

SYLLABUS: American Environmental Thought**FALL 2013**

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General Overview:

This course will survey major philosophical, scientific, academic, and popular ideas of nature in the United States from the eighteenth to the twenty-first centuries. Students will examine and discuss case studies of key historical manifestations of environmental thought, from romanticism to sustainability. Students will also consider voices and ideas from a range of social groups who were often marginalized in debates about the environment and resource use, such as indigenous people, women, and the working class. Finally, students will be asked to think critically about their own ideas and categories of nature and place those ideas within historical and cultural trends.

Course Objectives:

1. Demonstrate a firm understanding of the history of environmental thought in the United States
2. Critically assess the historical value, bias, and perspectives of a wide range of mediums, including text, painting, maps, and documentary film
3. Consider the ways and the extent to which the natural world is created and/or defined by ideology and dynamic use
4. Develop the oral and written skills vital to scholarly analysis and exchange

Required Readings:

The assigned readings should be completed by the date they are listed on the syllabus. Always bring the readings with you to class, along with your notes.

Carolyn Merchant, Editor, *Major Problems in American Environmental History*, 2nd Ed.

Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism*

Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*

Paul Hawken, Amory Lovins, and L. Hunter Lovins, *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution*

Assignments:

All assignments are designed to give you an opportunity to hone your writing skills and to critically analyze the materials. Please see individual assignment descriptions for further details. Assignments are due on the date and time listed on the syllabus schedule.

Participation and In-Class Activities	30%
Response Papers (6)	60%
Campus Place Tour Group Presentation	10%

Participation and In-Class Activities (30%)

This course is largely discussion based. Dynamic, engaged participation and attendance are required in every class session. More than two (2) unexcused absences in the semester will severely reduce your overall course grade. An excused absence will only be granted on three conditions: 1) you must take part in an official university-sponsored sporting event; 2) you suffer from an illness of some kind; 3) the death or illness of a family member. *All events must be documented.*

Participation includes active listening, asking questions about reading and lecture material, responding to ideas of your classmates, taking notes, completing reading assignments, engaging in intellectual debates and completing in-class writing assignments.

Response Papers (60%)

Throughout the semester you will write six formal papers, 2-3 pages each, in response to your thoughtful engagement with class themes and topics. Four response papers are due following site visits outside of the classroom (Bethabara Gardens, Reynolda House Museum of Art, Reynolda Gardens, campus tour) to allow you to apply course reading and discussion to what you heard and observed on the tour. For the two other response papers you will apply course readings and themes to current events and your own childhood experiences. The response papers ask for reflection, not just narration, and you will be expected to cite specific readings and engage with the author's ideas and/or argument.

“Place Tour” Group Presentation (10%)

In groups of 3, you will select a space or specific place on campus. Using ideas from readings and class discussion, analyze the way in which your chosen site is culturally constructed. How are the ideas about nature, civilization, or human's place in the world

represented in your site? How does the campus environment reflect assumptions about human behavior, needs, and expectations? Your group will write a 1-2 page summary of your thoughts and major points and give a 10 minute presentation to the class at the site.

Late Papers, Drafts, and Grade Disputes:

Papers are due at the end of class. I do not accept late or hand-written papers. If you do not turn in your paper at the time it is due, you will receive a 0 for the assignment. However as a courtesy, because printers fail and computers crash, you may email your paper to me to have the security of turning it in before class. You then have 24 hours to bring me a hard copy. If you do not bring in the hard copy within 24 hours, you will receive a 0 on the paper. Your paper copy must match your emailed version exactly.

I am willing to look over paper drafts if I receive your draft (by email or hardcopy) at least 48 hours before the assignment is due. Please feel free to take your essays to the writing center for additional assistance. I also welcome discussions about comments on graded papers, particularly if you have a mind towards improvement. Such conversations will often help you improve on future assignments.

Electronic Devices:

Although many technologies enable us to do things with greater efficiency, when used inappropriately they distract from the quality of intellectual exchange. As a rule, *electronic devices (including laptop computers) are not allowed*. Cell phones, music players, smartphones, etc must be turned off and put away during class. Even technology use that is noiseless – such as furtively text messaging during class – is distracting and such practices will have a negative impact on your participation grade.


Special Needs:


If you have a disability that may require an accommodation for taking this course, please contact the Learning Assistance Center (758-5929) within the first two weeks of the semester. Additionally, please meet with me as soon as possible so I can make appropriate accommodations.

Academic Honesty:

Plagiarism, or representing another person's ideas as your own, will not be tolerated regardless of circumstances. It will result in a failing course grade and possible disciplinary action. For questions about plagiarism and suggestions on how to avoid it, visit the library's guide at <http://zsr.wfu.edu/research/guides/plagiarism.html>


Week 6 Resource Conservation

t  Primary Sources from *Major Problems*, 314-330: George Perkins Marsh Discusses the Relationship of Man to Nature, 1864; John Wesley Powell advocates Reclamation, 1878; Theodore Roosevelt Publicizes Conservation, 1908; George L. Knapp Opposes Conservation, 1910; Gifford Pinchot Recalls the Origins of the Conservation Movement, 1947


th  Find a story about a current debate on resource conservation
Due: Response Paper #3


Week 7 National Parks


t Film: *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*

th  Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*


Week 8 Civilized Space: Urban Planning, Landscaping, and Yards

t  Anne Whiston Spirn, "Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted," in *Uncommon Ground*, 91-113.

 Frederick Law Olmsted, "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns"


 Leo Marx, "Pastoral Ideals and City Troubles," *The Fitness of Man's Environment* (1964): 120-144.


th  Selection, Virginia Scott Jenkins, *The Lawn: A History of an American Obsession* (Smithsonian, 1994)

 Kenneth T. Jackson, "Home, Sweet Home: The House and the Yard," in *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, 45-72.

Week 9 Case Study: Reynolda House and Gardens

t Tour of Reynolda House, Village, and gardens

 Deborah Fitzgerald, *Every Farm a Factory* (selection)

th  Reynolda House, "Model Farm":

http://www.reynoldahouse.org/discover/reynolda/model_farm.php

Due: Response Paper #4

Week 10 Suburban Space

t  Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside*

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Due: Response Paper #5

Week 11 Ethics and Changing Perceptions of Man's Place in Nature

t  Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (selection)

th  Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac* (selection)


Week 12 Case Study: Everyday Categories and Connections


t  Edward Schiappa, "Towards a Pragmatic Approach to Definition: "Wetlands" and the Politics of Meaning," *Environmental Pragmatism* (1996): 97-106

th **Campus "Place" Tour and Group Presentations**


Week 13 Man-Made Natural Disasters? Dust Bowl to Climate Change

t Documentary film selections: *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (1936) and *Chasing Ice* (2012)

th  Select Primary Sources in *Major Problems*, 503-523: Carl Anthony Explains Why African Americans Should be Environmentalists, 1990; Winona LaDuke Considers Indians' Place in the Ecosystem, 1990; Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit, 1992; Kyoto Protocol on Global Climate Change, 1997; Johannesburg Declaration of Sustainable Development, 2002

 Essays in *Major Problems*, 524-542: Fritjof Capra, "Globalization and Environmental Sustainability"; Eileen McGurty, "Environmental Justice"

Week 14 Sustainability

t  Hawken, Lovins, and Lovins, *Natural Capitalism*

th  *Natural Capitalism*
t  Joshua Yates, “Abundance on Trial: The Cultural
Significance of ‘Sustainability’”: http://www.iasc-culture.org/THR/THR_article_2012_Summer_Yates.php

Week 15 Case Study: Wake Forest campus

t Guest Speaker and campus tour

th Presentations: Sustainability and Environmental Thought on
Campus

Due: Response Paper #6