

Environmental History of North America

Department of History
HIST 396 (201)
Instructor: Sean Kheraj
Office: Buchanan Tower 1102
Office Hours: Wednesdays 11am to 12pm
Email: sean.kheraj@ubc.ca

To understand the past, historians must consider the role of the reciprocal relations between humans and non-human nature. This course provides an overview of land use and environmental change in Canada and the United States by examining changes in non-human nature, socio-economic interactions of humans and their environments, and human perceptions of the natural world. Lectures, readings, and discussion will cover a wide range of topics, including ecological imperialism, deforestation, agriculture, urbanization, conservation, wildlife, energy consumption, environmental movements, and climate change. Students will have the opportunity to explore the role of nature as agent of historical change.

Format:

The class will meet every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday for one-hour lectures from 10:00am to 11:00am. Friday lectures will involve student participation.

Participation & Discussion

Every Friday there will be a discussion lecture based on the week's readings. Students must prepare a one-page written answer to a discussion question that will be posed at the end of Wednesday's lecture. This written answer will count towards the final participation mark. The instructor will then lead a discussion for the Friday class.

Assignments & Marking:

There are two written assignments for this course. The first written assignment is a short primary document response essay (5 pages) based on a choice of a number of different primary documents. Students must answer an essay question regarding the selected primary document

The second written assignment is a research essay (18-20 pages) based on a selection of themes in North American environmental history.

All late written assignments will be penalized one full letter grade per day (up to five days) and all term work should be submitted no later than the last day of classes.

There will also be a take-home final exam for this course.

The course instructor will be available to meet with students during office hours to discuss upcoming assignments and returned work. Contact through email should be limited to short discussion. Any concerns of a more detailed nature should be brought up during office hours. The course instructor cannot discuss grades over email.

Should you wish to discuss a graded assignment, please allow **24 hours** to review the mark and comments before contacting the course instructor or teaching assistants (this includes email).

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from failure in an assignment to suspension from the university. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in the University of British Columbia calendar:

<http://www.students.ubc.ca/calendar/index.cfm?tree=3,286,0,0>

Required Texts:

- MacEachern, Alan and William J. Turkel. *Method & Meaning in Canadian Environmental History*. Toronto: Nelson Education, 2009.
- Steinberg, Ted. *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University 2009.
- Custom course pack

Evaluation:

Participation	20%
Short Response Essay	20%
Research Essay	35%
Final Exam	25%

Week 1: Approaching Environmental History (January 5, 7, 9)

- Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, Prologue: Rocks and History, pgs. 3-7.
 Graeme Wynn, "Travels with George Perkins Marsh: Notes on a Journey into Environmental History" in MacEachern and Turkel, *Method & Meaning*, pgs. 2-23.
 Donald Worster, "Ice, Worms, and Dirt: The Power of Nature in North American History" in MacEachern and Turkel, *Method & Meaning*, pgs. 24-33.
 William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature" [course pack].

Week 2: Aboriginal North America (January 12, 14, 16)

- Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, Ch. 1 Wilderness Under Fire, pgs. 11-21.
 Douglas Deur and Nancy J. Turner, "Introduction: Reconstructing Indigenous Resources Management, Reconstructing the History of an Idea" [course pack].
 Robert Boyd, "Strategies of Indian Burning in the Willamette Valley" [course pack].

Week 3: Ecological Imperialism (January 19, 21, 23)

Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, Ch. 2 A Truly New World, pgs. 22-39; Ch. 3 Reflections from a Woodlot, pgs. 40-54.

Alfred Crosby, "Virgin Soil Epidemics as a Factor in the Aboriginal Depopulation of America" [course pack].

Liza Piper and John Sandlos, "A Broken Frontier: Ecological Imperialism in the Canadian North" [course pack].

Week 4: Animals as Resources in Early North America (January 26, 28, 30)

Peter E. Pope, "Historical Archaeology and the Maritime Cultural Landscape of the Atlantic Fishery" in MacEachern and Turkel, *Method & Meaning*, pgs. 36-54.

Carolyn Podruchny, "Writing, Ritual, and Folklore: Imagining the Cultural Geography of Voyageurs" in MacEachern and Turkel, *Method & Meaning*, pgs. 55-74.

Week 5: Remaking Landscapes (February 2, 4, 6)

*****Short Essay Due on Monday, February 2*****

Colin M. Coates, "Seeing and Not Seeing: Landscape Art as a Historical Source" in MacEachern and Turkel, *Method & Meaning*, pgs. 140-157.

J.I. Little, "West Coast Picturesque: Class, Gender, and Race in a British Colonial Landscape" *Journal of Canadian Studies* 41 (2) 2007: 5-41 [course pack].

Week 6: Agricultural Frontiers (February 9, 11, 13)

Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, Ch. 5 King Climate in Dixie, pgs. 72-88; Ch. 7 Extracting the New South, pgs. 99-115; Ch. 8 The Unforgiving West, pgs. 116-135.

Matthew Evenden, "Precarious Foundations: Irrigation, Environment, and Social Change in the Canadian Pacific Railway's Eastern Section, 1900-1930" *Journal of Historical Geography* 32 (2006): 74-95 [course pack].

John F. Varty, "Trust in Bread and Bologna: Promoting Prairie Wheat in the Twentieth Century" in MacEachern and Turkel, *Method & Meaning*, pgs. 182-195.

Reading Week: February 16-20

Week 7: Conservation of the North American Forest (February 23, 25, 27)

Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, Ch. 4 A World of Commodities, pgs. 57-71.

Michael Williams, "Clearing the United States Forests: Pivotal Years, 1810-1860" *Journal of Historical Geography* 8 (2) 1982: 12-28 [course pack].

Richard W. Judd, "A 'Wonderful Order and Balance': Natural History and the Beginnings of Forest Conservation in America, 1730-1830" *Environmental History* 11 (1) 2006: 8-36 [course pack].

Stéphane Castonguay and Diane Saint-Laurent, "Reconstructing Reforestation: Changing Land-Use Patterns Along the Saint-François River in the Eastern Townships" in MacEachern and Turkel, *Method & Meaning*, pgs. 273-292.

Week 8: The Parks Movement (March 2, 4, 6)

Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, Ch. 9 Conservation Reconsidered, pgs. 136-154.
 Roderick Nash, "Hetch Hetchy" [course pack].
 Alan MacEachern, "Lost in Shipping: Canadian National Parks and the International Donation of Wildlife" in MacEachern and Turkel, *Method & Meaning*, pgs. 196-213.

Week 9: Energy & Consumption (March 9, 11, 13)

Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, Ch. 13 America in Black and Green, pgs. 203-224; Ch. 14 Throwaway Society, pgs. 225-239.
 Matthew Evenden, "Lights Out: Conserving Energy for War in the Canadian City, 1939-1945" *Urban History Review* 34 (1) 2005: 88-99 [course pack].
 Alan L. Olmstead and Paul Rhode, "Rationing without Government: The West Coast Gas Famine of 1920" *American Economic Review* 75 (5) 1985: 1044-1055 [course pack].

Week 10: The Nature of Cities (March 16, 18, 20)

Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, Ch. 10 Death of the Organic City, pgs. 155-169.
 Michèle Dagenais, "The Urbanization of Nature: Water Networks and Green Spaces in Montreal" in MacEachern and Turkel, *Method & Meaning*, pgs. 216-235.
 Mike Davis, "Dead Cities: A Natural History" [coursepack].

Week 11: Science and Environmental History (March 23, 25, 27)

*****Long Essay Due on Wednesday, March 25*****

Stephen Bocking, "Nature's Stories? Pursuing Science in Environmental History" in MacEachern and Turkel, *Method & Meaning*, pgs. 294-310.
 William J. Turkel, "It Costs Something to Learn Something: Property Rights, Information Costs, and the Struggle at Fish Lake" in MacEachern and Turkel, *Method & Meaning*, pgs. 311-326.

Week 12: The Modern Environmental Movement (March 30, April 1, 3)

Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, Ch. 15 Shades of Green, pgs. 240-268.
 Frank Zelko, "Making Greenpeace: The Development of Direct Action Environmentalism in British Columbia" *BC Studies* 142/143 2004: 197-239 [course pack].
 Robert Gottlieb, "Beyond NEPA and Earth Day: Reconstructing the Past and Envisioning a Future for Environmentalism" *Environmental History Review* 19 (4) 1995: 1-14 [course pack].

Week 13: Climate Change (April 6, 8)

Steinberg, *Down to Earth*, Ch. 16 In Corporations We Trust, pgs. 269-295.
 Liza Piper, "Colloquial Meteorology" in MacEachern and Turkel, *Method & Meaning*, pgs. 102-123.