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 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.
RESOURCES AND POLICIES

ACCESSIBILITY AND ACCOMMODATIONS
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 mfletch@macalester.edu or x6874.

PLAGIARISM
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 and help on avoiding plagiarism, see bit.ly/2wzqH7F. For the “Quick Guide” to the Chicago Manual of Style, the citation system used by historians, see bit.ly/2I6rPS1 (notes & bibliography section).

OTHER RESOURCES
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 https://www.macalester.edu/max/writing/ and look for the reservation link. Please also spend some time perusing Prof. Zachary Schrag’s extraordinarily helpful advice for doing well in a history course at https://historyprofessor.org.

REQUIRED TEXTS
The following books are available for purchase at the college book store; note that three are also available free as ebooks through the Macalester library:

Catherine McNeur, Taming Manhattan (ebook https://bit.ly/2OMq1AO)
Colin Fisher, Urban Green
Brian McCammanck, Landscapes of Hope
Lincoln Bramwell, Wilderburbs

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 readings (when available). 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 on weekdays. My open office hours are Tuesday from 3-4, Wednesday from 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 cannot make my scheduled 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.
WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

Your written work should present your ideas in polished, carefully edited, thoughtfully considered prose. Because this course meets Macalester’s argumentative writing (WA) requirement, we will spend some class time discussing the conventions of good argumentative writing and honing our writing skills.

Each of the Class Preparation Assignments focuses on a different skill that historians use every day, including reading carefully, asking questions, understanding arguments, and putting different kinds of evidence and arguments in conversation with one another:

- **Draft Discussion Questions** provide an opportunity to practice framing questions that intentionally target different levels of Bloom’s taxonomy.
- **Reverse Outlines** ask you to distill the key arguments and structural features of longer readings into a short outline.
- **Reading Responses** ask you to summarize other scholars’ historical arguments and engage them in a concise, focused way (300 words or less), and give you a chance to reflect on which elements you find most interesting or important.
- **Roundtable Analyses** ask you, in a 3-4 page double-spaced essay, to summarize, analyze, and synthesize one or more important themes across a pair of historical monographs, and to explain how they are in conversation with one another.

Other Assignments build toward your final research paper:

**Research Question Discussion:** Prepare a 3-4 minute presentation that explains your research paper topic, the historical question you hope to answer, why that question is valuable, and what you find most interesting or important about your question.

**Tentative Bibliography:** Based on your initial research, compile a short bibliography of the ten most promising sources you have identified. At the top of your bibliography, provide short annotations for the 3-4 most important existing scholarly sources that speak to your research question.

**The Final Research Paper** 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, should connect in some clear way to one of the scholarly discussions in which one or more course texts are engaged, and should be 12-15 pages in length. Drawing on a range of sources, the paper 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.

**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. 30, at 5 pm.

**Peer Review Groups:** All students will meet with their peer review groups between Sunday 12/2 and Saturday 12/8, to provide feedback on the peer review drafts submitted by your group members on Nov. 29. (We will discuss this assignment further in class; peer review guidelines are posted on Moodle.)

See Moodle for full details about each assignment.
My grading philosophy is that grades ideally ought to do a few things. First, they ought to encourage learning—that is, to give you reasons (whether carrots or sticks) to take advantage of the opportunities for learning that the course provides. Second, they should reflect how much work you have put into the class—that is, how much genuine effort you have made to learn the things I have asked you to learn and to do the things I have asked you to do. Third, they should measure how well you have demonstrated mastery of the course’s content—that is, how well you have performed on high-stakes assignments that I have designed to measure your knowledge and skill relative to other students.

The problem is that there is often tension among these three things, which can generate a lot of angst and ambiguity for students and professors alike. If one student displays exceptional effort and improvement, should she get a higher grade in the course than her actual performance on high-stakes assessments says she should? What about that brilliant slacker who sat next to her? The one who missed a bunch of class, rarely contributed to discussions, and made a habit of texting under the desk during class—yet somehow managed to perform well on those high-stakes tests and papers?

Grading in this course will be quite different in some ways—and very similar in others—from norms you have likely experienced in the past, but it is structured to do all three of the things mentioned above. There is solid research suggesting that high-pressure, high-stakes testing can be detrimental to learning, and especially “deep learning.” This seems to be especially true with skill-building activities like improving the quality of one’s writing, which seem to work best as a slow, incremental, iterative process of practicing techniques and building skills based on regular feedback. In an effort to encourage experimentation, reward effort, and still provide an honest assessment of your mastery of course skills and content relative to other students, I will determine your grade this semester using a method called the “Contract for B.”

Here’s how it works in a nutshell. In this course, your final grade will reflect two separate variables. 85 points of your 100-point grade will be based on fulfilling the minimum terms of the contract as spelled out below. If you faithfully meet the terms of the contract, you will automatically earn the full 85 points; if you do not (falling “off contract”), the most you can earn for this portion of your grade is a 70. The remaining 15 points will be based entirely on the quality of the revised written work in your final portfolio, independent of the effort you have put in. Do the math and you’ll see that the minimum grade for anyone who works hard and fulfills the terms of the contract is a B. For those who fulfill the terms of the contract and turn in a B+ portfolio, the final grade will be a B+ (and A- for A- portfolios, or A for A portfolios). For those who have fallen off contract, the best you can do based on the quality of writing in your portfolio (assessed independent of effort) is a B-

I will read and comment on your work regularly during the semester, focusing on how you can improve your writing and your mastery of course content. I will not grade any of your written work until the final portfolio, although you should have a pretty good idea of where you stand based on the comments I provide. The purpose of this approach is to remove worries about grades from the equation, allowing us to focus on what you can do to improve as a writer and as a student in this course—no matter how good you already are at these things.
Every student who does all of the following is guaranteed to earn at least a B in this course:

1. **Attend class regularly.** Everyone can miss class once and remain on contract. Any additional absences must be “purchased” at the cost of one token each (see “Forgiveness Tokens,” next page).

2. **Do the reading and participate in class discussions, exercises, and activities.** Be advised that this course has an appropriately heavy reading load for a history course at this level, as well as frequent short writing assignments. I have chosen readings for readability and interest, but please plan ahead because completing both the readings and their related short assignments is vital to our collective success. Discussions and short writing assignments are the driving forces in this class, so it is vital that everyone arrive prepared to discuss and engage with the day’s material. Our goal will be to analyze issues, 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.

3. **Complete at least three of each of the following assignments over the course of the semester**—including at least one of each during Weeks 2-5, another one of each during Weeks 6-9, and another one of each during Weeks 11-14. Otherwise you may complete these assignments on whatever schedule you choose, within the constraints of the late work policy spelled out in #5 of the contract. The only caveat is that you may not complete more than one assignment for any given day.
   a. Draft Discussion Questions (due at 11 am on the day the reading is discussed)
   b. Reverse Outline (due at 11 am on the day the reading is discussed)
   c. Reading Response (due at 11 am on the day the reading is discussed)

4. **Complete three Roundtable Analysis papers** (3-4 double-spaced pages each, due at 11 am on the day of each roundtable; as long as you turn in a complete draft on time, you may request an automatic 48-hour extension to continue to work on the essay before I read it and provide feedback)

5. **Turn in work that is on time and complete,** even if it is not your best work. All writing assignments that you submit should be complete, on time, reflect honest effort, and be of at least passing-level quality. With the exception of Draft Discussion Questions, you may use one of your tokens to “buy” a 24-hour extension for any assignment if your work is not yet complete or of passable quality at the time of the deadline. For the Peer Review Draft of your Research Paper, you may request an automatic, no-questions-asked extension of 48 hours to make further revisions before I read it and offer comments—as long as you turn in a complete draft when it is due, even if it is not yet polished to your satisfaction. You may also discuss known problems with me, as long as you do so ahead of the deadline, even on short notice; in some extreme cases I will extend the deadline if you have a good reason for not being able to complete the assignment by the original due date. To be considered of “passing-level quality,” your Peer Review Draft of the Research Paper must earn at least 80 points according to this rubric.

6. **Give honest, constructive feedback** on others’ writing in class and in peer conferences.

7. For your final portfolio, **make substantive, good-faith revisions that respond to written feedback** from me and others. This will most often include extending or refining your thinking by qualifying or sharpening your thesis, reconsidering your evidence and analysis, and/or rethinking your structure and organization. It should always include some reorganizing and restructuring of your arguments at the paragraph and sentence level, together with editing your language for greater clarity and impact.

8. **Turn in a complete portfolio of revised, passing-quality work,** with cover sheet, via Moodle by noon on Monday, 12/11.

9. **Meet individually with me** for a 30-minute portfolio conference, chosen from a wide range of available times, between Dec. 10 and Dec. 13. During the conference, I will give your portfolio a grade and discuss it with you. If you are happy with that grade, you can choose to accept it and be done. If you would like to continue revising, you can keep working on it until the final deadline, which is the course’s scheduled final exam time (Sat., Dec 15, at 1:30 pm). There is no guarantee that further revisions will improve your final portfolio grade, but you are guaranteed at least the grade assigned at your portfolio conference.
PORTFOLIOS OF REVISED WORK

The writing in your final revised portfolio should reflect your best writing, and taken as a whole should demonstrate your ability to:

1. Identify, analyze, and synthesize important course themes by drawing on multiple course readings;
2. Identify, summarize, and engage with other scholars’ historical arguments;
3. Generate a compelling historical argument that follows the conventions of historical scholarship and is competently framed for an anticipated audience of other bright, engaged Macalester students who do not know the first thing about this course’s content;
4. Support an argument by carefully analyzing an appropriate range of well-selected evidence drawn from course materials and original research;
5. Express ideas clearly using sentence and paragraph-level structures appropriate for historical scholarship.

At minimum, your portfolio should include revised versions of the following:

1. One Reading Response OR one Reverse Outline OR one set of Draft Discussion Questions
2. One Roundtable Analysis
3. Your Final Research Paper
4. A 2-3 page explanation of how the writing in your portfolio demonstrates all of the skills listed above, together with a short description of the most important revisions you have made to improve it.

You may include more pieces of writing than this if you need to in order to demonstrate 1-5 above, but the complete portfolio cannot exceed 20 pages total. (Your “cover letter” will not count toward the 20-page limit.)

FORGIVENESS TOKENS

No one is perfect, and sometimes we don’t quite manage to do some of things that we are supposed to, despite the best of intentions. Forgiveness tokens are designed to recognize this reality. Everyone in the class will begin the semester with three tokens, and may use them in whatever combination they want at the following exchange rates:

Number of tokens | Forgiveness
---|---
1 | One class absence OR 24-hour extension on a reading response, reverse outline, or roundtable analysis
2 | 48-hour extension on a reading response, reverse outline, or roundtable analysis OR 24-hour extension on the portfolio
3 | 48-hour extension on the portfolio

Extra Tokens may be earned under certain circumstances, particularly for those who have fallen off contract and are trying to get back on. Generally speaking, earning an extra token will require roughly the same amount of time and preparation as is required to prepare for and attend one day of class.

CALL ME “CHRI$$

(he/him/his)

Students often are not sure what to call their professors. Like many others at Macalester, I invite you to use my first name. If you are feeling formal, you can call me Professor Wells or Dr. Wells—but be aware that you should typically avoid Mr./Ms./Mrs. with professors, most of whom have PhDs. If you are not sure of someone’s preferences, just ask! And be sure to share what you would like to be called, as well.
DRAFT READING SCHEDULE: SEE MOODLE FOR OUR OFFICIAL LIST
All e-reserves marked X

WEEK 1: INTRODUCTIONS (25)
T  9/4    What is Urban Environmental History?

WEEK 2: PIGS, PROMENADES, AND PRIVIES (133)
T  9/11   McNeur, Taming Manhattan, Intro-ch. 2 (94)
R  9/13   McNeur, Taming Manhattan, ch. 3 (39)

WEEK 3: THE STRUGGLE FOR THE COMMONS (177)
T  9/18   McNeur, Taming Manhattan, chs. 4-end (103)
R  9/20   Rawson, Eden on the Charles, Prologue and ch. 1 (74)

WEEK 4: (RE)MAKING THE CITY IN NATURE (158)
T  9/25   Rawson, Eden on the Charles, chs. 2-3 (104)
R  9/27   Rawson, Eden on the Charles, ch. 4 (54)

WEEK 5: THE CITY COMPLETE (52)
T  10/2   Rawson, Eden on the Charles, ch. 5-end (52)
R  10/4   Roundtable 1

WEEK 6: WORKING-CLASS NATURE (149)
T  10/9   Fisher, Urban Green, Introduction-ch. 4 (113)
R  10/11  Fisher, Urban Green, ch. 5-end (36)

WEEK 7: RACIAL LANDSCAPES (155)
T  10/16  McCammack, Landscapes of Hope, Introduction-ch. 2 (104)
R  10/18  McCammack, Landscapes of Hope, ch. 3 (51)

WEEK 8: RESEARCH QUESTION DISCUSSIONS (0)
T  10/23  Research question discussions
R  10/25  NO CLASS: FALL BREAK

WEEK 9: RACE AND NATURE IN THE GREAT DEPRESSION (102)
T  10/30  McCammack, Landscapes of Hope, ch. 4-end (102)
R  11/1   Roundtable 2

WEEK 10: RESEARCH WEEK (0)
T  11/6   RESEARCH WEEK (and individual meetings with me)
R  11/8   RESEARCH WEEK (and individual meetings with me)
WEEK 11: SEPTIC-TANK SUBURBIA (152)

WEEK 12: SUBURBAN NATURE (118)
T  11/20  Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside*, chs. 5-end (118) X
R  11/22  NO SCHOOL: THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 13: ON NATURE’S EDGE (116)
R  11/29  Bramwell, *Wilderburbs*, ch 2 (42)
F  11/30  Peer Review Draft due via Moodle at 5 pm

WEEK 14: NATURAL ENCOUNTERS (104)
T  12/4  Bramwell, *Wilderburbs*, ch. 3-end (104)
R  12/6  Roundtable 3
PEER REVIEW CONFERENCES THIS WEEK

WEEK 15: PORTFOLIOS (0)
M  12/10  Portfolios of Revised Work (with cover sheet) due via Moodle by noon
T  12/11  NO CLASS (portfolio conferences)
SIGN UP FOR A PORTFOLIO CONFERENCE SLOT, 12/10-12/13