

**HIST120AC/ESPM160AC:
American Environmental and Cultural History**

Instructor: Robert Chester

Semester: Fall 2015

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Consultation Hours: Wednesdays, 10:30-11:30 & 2-3

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Required Texts

-William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and Ecology in New England, Revised Edition*, Paperback, (Hill and Wang, 2003), ISBN-13: 978-0809016341

-Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac: With Essays on Conservation from Round River*, Paperback, (Ballantine Books, 1986), ISBN-13: 978-0345345059

-Christopher F. Jones, *Routes of Power: Energy and Modern America*, (Harvard University Press, 2014), ISBN-13: 978-0674728899

-Anders Halverson, *An Entirely Synthetic Fish: How Rainbow Trout Beguiled America and Overran the World*, (Yale University Press, 2011), ISBN-13: 978-0300140880

-bcourses

Course Requirements

Midterm Exam: 15% (Monday, October 5)

Research Project & Presentation: 20% (Due Dates TBA by GSIs)

Observational Analysis: 5% (Due Monday, November 30)

Final Exam: 35% (Wednesday, December 16 at 7pm)

Discussion Section: 25%

Course Description: HIST120/ESPM160AC examines how distinct human societies and natural environments have shaped one another throughout the history of the United States and the Americas more broadly. The course assists students in analyzing primary and secondary sources to analyze the different ways that Native Americans, African Americans, Europeans, Euro-Americans, and others have perceived, experienced, and actively shaped natural and built environments over time and space. We will examine how Native American and European settler communities viewed one another's cultures according to the distinct ways they manipulated nature and managed resources. Ultimately, colonization, disease, and capitalism combined to facilitate European expansion into the Americas. These factors also contributed to the explosive growth of the African slave trade and the massive dispossession and decline of indigenous communities across the Americas. The environmental forces unleashed by Europeans during these centuries undermined the ability of indigenous communities to resist encroachment and expansion. The staple-export agriculture that emerged in European colonies in the Americas fed the appetites of the slave trade and structured the lives, labor, and working environments of millions of African-American slaves. This capitalist agriculture also intensified demand for new lands which in turn contributed to pressure for acquiring more territory from Native Americans. HIST120/ESPM160AC thus explores the various ways that the environmental history of the

Americas illuminates the many deep connections between the cultural histories of Native Americans, African Americans, European settlers, and Euro-Americans.

Two major themes that will inform the course are the historic debate over the purpose of public lands and campaigns and policies for the protection of public health. In this context, we will examine the emergence of the conservation and environmental movements, the federal agencies responsible for managing public lands, and the activism of scientists and reformers working to reduce urban, industrial, and occupational hazards. In addition to explaining the transition to and consequences of a fossil fuel economy, students will explore the economic causes and cultural and ecological ramifications of suburbanization after World War II. We will also analyze the changing nature of agriculture from the rise of corporate agribusiness to its ecological and public health consequences in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Finally, the course will end by considering the causes and consequences of global climate change for the United States and the World.

Exams: The midterm exam will consist of a blue/green book analysis of course materials comprising two short-essay identifications and one longer essay based on a pre-circulated prompt. The Identification portion of the midterm will account for thirty percent and the longer essay will account for the remaining seventy percent of the student's exam grade. The final exam will also require a blue/green book and will consist of three parts, including two Identifications and two longer essays based on pre-circulated prompts. Long essays require students to provide extensive and in-depth analysis of assigned readings.

Research Project & Presentation: Each student must sign up to present on one of the topics selected or approved by their GSI. Once you have your topic, you will need to search article databases, periodicals, and newspapers to find relevant materials that will allow you to assemble a bibliography that will help you prepare to discuss your topic. Each student will be required to submit an annotated bibliography and a brief outline to their GSI (this last step of the project may be handed in either before or after their presentation in discussion section). The outline portion of this assignment requires that the students provide introductory and concluding paragraphs that articulate their arguments and explain the ways their research provided evidence for their core claims. Students may draw upon disciplinary expertise to tackle topics they are familiar with, but they must explain the significance of their topic and present their knowledge with a general audience in mind. Avoid jargon and overly technical language that impedes the ability of non-experts to understand your analysis. The student's annotated bibliography must list **at least one scholarly monograph, two scholarly articles from peer-review journals, and at least three separate primary sources such as newspaper and magazine articles, correspondence, pamphlets, travel narratives, and/or other documents.** Wikipedia is not an authorized source for this assignment. Students may choose to focus on current research or debates concerning their chosen topic and/or the history of this subject. Where possible, students should attempt to historicize their topic. There is no maximum number of citations or sources a student may draw upon to prepare for their discussion. **Individual students should plan on spending a minimum of four and a maximum of six minutes per person discussing the information they found and the conclusions they may have reached about their topic.** More time may be allocated for the fielding of questions after the student finishes their in-class presentation. Each student's project will be assessed as a whole, but no step in the process should be viewed as unimportant.

Observational Analysis: Each student must visit an outdoor area where they may observe the environment of the site selected. **Students must visit the same location twice.** The first observational visit should occur between August 27 and September 30. The second visit should occur roughly between November 1 and November 27. Your chosen site may be an agricultural area, a state or local park, a reserve or preserve of some sort, a stretch of private property that you can access, or a boat on the water if you prefer. The above examples do not preclude the possibility of other types of sites students might visit and observe. My examples are simply suggestions. This exercise is intended 1) to demonstrate the importance of seasonal variation in how we experience our environmental surroundings 2) emphasize the insights gained from experiential learning and the limits of text-based knowledge 3) foster an understanding of the work and analysis of keystone writers who continue to influence how we view and think about nature, ecology, conservation, and environmental history 4) encourage students to enjoy themselves. In order to better understand the genre of nature writing we are aspiring to, students should read Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* prior to embarking on this assignment. Students may choose one of the following options to complete the requirements of your observational analysis. Students should strive to analyze any evidence of how the site they visit has changed over time. This analysis of change over time must include an analysis of seasonal variation but may also include an analysis of changes over a series of years and or decades should the student have access to that information and wish to include it in their observations. In other words, is there clear evidence of human manipulation? How did the built environment shape the way you experienced this place?

Option One: Journal Entries: For each separate visit to the site, students should present one to two pages of description based on their observations of the landscape, weather, animals, birds, plants, and/or bodies of water. Each description should provide the location where the student performed their observations and specify the date and time of day this field experiment was conducted. Ultimately, students must present a one to two page analysis that compares and contrasts the findings from both journal entries and emphasizes how these distinct descriptions reflect the seasonal rhythms and variation of this distinct site. Students must submit copies of their journal entries/notes along with their synthetic analysis of seasonal variation.

Option Two: Visual Representation: For each separate visit to the site, students should present at least one image that captures some aspect of their observations of the landscape, weather, animals, birds, plants, and/or bodies of water. These images may consist of sketches, diagrams, and/or photographs executed by the individual student. Each description should provide the location where the student performed their observations and specify the date and time of day these images were produced. Ultimately, students must present a one to two page analysis that compares and contrasts their findings from both visits and emphasizes how these distinct visual representations capture the seasonal rhythms and variation of this distinct site. Students must submit copies of their images/notes along with their synthetic analysis of seasonal variation.

Cheating or Plagiarism: Plagiarism is a form of academic dishonesty, violating the Berkeley Campus Code of Student Conduct. According to the Code:

"Plagiarism includes use of intellectual material produced by another person without acknowledging its source."

Please see additional handout posted to bcourses for a more specific definition of plagiarism with examples.

Discussion Sections: Discussion section accounts for 25% of your course grade. Regular attendance and participation in section are required for this course. **Section is reserved primarily for discussion of assigned readings and course assignments. If you have questions about lectures, please try to ask them during office hours. Asking one or two quick questions at the start of section is fine, but discussion is not primarily a place to review material from lecture; rather, it is a place where you use materials from lecture to situate and analyze weekly readings in their historical and thematic context.** You are permitted only one unexcused absence. Two unexcused absences will automatically reduce your section grade to a maximum of a B, and three unexcused absences will automatically reduce your section grade to a maximum of a D.

Laptops and Other Electronic Equipment: The use of laptops or other electronic devices (phones, kindles, tablets, and the like) during my lectures is expressly prohibited. **You may NOT use them.** If you require accommodations that exempt you from such restrictions, please contact me the first day of class or have the appropriate parties forward this information to me as soon as possible. Please refrain from texting or manipulating your phone or other gadgets while in class. If I see you fiddling with your phone that means you are disrupting my lecture, and I will make a point of stopping to get your attention. More generally, please act courteously out of respect for me and your fellow students during both lectures and discussions. Thank you.

bcourses: The instructor will use bcourses (<https://bcourses.berkeley.edu/>) to provide students with a range of course materials. The instructor will post the following on **bcourses**: the syllabus, lecture outlines, discussion questions for assigned readings, assignments, and primary and secondary sources. There will be an outline for every single lecture, and they will all be posted in a folder in **bcourses** approximately 24 hours in advance (if not well before then).

Course Calendar

Week One (Assigned Reading: Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*, pp.xiii-98, and Primary Sources (bcourses))

Wednesday, August 26: Meteorites & Major Themes

Friday, August 28: Mammoths & Mosaics

Week Two (Assigned Reading: Excerpt from White, *The Organic Machine*, (bcourses), and William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, pp.xi-15)

Monday, August 31: Agricultural Developments

Wednesday, September 2: The Columbian Exchange

Friday, September 4: Sugar, Tobacco & the Growth of the African Slave Trade

Week Three (Assigned Reading: Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, pp.19-126)

Monday, September 7: **No Class/Labor Day**

Wednesday, September 9: Tidal Zones & Black Belts

Friday, September 11: Pox Americana

Week Four (Assigned Reading: Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, pp.127-185, and Ari Kelman, "The Necropolis of the South," (bcourses))

Monday, September 14: An Empire of Liberty & Order
Wednesday, September 16: Equine Empires
Friday, September 18: Time, Space & Movement

Week Five (Assigned Reading: Primary Sources by Thoreau, Fenimore-Cooper, Emerson, Clappe, and Melville, and Dan Flores, "Bison Ecology and Bison Diplomacy" (bcourses))

Monday, September 21: Transcendent Nature
Wednesday, September 23: Nature Incorporated
Friday, September 25: From Hydraulic to Hard-Rock to Open Pit Mining

Week Six (Assigned Reading: Excerpts from George Perkins Marsh, *Man & Nature*, John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra*, & John Wesley Powell, *Report on the Lands of the Arid Region*, (bcourses), and Jones, *Routes of Power*, pp.1-22)

Monday, September 28: Not-So-Free Soil
Wednesday, September 30: Creating Corridors & Building Communities
Friday, October 2: Mystic, Scientist, Advocate

Week Seven (Assigned Reading: Jones, *Routes of Power*, pp.23-122)

Monday, October 5: **Midterm Exam**
Wednesday, October 7: From the Open Range to the Feedlot
Friday, October 9: From Bonanza to Bust

Week Eight (Assigned Reading: Excerpts from Thomas Andrews, *Killing for Coal*, (bcourses), and Jones, *Routes of Power*, pp.123-160)

Monday, October 12: Conflagrations, Timber Famines & Wounded Watersheds
Wednesday, October 14: Imperial Personalities & Dispossessed Peoples
Friday, October 16: Managing Monumental Nature

Week Nine (Assigned Reading: Halverson, *An Entirely Synthetic Fish*, pp.ix-xviii, 1-75, and Leopold, pp.101-110, 130-41)

Monday, October 19: **Film:** *Facing the Storm*
Wednesday, October 21: **Film:** *Facing the Storm*
Friday, October 23: Urban Obstacles, Urban Opportunities

Week Ten (Assigned Reading: Jones, *Routes of Power*, pp.161-240, and Halverson, *An Entirely Synthetic Fish*, pp.76-128)

Monday, October 26: Fossil Fuels, Electricity & Energy Transitions

Wednesday, October 28: "Water is for Fighting Over"

Friday, October 30: The Dust Bowl & The New Deal

Week Eleven (Assigned Reading: Halverson, *An Entirely Synthetic Fish*, pp.129-88, and Leopold, pp.177-202, 237-79)

Monday, November 2: The Dust Bowl & The New Deal Continued

Wednesday, November 4: From Hetch Hetchy to Dinosaur

Friday, November 6: From Abundance to Addiction

Week Twelve (Assigned Reading: Excerpts from Walter Prescott Webb, *The Great Plains & Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl*, and William Cronon, "A Place for Stories," (bcourses))*

Monday, November 9: Levittown, Lawns & Ever Longer Commutes

Wednesday, November 11: **No Class/Veterans Day**

Friday, November 13: Spectacular Disasters & Substantive Reforms

Week Thirteen (Assigned Reading: Colin Fisher, "African Americans, Outdoor Recreation, and the 1919 Chicago Race Riot" (bcourses))

Monday, November 16: Toxic Histories

Wednesday, November 18: From Sunkist to Slow Food

Friday, November 20: Reclaiming Rights & Battling Environmental Racism

Week Fourteen (Assigned Reading: Primary Sources & Excerpts from Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* and Julie Sze, *Noxious New York*, (bcourses))

Monday, November 23: Stagflation & Sagebrush

Wednesday, November 25: TBA

Friday, November 27: **No Class/Academic and Administrative Holiday**

Week Fifteen (Assigned Reading: Excerpts from Barry Commoner, Paul Ehrlich & Garrett Hardin(bcourses))

Monday, November 30: Acts of God? (**Observational Analysis Due**)

Wednesday, December 2: From Trinity to Fukushima Daiichi (**Observational Analysis Due**)

Friday, December 4: Betting on a Global Commons

Final Exam: Wednesday, December 16 from 7 to 10pm (Location TBA)