, however, as long as you turn in complete work of passable quality when it is due, you may ask for a penalty-free extension of 72 hours to work on it further. (For the final paper you may request 24 hours.) I will always approve such requests. You may also discuss known problems with me ahead of time; in some cases I may extend the deadline or reduce the penalty.
Grading
Your grade for this course will be calculated as follows:

- Two papers (5-7 pages) 25% each
- Final paper (8-10 pages) 35%
- Participation 15%

Required texts
The following books are available for purchase at the college bookstore and at the library reserve desk:
- Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, 3rd ed.
- William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*
- Christopher Wells, *Environmental Justice in Postwar America*

Moodle
Our Moodle site (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 prompts for the first two papers two weeks before they are due, and is where you will submit your papers.

Email & Office hours
You can always reach me by email. I will usually get back to you quickly, and always within 24 hours on weekdays. My open office hours are Tues 3-4, Wed 3:30-4:30, and by appointment. You can swing by my office to see if I’m available or reserve a slot at http://tinyurl.com/Wells-office-hours. If you can’t make my standing times, make an appointment by giving 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.

Participation
Participation in class discussions is vital to the success of this class. 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 assigned readings. Please remember that we are all in this together, and we are all responsible for the success of the course. As eager as I am to share with you what I know, I expect that you will learn at least as much from one another as you will from me. We will discuss in class the mutual rights and responsibilities that you would like to see govern our classroom, but at minimum it is important that we all respect one another’s time, space, values, and ideas by coming to class on time and prepared to engage in respectful, intellectually challenging discussions.

Resources and policies
Many wonderful resources exist that will help you with this class. The MAX Center, located in Kagin Commons, has peer tutors to help students with all stages of their writing. Find them at macalester.edu/max/writing/ and look for the reservation link. Please also spend some time perusing Prof. Zachary Schrag’s extraordinary helpful advice for doing well in a history course at 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 or on this campus. For Macalester’s policies on academic integrity and help on avoiding plagiarism, see bit.ly/2wznH7E. For the Quick Guide to the Chicago Manual of Style, the citation system used by historians, see bit.ly/2bMMLxf (requires login; choose the “Notes and Bibliography” style).

I am committed to supporting all students in my class. If course design ever poses barriers to your ability to access or demonstrate mastery of course content, please let me know so that I can make reasonable academic accommodations. If you think you may need formal accommodations, please contact Melissa Fletcher, Director of Disability Services, at mfiletche@macalester.edu or x6874.
For the official daily reading schedule, see our Moodle site (moodle.macalester.edu).