

History 280: United States Environmental History

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

UWSP – History Department
473 CCC

Section Two Course Meetings: CCC 101 12:00-12:50 MWF

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Office Hours: CCC 473 1:00-2:00pm MTWR

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 office hours, 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 Klinge, 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).

D2L: There might be some non-book readings, which will be available on D2L and announced in class.

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.”

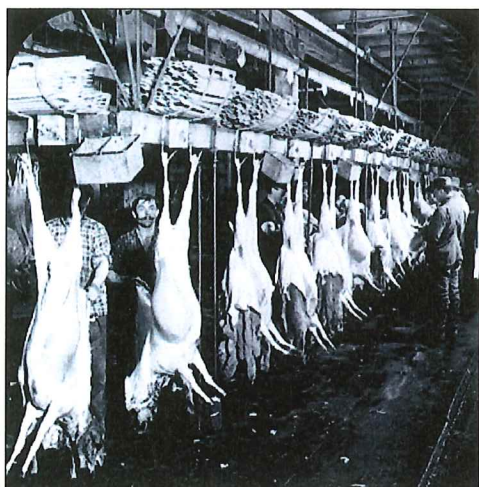
“Look beyond just the facts, because it is a very beneficial class.”

“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.

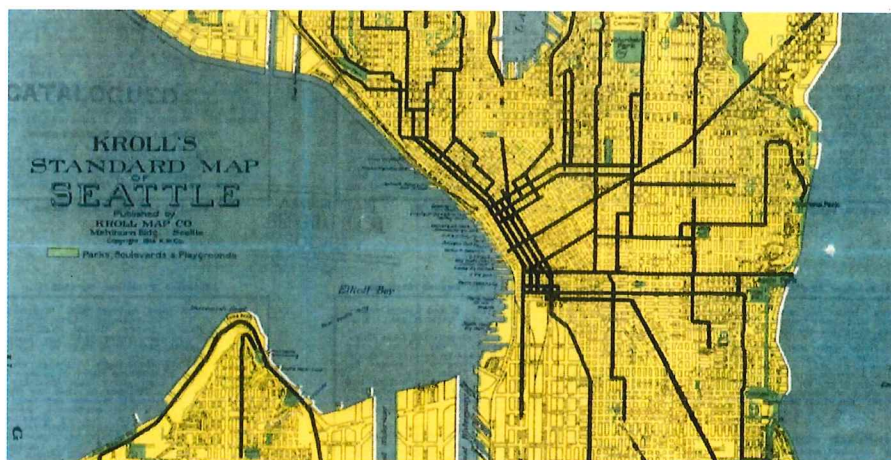


Life Happens: I understand you have a life outside this class. I understand that life might make it difficult to complete some assignments, attend class, or simply to do well. I do my best to be flexible because I know those circumstances are out of your control and my control. I'm on your team.

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: The syllabus is a general plan for the course. Changes announced in class, on D2L, or via email may be necessary.



Schedule			
Finish readings before class on the day they are listed.			
Why the History of the Environment Matters			
Week 1 Jan 23	Monday Introduction	Wednesday Lecture	Friday Lecture
FARM: How did farming transform North American ecology and communities?			
Week 2 Jan 30	Monday Lecture	Wednesday Lecture	Friday Lecture
Week 3 Feb 6	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 Feb 13	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 "Farm Security Administration Photographs" (see Studyguide for link)
Week 5 Feb 20	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 Feb 27	Monday Lecture	Wednesday Lecture	Friday Lecture
Week 7 March 6	Monday Film Discussion <i>Politics of Trees</i> (see Studyguide for link)	Wednesday Book Discussion "Introduction," <i>Understories</i>	Friday Book Discussion "Ch. 1: Cultural Politics of Memory and Longing," <i>Understories</i>
Week 8 March 13	Monday Book Discussion "Ch. 2: Sovereign Natures," <i>Understories</i>	Wednesday Book Discussion "Ch. 3: Passionate Attachments" <i>Understories</i>	Friday Document Discussion "Views from Our National Forests" (in class exercise only)
SPRING BREAK			
Week 9 March 27	Monday Book Discussion "Ch. 5: Smokey Bear Is a White Racist Pig," <i>Understories</i>	Wednesday Film Discussion "Part IV" <i>Greatest Good</i> (viewed in class)	Friday EXAM TWO
CITY: How does nature matter to a city?			
Week 10 April 3	Monday Lecture	Wednesday Lecture	Friday Lecture
Week 11 April 10	Monday Film Discussion <i>River Under the City of Angels</i> (see Studyguide for link)	Wednesday Book Discussion "Prologue" and "Ch. 1: All the Forces of Nature..." <i>Emerald City</i>	Friday Book Discussion "Ch. 2: The Work Which Nature..." <i>Emerald City</i>
Week 12 April 17	Monday Book Discussion "Ch. 3: The Imagination and ..." <i>Emerald City</i>	Wednesday Book Discussion "Ch. 6: Junk-Yard for Human Junk," <i>Emerald City</i>	Friday TBA

Week 13 April 24	Monday Book Discussion “Ch. 7: Death for a Tired Old River,” <i>Emerald City</i>	Wednesday Book Discussion “Ch. 8: Masses of Self Centered People,” <i>Emerald City</i>	Friday Document Discussion “Earth Day Documents”
Week 14 May 1	Monday EXAM THREE	Wednesday Place Paper Workshop	Friday Film Discussion <i>A Changing Delta (in class viewing)</i>
Week 15 May 8	Monday Paper Troubleshooting	Wednesday Paper Troubleshooting	Friday Paper Troubleshooting
Final Exam Week	Place Paper aka Final Paper Due by the End of the Final Exam Time Period – No Final Exam Section 1: 2:30pm Wednesday, May 17th Section 2: 10:00am Thursday May 18th		