

History 280: United States Environmental History - Honors

Course Meetings: 321 CCC 11am – 11:50am MWF

UWSP – History Department
473 CCC

Dr. Neil Prendergast
nprender@uwsp.edu

Office Hours:

Tuesdays 11am-Noon (Library 2nd Floor)

Thursdays 1pm -2pm (Library 2nd Floor)

What can the past teach us about sustainability?

That question is at the root of all we'll do this semester. As an historian, I think there is no better a challenge than to teach how the past matters today. As an *environmental* historian, I further believe that the lessons of the past are—and should be—environmental lessons.

In this class, we look for lessons to guide sustainability in three places: cities, farms, and forests. Each forms a unit in the class. There are certainly other ways to survey American environmental history, but this particular arrangement works very well. It encourages us to see the intellectual and cultural traditions that undergird how Americans today think about cities, farms and forests.

In each unit, we will keep in mind the components of sustainability: justice, economics, and ecology. As it turns out, Americans have long thought about these themes, well before the notion of sustainability came on the scene. That's good for us, because it means we can learn from people who have already thought about the things we care about. The past is full of people who can help us decide how to build cities, farm soil, design parks, and manage forests.

About those lessons: How do we decide upon what counts as a lesson? That's the hard part. It will be part of our conversation every day. It's also the fun part.

Enduring Understandings:

Sustainability requires understanding the lessons of the past.

Learning Outcomes: After taking this course, students will be able to:

- Describe and explain major changes in the history of the United States environment
- Evaluate competing claims about the nation's environmental past
- Question the landscape around them with thought and care

Course Structure:

Three Units: Farm, Forest, and City Each of these units is also a landscape type with its own social history, intellectual heritage, and historical ecology. In forming the class around these landscape types, my aim is to give you lots of different ways of thinking about the places you encounter everyday—and perhaps care a great deal about.

But what information are you responsible for? And how should you take notes? Each unit has a **Unit Study Guide** with keywords and questions to keep you on track. In fact, pay great attention to the Unit Study Guide. **It's not optional.** It contains keywords that will become multiple choice questions on the unit exam. It also contains questions about readings that will be possible exam questions. **Know and love the Unit Study Guide.**

We begin each unit with a week of **lecture**. I offer a basic chronology of how important ideas and major events unfolded. To reinforce the lectures, you will read *short* essays and articles made available on D2L. These lectures and readings contain keywords listed on the Unit Study Guide, which are possible exam multiple choice questions.

After the week of lecture, we watch a **film**. I like to insert the film here because it's a good visual break. A film also brings new perspectives into our inquiry—and that's the real reason I include them. The Unit Study Guide has Film Key Terms that will appear as multiple choice questions on the exam, as well as Film Questions that will be possible short answer exam questions.

Next, we arrive at the heart of the unit: the **book**. I have chosen smart and accessible books that will let us dig deeper into the history of cities, forests, or farms. The Unit Study Guide has Book Key Terms that will appear as multiple choice questions on the exam, as well as Book Questions that will be possible exam short answer questions.

Interwoven through the weeks in which we read books, we will also look at **historical documents**. In general, these will be on Fridays and require less preparation than reading the books. The Unit Study Guide contains questions about these documents that will be possible exam short answer questions.

Place Paper: At the end of the semester, you will do some light research but deep thinking about a place largely of your own choosing. It's the culminating work of the semester and takes the place of a final exam. It's due at the final exam date. An assignment description will be on D2L.



Office Hours: You are welcome to visit me in my office. I set aside office hours so that I have the chance to talk with students one-on-one. During Wednesdays 1-3pm (473 CCC), I do not have any other commitments. My only commitment is to speak with my students.

To visit me during office hours you *do not need an appointment*. We can chat about anything going on in the course, from content to class dynamics. They are an especially good time to check in if you missed class. If you have class or work during my office hours, I am happy to make an appointment. Just email me.

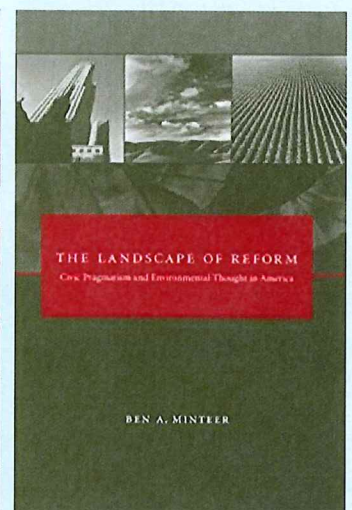
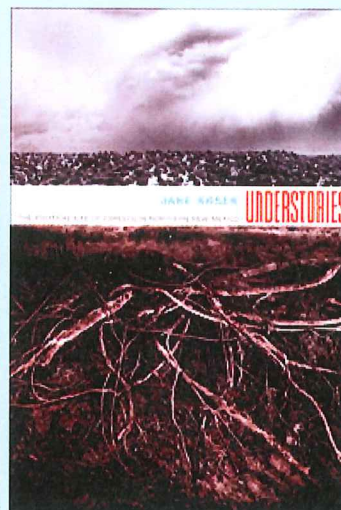
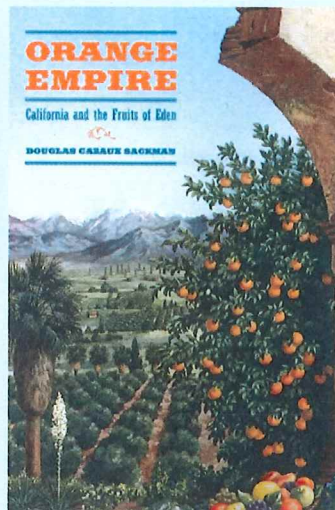
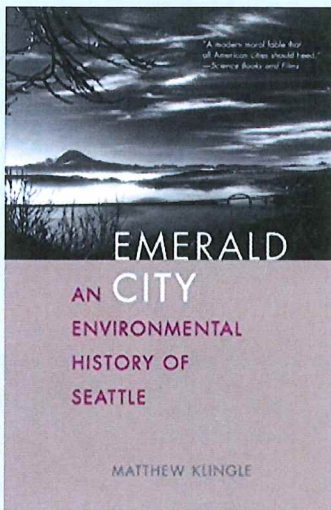
Text Rental Readings:

Matthew Klingle, *Emerald City: An Environmental History of Seattle* (2007).

Douglas Sackman, *Orange Empire: California and the Fruits of Eden* (2005).

Jake Kosek, *Understories: The Political Life of Forests in Northern New Mexico* (2008).

Ben Minteer, *Landscape of Reform: Civic Pragmatism and Environmental Thought in America* (2009).



D2L: There will be some non-book readings and they will be available on D2L.

Grading: 50 points for **Exam One** + 50 points for **Exam Two** + 50 points for **Exam Three** + 50 points for the **Final Paper** = 200 semester points.

Letter grades for the semester follow the typical pattern:

A 93-100	B+ 87-89.99	C+ 77-79.99	D+ 67-69.99	F 59.99 and below
A- 90-92.99	B 83-86.99	C 73-76.99	D 60-66.99	
	B- 80-82.99	C- 70-72.99		

Advice from Previous Students: Why listen just to me? Here is what your predecessors want to tell you:

“Read the material and attend class.”

“Attend class, pay attention and from there it’s not hard to do well in the class.”

“Stay caught up on the readings and highlight for the paper at the end.”

“Stay on top of the reading. It’s not too hard and the lectures cover the material, but the text gives a lot of depth and examples.”

“Involve yourself in the reading, thinking about how you could apply it to what you care about.”

“Be prepared to read! Pick up on little things.”

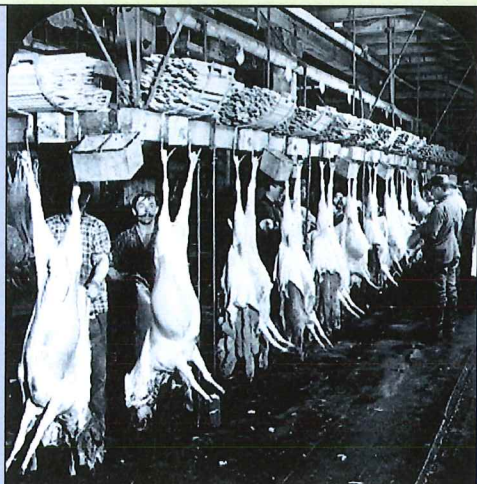
“Look beyond just the facts, because it is a very beneficial class.”

“Come to class and speak up. Participate. I found the class much more interesting when more people took part.”

Course Policies: During the class, cell phones and other electronic devices are prohibited. If you are a parent or are otherwise obligated to be available to your family via cell phone, then please discuss that situation with me, so I know that you have a good reason for keeping your phone turned on.

The prohibition of electronics also extends to laptop computers (unless approved by the Learning Technology Center). While laptops are great aides in studying, the focus in class is on class, not the computer screen. If you do prefer to have your notes in a computer file, you will find that typing them from your handwritten notes will aid you greatly in digesting the material.

For information on plagiarism, consult <http://www.uwsp.edu/centers/rights>. See Chapter 14, *Student Academic Standards and Disciplinary Procedures*, pages 5 -10, for the disciplinary possibilities if you are caught cheating. As an instructor deeply concerned with fairness in the classroom, I pursue each and every case of plagiarism and cheating. Please note that turnitin.com is used for the essay assignments.



Life Happens: I understand you have a life outside this class. I understand that life might make it difficult to complete some assignments, attend class, or simply to do well. I do my best to be flexible because I know those circumstances are out of your control and my control. I’m on your team.

I also know that some real learning has to take place in this class. You will have more opportunity in life if you understand history, read critically, and write well. This class has to be one of your priorities. I do my best to be flexible, but I have to adhere to some standards. If something comes up, let’s talk.

Equity of Educational Access: If you have a learning or physical challenge which requires classroom accommodation, please contact the UWSP Disability Services office with your documentation as early as possible in the semester. They will then notify me, in a confidential memo, of the accommodations that will facilitate your success in the course. Disability Services Office, 103 Student Services Center, Voice: (715) 346-3365, TTY: (715) 346-3362, <http://www.uwsp.edu/special/disability/studentinfo.htm>.

NOTE: This syllabus is a general plan. Changes may be announced in class, via email, or on D2L.

Schedule			
Finish readings before class on the day listed.			
Why the History of the Environment Matters			
Week 1 Sept 6, 8	Labor Day	Wednesday Introduction	Friday Introduction "Ch. 1: Civic Pragmatism and American Environmental Reform," <i>Landscape of Reform</i>
FARM: How did farming transform North American ecology and communities?			
Week 2 Sept 11, 13, 15	Monday Lecture	Wednesday Lecture	Friday Lecture "Ch. 2: Nature Study, Rural Progressivism, and the Holy Earth," <i>Landscape of Reform</i>
Week 3 Sep 18, 20, 22	Monday Film Discussion <i>Why Bracero?</i> and <i>Harvest of Shame</i> (links on Unit Studyguide)	Wednesday Book Discussion "Ch. 1: Manifesting the Garden," <i>Orange Empire</i>	Friday Book Discussion "Ch. 4: The Fruits of Labor," <i>Orange Empire</i>
Week 4 Sept 25, 27, 29	Monday Book Discussion "Ch. 5: The Finished Products of Their Environment," <i>Orange Empire</i>	Wednesday Book Discussion "Ch 7: A Record of Eden's Erosion," <i>Orange Empire</i>	Friday Document Discussion Documentary Photography (See Unit Studyguide for Documents)
Week 5 Oct 2, 4, 6	Monday Book Discussion "Ch. 8: A Profit Cannot Be Taken from an Orange," <i>Orange Empire</i>	Wednesday Doc. Discussion "Agribusiness" and "Becoming Native" (D2L)	Friday EXAM ONE
FOREST: How are forests not just natural, but also political?			
Week 6 Oct 9, 11, 13	Monday Lecture	Wednesday Lecture "Ch. 4: Wilderness and the 'Wise Province'" <i>Landscape of Reform</i>	Friday Lecture "Ch. 5: Aldo Leopold, Land Health, and the Public Interest," <i>Landscape of Reform</i>
Week 7 Oct 16, 18 No Class Oct 20	Monday Film Discussion <i>Politics of Trees</i> (links on Unit Studyguide)	Wednesday Book Discussion "Introduction," <i>Understories</i>	Friday Book Discussion NO CLASS
Week 8 Oct 23, 25, 27	Monday Book Discussion "Ch. 1: Cultural Politics of Memory and Longing," <i>Understories</i>	Wednesday Book Discussion "Ch. 2: Sovereign Natures," <i>Understories</i>	Friday Document Discussion The document discussion will be an in-class exercise.
Week 9 Oct 30 Nov 1, 3	Monday Book Discussion "Ch. 3: Passionate Attachments.." <i>Understories</i>	Wednesday Doc. Discussion "Ch. 5: Smokey Bear Is a White Racist Pig," <i>Understories</i>	Friday EXAM TWO
CITY: How does nature matter to a city?			
Week 10 Nov 6, 8, 10	Monday Lecture "Green Manhattan" (D2L)	Wednesday Lecture "City and Nature" (D2L)	Friday Lecture "Ch 3. Lewis Mumford's Pragmatic Conservationism," <i>Landscape of Reform</i>

Week 11 Nov 13, 15, 17	Monday Film Discussion <i>Dynamic American City</i> (link on Unit Studyguide)	Wednesday Book Discussion “Prologue,” <i>Emerald City</i>	Friday Book Discussion “Ch. 1: All the Forces of Nature...” <i>Emerald City</i>
Week 12 Nov 20, 22	Monday Book Discussion “Ch. 2: The Work Which Nature...” <i>Emerald City</i>	Wednesday Book Discussion “Ch. 4: Out of Harmony,” <i>Emerald City</i>	THANKSGIVING BREAK
Week 13 Nov 27, 29 Dec 1	Monday Book Discussion “Ch. 6: Junk-Yard for Human Junk,” <i>Emerald City</i>	Wednesday Book Discussion “Ch. 8: Masses of Self-Centered People” <i>Emerald City</i>	Friday EXAM THREE
Week 14 Dec 4, 6, 8	Monday Place Paper Workshop	Wednesday “Ch. 6. The Third Way Today,” <i>Landscape of Reform</i>	Friday “Ch 7. Conclusion: Environmental Ethics as Civic Philosophy” <i>Landscape of Reform</i>
Week 15 Dec 11, 13, 15	Monday Paper Troubleshooting	Wednesday Paper Troubleshooting	Friday Paper Troubleshooting
Final Exam Week	Final Paper Due 2:30pm Tuesday, December 19th in D2L		

If you like this course and are considering a history major (or any major in the humanities or social sciences), then this article might be interesting:

Good News Liberal-Arts Majors: Your Peers Probably Won’t Outearn You Forever

George Anders, *Wall Street Journal*, September 11, 2016

Six years ago, Andy Anderegg’s decision to major in English looked like an economic sacrifice. When she left academia in 2010, with a master’s degree in fine arts from the University of Kansas, the first job she landed was a [Groupon](#) Inc. [GRPN 2.62%](#) writing gig paying all of \$33,000 a year.

Now, however, Ms. Anderegg is riding high. She rose rapidly as Groupon expanded, becoming managing editor of the shopping-coupon site in 2012; by the time she left in 2014, she was earning more than \$100,000. Today, at age 30, she is executive editor at Soda Media Inc., a Seattle creator of online content, and building up her own digital-media consulting practice. She won’t disclose her aggregate income but says: “It’s better than what I made at Groupon.”

Ms. Anderegg’s delayed payoff is part of a little-noticed bright spot in the earnings picture for humanities and social-sciences majors. It’s no secret that liberal-arts graduates tend to fare worse than many of their counterparts immediately after college: According to PayScale Inc., a Seattle-based provider of salary data, the typical English or sociology graduate with zero to five years of experience earns an average of just \$39,000 a year. By contrast, finance majors with that level of experience average \$52,000; nursing, \$57,000, and computer science, \$63,000.

The story tends to change, however, as careers play out. Over time, liberal-arts majors often pursue graduate degrees and gravitate into high-paying fields such as general management, politics, law and sales, according to an analysis by the Association of American Colleges & Universities, a trade group representing more than 1,350 schools. Once people reach their peak-earnings ages of 56 to 60, liberal-arts majors are earning an average \$66,185, the association found. That’s about 3% ahead of the earnings pace for people with degrees

in vocational fields such as nursing and accounting, though it remains more than 20% behind science and engineering majors.

Even more striking, however, are earnings trends for ultrahigh achievers across all majors.

Using Census Bureau data, the Brookings Institution's Hamilton Project analyzed lifetime earnings for each discipline's top 10% of moneymakers. It found that computer science's stars rang up lifetime earnings of at least \$3.2 million. Nice work, but not as impressive as philosophy majors' \$3.46 million or history majors' \$3.75 million.

Consider the executive leadership team at Seattle's [Zillow Group](#) Inc. The real-estate data firm's chief executive, Spencer Rascoff, chose a government and economics concentration at Harvard University. Chief Financial Officer Kathleen Philips studied political science at the University of California, Berkeley. Chief economist, Stan Humphries, earned a bachelor of arts in interdisciplinary studies from North Carolina's Davidson College.

Last year, Mr. Rascoff, Ms. Philips and Mr. Humphries each earned at least \$7 million in salary, bonus or stock options, according to Zillow's proxy statement. Mr. Humphries took the most roundabout route of the three; after graduating from college, he taught high-school science in Africa for the Peace Corps before eventually earning a Ph.D. in government from the University of Virginia.

"College shouldn't prepare you for your first job, but for the rest of your life," says John Kroger, president of Reed College in Oregon, the liberal-arts school that famously served as a starting point for Steve Jobs. Although Mr. Jobs dropped out of Reed in the early 1970s, the [Apple](#) Inc. founder often credited the school with stretching his horizons in areas such as calligraphy, which later influenced Apple's design ethos.

In the short-term, employers still say they prefer college graduates with career-tailored majors. A recent survey of 180 companies by the National Association of Colleges and Employers found that at least 68% want to hire candidates who majored in business or engineering. By contrast, only 24% explicitly want communications majors, 21% want social-sciences majors and 10% humanities majors.

When asked to define the résumé traits that matter most, however, the NACE-surveyed employers rated technical skills 10th. Four of the top five traits were hallmarks of a traditional liberal-arts education: teamwork, clear writing, problem-solving aptitude and strong oral communications. Mindful of those longer-term needs, some employers end up hiring humanities and social-sciences graduates, even if such majors aren't explicitly singled out when recruiting.

"It's easier to hire people who can write—and teach them how to read financial statements—rather than hire accountants in hopes of teaching them to be strong writers," says Liz Kirschner, head of talent acquisition at [Morningstar](#) Inc., a Chicago investment-research firm. Since its founding in 1986, Morningstar has hired an unusually large number of humanities and social-sciences majors.

One of them is Alec Lucas, a philosophy and classics major who earned a Ph.D. in theology, expecting to make a decent living in either ministry or teaching.

"The best job offer I could find involved being a visiting professor, teaching four classes per term and getting paid call-center wages with no health insurance," Mr. Lucas recalls. Morningstar snapped him up at roughly triple the divinity-school's pay package, and put him to work as a mutual-fund analyst. His longtime side

interest in investment helped him find his footing; now he is Morningstar's expert on more than a dozen well-known equity-strategy funds.

Alice Harra, associate dean of students at Reed, says recent graduates of the college are landing hundreds of jobs with tech companies that value a liberal-arts ethos. Others have created startups such as Urban Airship, Puppet Inc. and Inspiration Software, she says.

"I love hiring liberal-arts graduates," says Dave Elkington, founder and chief executive of InsideSales.com, a Provo, Utah, company specializing in customer-data analysis. "They think broadly and communicate effectively. They aren't stuck in a rut. They can challenge ideas." Mr. Elkington, a philosophy major himself, says he came up with a lot of the ideas for his company's analytic tools by reflecting on Aristotle's classifications of knowledge.

Mr. Elkington isn't the only one who values liberal-arts degrees. Last year, LinkedIn data scientist Alice Ma analyzed the career paths of people who graduated from college between 2010 and 2013. Within that sample, she found that about 10% of all liberal-arts majors headed into tech-sector jobs. The figure jumped to 14% when she narrowed the list to 40 top-ranked schools, such as Harvard, Amherst College and Stanford University.

Liberal-arts graduates were most likely to join tech companies to work in sales (11.8%), marketing (5.2%) and project management or business strategy (5.1%), she says. Other common specializations included customer service, corporate communications and human resources.

Not every liberal-arts degree is equally likely to translate into a midcareer income boost. PayScale's data shows that for people with 10 to 20 years of experience, degrees in communications, political science, history and philosophy yield average annual income of \$70,000 or more. By contrast, degrees in French, anthropology, creative writing and film fit into a band of \$60,000 to \$69,000. Fields such as theology, photography and music bring up the rear; they pay less than \$60,000 on average.