

Spring 1993

History 460

AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

LECTURER: Bill Cronon, 5103 Humanities.

SECTION LEADER: Lian Partlow.

Phone: 263-1840. This has an answering machine on which you can leave messages if I'm not in. No calls to my home telephone number, please.

Office Hours: 10:30-11:30 Wednesday and Thursday mornings, first come first served. I would prefer to see you during regular hours, but will try to meet with you at other times if necessary. Please don't just stop by my office if you need to see me at times other than my office hours, however; call first and make an appointment.

LECTURES will be held on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 2:30 to 3:45.

A NOTE ON THE READINGS:

This syllabus provides a detailed outline of what we'll be covering in the course, and we strongly advise you to refer to it often as you plan your studying.

Readings are extensive, averaging 100-200 pages per week, but they are generally not difficult; they have been chosen as much as possible to be fun and provocative as well as informative. All required texts are available at the University Bookstore. They are as follows (call numbers are included where available):

- Rachel Carson, Silent Spring, SB 959 C3
- William Cronon, Changes in the Land, GF 504 N45 C76 1983
- Alfred Crosby, Ecological Imperialism, GF 50 C76 1986
- Stephen Fox, The American Conservation Movement, QH 31 F68 1985
- Aldo Leopold, Sand County Almanac, QH81 L56 1966
- Richard Meehan, The Atom and the Fault, TK1344 C2 M44 1984
- Carolyn Merchant, Major Problems in American Environmental History
- Roderick Nash, American Environmentalism, S930.A56 1990
- John Reiger, American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation, QL84.2R43 1986

Note that you will not be reading all of these books in their entirety, and all are available in Helen C. White library; you needn't purchase all of them, and you should feel free to read library copies or share books with classmates.

EXAMINATIONS AND INTERPRETIVE ESSAY ASSIGNMENTS:

There will be two exams, a midterm and a final, each covering their respective halves of the course in their objective sections; the final will also require you to write comprehensive essays covering the course as a whole.

You will be asked to turn in two brief interpretive essays (no more than 4-6 pages in length), in which you reflect on and discuss a major theme in environmental history. You should devote these essays to an analysis of a particular reading, movie, painting, lecture, or discussion section, linking them in a serious and historical way to some major topic we're discussing in the course. The essays should not be mere book reports, but should reflect your effort to engage, critique, and move beyond the ideas of particular authors or artists as you strive to integrate their work into the larger framework of the course.

You may turn in your interpretive essays during whichever weeks you choose, subject to the following restrictions:

- you must turn in 1 essay during each half of the course;
- if your essay covers a reading, it should be turned in at the beginning of the discussion section in which that text is discussed;
- both essays must be completed by the last day of class, when you will be asked to resubmit both of them to your section leader for final evaluation.

We ask that you think seriously and creatively about the content of these essays, and that you write them as well as you know how. They will be evaluated for the quality and concision of their prose as well as for the breadth and depth of their thought. That said, try to relax and have fun with the essays: they're your chance to play with the ideas in the course, and to test out different ways of looking at this complicated material.

(If you would like to replace the second essay with a short research paper, you are welcome to do so provided you make prior arrangements with your section leader by no later than March 18.)

Be forewarned that late essays will be marked down by at least one-third of a grade unless other arrangements are made well prior to the due date. No essay will be accepted after the final exam. The midterm exam counts for 25% of your grade, and the final for 35% of it; the two interpretive essays collectively count for 25% of your grade, and section participation for another 15%.

WEEKLY OUTLINE OF LECTURES AND ASSIGNMENTS

(Note: the number following weekly titles indicates pages of assigned reading.)

Week 1: INTRODUCTORY (74)

19 Jan: Conversing with the Earth

21 Jan: The World That Coyote and Raven Made

SECTION: Nash, American Environmentalism, 1-8.

Merchant, Problems, 1-64.

Week 2: INVASION (226)

26 Jan: Migration, Disease, and Death

28 Jan: Co-Invasion

SECTION: Crosby, Ecological Imperialism, 1-103, 132-216, 269-308.

WEEK 3: CHANGING THE LAND (188)

2 Feb: Selling Animals

4 Feb: A World of Fields and Fences

SECTION: Cronon, Changes in the Land, 1-170.

Merchant, Problems, 65-83.

WEEK 4: THE COUNTRY AND THE CITY (127)

9 Feb: The Flow of the River: Industrial Revolutions

11 Feb: The Machine in the Garden: Agricultural Revolutions

SECTION: Merchant, Problems, 133-169, 209-46, 286-337

WEEK 5: LANDSCAPES OF DEATH (140)

16 Feb: Hunters and Hunted

18 Feb: Even the Oceans Fail

SECTION: Reiger, American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation 11-151, and study pictures.

WEEK 6: LANDSCAPES OF THE MIND (53)

23 Feb: Mountain Gloom, Mountain Glory: Sublime and Picturesque

25 Feb: Improving Nature

SECTION: Nash, American Environmentalism, 36-51.

Merchant, Problems, 170-208.

WEEK 7: TEACHING NATURE

2 March: Discovering Nature: The Child in the Garden

4 March: **MID-TERM EXAM**

Remember: you must have completed your first interpretive essay by now.

SPRING BREAK

WEEK 8. THE CONTRADICTIONS OF PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATION (187)

16 March: The Conservation Vision

18 March: BATTLE FOR WILDERNESS (in-class documentary screening)

SECTION: Fox, American Conservation Movement, 3-147.

Nash, American Environmentalism, 69-112.

WEEK 9: ANXIETIES OF A NUCLEAR AGE (158)

23 March: Planning Against Disaster

25 March: Planning, Prophecy, and the Population Bomb

SECTION: Fox, American Conservation Movement, 148-217

Nash, American Environmentalism, 113-70, 202-5.

Merchant, Problems, 414-43.

WEEK 10: RACHEL CARSON AND A NEW ENVIRONMENTALISM (147)

30 March: The Fallout of Silent Spring

1 April: RACHEL CARSON'S SILENT SPRING (in-class documentary screening)
plus excerpts from CBS REPORTS Silent Spring documentary.

SECTION: Carson, Silent Spring, 1-37, 103-127, 219-97.

Fox, American Conservation Movement, 291-99.

WEEK 11: WILDERNESS AND THE LAND ETHIC (206)

6 April: Wilderness and Nature's Economy

8 April: Killing What One Loves: Paradoxes of Preservation

SECTION: Leopold, Sand County Almanac, 6-19, 127-9, 137-41, 237-95. (If you're using another edition, read the essays entitled "Good Oak," "Red Legs Kicking," "Thinking Like a Mountain," and Part IV of the Book, "The Upshot.")

Fox, American Conservation Movement, 218-329.

Nash, American Environmentalism, 160-65, 175-80, 259-67.

WEEK 12: TOWARDS EARTH DAY (94)

13 April: Back to Earth

15 April: Environmentalism Triumphant?

SECTION: Nash, American Environmentalism, 181-89, 195-236, 246-54.

Merchant, Problems, 484-522.

WEEK 13: ENVIRONMENTAL DECADE: THE PERILS OF SUCCESS (170)

20 April: Redefining Risk: NEPA and the Rise of Environmental Law

22 April: Energy Crisis

SECTION: Meehan, The Atom and the Fault, ix-157.

Nash, American Environmentalism, 237-45.

WEEK 14: ENVIRONMENTAL POLITICS IN THE REAGAN ERA (93)

27 April: Toxic Torts

29 April: Backlash: Environmental Politics in the 1980's

SECTION: Nash, American Environmentalism, 255-348.

WEEK 15: WORRYING ABOUT THE PLANET (45)

4 May: Scale Shift: The Prospect of Global Change

6 May: Taking Heart from Planetary Peril: Our Common Future

SECTION: Merchant, Problems, 523-68.

Remember: You must resubmit both of your interpretive essays this week for final evaluation.