**HIST 213/ENST 213  
North American Environmental History: Rivers of North America**

Tuesdays & Thursdays 1:00-2:22 pm, Coleman 55

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Office hours: Wednesday 12-1 pm, or by appointment.

In order to obtain an accurate idea of these New World forests, we always realized that we had to follow some of the rivers which flow beneath their overhanging shadows. Rivers resemble great tracks carefully provided by Providence, from the beginning of the world, to penetrate the wilderness, allowing man access.

Alexis de Tocqueville, 1832

Rivers cannot change their source, only their course. Neither can we change their histories or their influence on us.

Del Barber, 2011

Welcome to the study of environmental history in North America. Environmental history asks us to consider our relationships with nature in the past: how nature has shaped human thought and human actions, and how, in turn, humans have shaped the landscapes around them. Nature and society is each actor and acted upon.

Like all history, it looks for both change and continuity. But environmental historians may focus on physical or material evidence (places and products of resource extraction, patterns of settlement, the grooves of transportation routes). Or they may deal with the imaginative and ideological (how cartography, art, and science understand and represent the natural world; how we process nature into political empires, bodies of knowledge, networks of exchange, and “sense of place”). Finding our way to a sustainable relationship with the natural world is, quite simply, the crucial issue facing us in the twenty-first century.

In this course, we will explore our history with nature through one of the most important features of the North American continent: its rivers. We’ll cover centuries of history and a continent’s worth of geography, looking at common themes as they play out along different rivers. (You’ll also learn a lot about Canada!) We’ll delve into one of the more significant rivers in the United States, just a few feet away: the Susquehanna. But these themes and questions can be applied to all sorts of environments in North American history. Hopefully, you will take from the class new ways of thinking about both history and landscapes familiar to you.

**The Course at Glance**

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| Topic | Date |  | Assignments |
| Why Rivers?  Why Environmental History? | August 21  August 23 | Introduction  Discussion |  |
| Rivers for Exploration and Exchange | August 28  August 30 | Lecture  Discussion |  |
| Indigenous Riverscapes | September 4  September 6 | Lecture  Discussion |  |
| Rivers for Harvest | September 11  September 13 | Lecture/Discussion  \*Mill Dams Walk |  |
| Rivers for Settlement | September 18  September 20 | Lecture  Discussion | September 18:  Map Study Due |
| Rivers and Transportation | September 25  September 27 | Discussion \*Montandon Canal |  |
| Rivers, Disasters, and Response | October 2  October 4 | \*Research Session Discussion |  |
| Fall Break; Rivers and Industry | October 9  October 11 | No Class  Discussion |  |
| Rivers and/as Megaprojects | October 16  October 18 | Lecture  Discussion | October 16: Riverwalk Journal Due |
| Rivers and Cities | October 23  October 25 | Discussion  No Class |  |
| Rivers as Green/Blue Spaces | October 30  November 1 | Guest/Discussion  Peer Feedback |  |
| Rivers and Identity | November 6  November 8 | Lecture  Discussion |  |
| Rivers and Borders | November 13  November 15 | Lecture  Discussion | November 13:  Source Analysis Due |
| Thanksgiving | November 20  November 22 |  |  |
| Rivers and Restoration | November 27  November 29 | Guest Lecture  Discussion |  |
| Review | December 4 |  | Exam in Exam Period |

**All readings available on Moodle.**

**August 21 and 23 Why Rivers? Why Environmental History?**

Chris J. Magoc, “In search of a useable – and hopeful – environmental narrative in the mid-Atlantic,” *Pennsylvania History* 82:3 (2015), 314-328.

Philip V. Scarpino, “Anthropocene World / Anthropocene Waters: A Historical Examination of Ideas and Agency,” in *Rivers of the Anthropocene,* eds. J. Kelly et al (University of California Press, 2017), 101-115.

**August 28 and 30 Rivers for Exploration and Exchange**

Timothy J. Shannon, “Avenue of Empire: The Hudson Valley in an Atlantic Context,” in Jacobs and Roper, eds, *Worlds of the Seventeenth-Century Hudson Valley* (SUNY Press, 2013), 67-84.

William L. Lang, “Lewis and Clark on the Columbia River: The Power of Landscape in the Exploration Experience,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* 87:3 (1996), 141-148.

**September 4 and 6 Indigenous Riverscapes**

April M. Beisaw, “Environmental History of the Susquehanna Valley Around the Time of European Contact,” *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 79:4 (2012), 366-376.

Micah A. Pawling, “Wəlastəkwey (Maliseet) Homeland: Waterscapes and Continuity within the Lower St. John River Valley, 1784-1900,” *Acadiensis* 46:2 (2017), 5-34.

**September 11 and 13 Rivers for Harvest**

Gordon Sayre, “How to succeed in exploration without really discovering anything: four French travelers in colonial Louisiana, 1714–63,” *Atlantic Studies* 10:1 (2013), 51-68.

Carolyn Podruchny, Ch. 4 “It is the Paddle That Brings Us,” *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 86-133.

**September 18 and 20 Rivers for Settlement**

Peter Mancall, Ch 5, “The Colonists’ Economy,” in *Valley of Opportunity: Economic Culture along the Upper Susquehanna, 1700–1800* (Cornell University Press, 1991), 95-129.

Richard Judd, Chapter 3: “The Ecologies of Frontier Farming,” in *Second Nature: An Environmental History of New England* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2014), 69-94.

**September 25 and 27 Rivers and Transportation**

Simon Hill and Daniel Kanhofer, “British and American Canals, c.1763-1825: Connectivity, Continuity and Change,” *Northern Mariner / Le Marin Du Nord* 26:2 (2016), 126-144.

David Schley, “A Natural History of the Early American Railroad,” *Early American Studies, An Interdisciplinary Journal* 13:2 (2015), 443-466.

**October 2 and 4 Rivers, Disaster, and Response**

Uwe Lübken, “Rivers and Risk in the City: The Urban Floodplain as a Contested Space,” in *Urban Rivers: Remaking rivers, cities, and space in Europe and North America*, eds. Castonguay and Evenden (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 130-144.

Christopher Morris, Ch. 8: “Engineering the River of Empire,” *The Big Muddy: An Environmental History of the Mississippi and its Peoples* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 140-168.

Christine Kreiser, “Wave of Destruction: The dam disaster that destroyed Johnstown,” *American History* 50:4 (2015), 38-41.

**October 9 and 11 Fall Break/Rivers of Industry**

Donna Rilling, “Locating Philadelphia’s Water-Powered Past,” *Pennsylvania Magazine Of History & Biography* 139:3 (2015): 356-359.

Brian Black, “Oil Creek as Industrial Apparatus: Re-Creating the Industrial Process through the Landscape of Pennsylvania’s Oil Boom,” *Environmental History* 3: 2 (1998), 210-29.

Joshua Salzmann, “The Creative Destruction of the Chicago River Harbor: Spatial and Environmental Dimensions of Industrial Capitalism, 1881-1909,” *Enterprise & Society* 13:2 (2012), 235-75.

**October 16 and 18 Rivers and/as Megaprojects**

Martin Melosi, “The environmental impact of the big dam era,” *Precious Commodity: Providing Water for America’s Cities (*University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 78-109.

Christopher Jones, Ch.5: “Taming the Susquehanna,” in *Routes of Power: Energy and Modern America* (Harvard University Press, 2014), 161-194.

Daniel Macfarlane, “[Turning off Niagara Falls … Again: 1969 Redux](http://niche-canada.org/2016/01/29/turning-off-niagara-falls-again-1969-revisited/),” 29 January 2016, The Otter/NiCHE [Network in Canadian History & Environment]

**October 23 and 25 Rivers and Cities**

Charles S. Olton, “Philadelphia’s First Environmental Crisis,” *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 98:1 (1974), 90–100.

Dany Fougères, “Surface water in the early nineteenth century,” in *Metropolitan Natures: Environmental Histories of Montreal,* eds. Castonguay and Dagenais (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 85-100.

John Hartig, *Burning Rivers: Revival of Four Urban-Industrial Rivers that Caught on Fire* (2010), pages 14-19 (Cuyahoga).

Edward K. Muller, “River City,” in *Devastation and renewal: An environmental history of Pittsburgh and its region*, ed. Joel Tarr (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 41-64.

**October 30 & November 1 Rivers as Green (Blue?) Spaces**

Jennifer Bonnell, Ch. 5: “Charles Sauriol and the Don Valley Conservation Movement,” *and* Ch. 6: “Metro Toronto and the Don Valley Parkway,” *Reclaiming the Don: An Environmental History of Toronto’s Don River Valley* (University of Toronto Press, 2014), 113-172.

**November 6 and 8 Rivers and Identity**

Tricia Cusak, Chapter 2: “The Chosen People: The Hudson River School and the construction of American Identity,” *Riverscapes and National Identities* (Syracuse University Press, 2010) 19-56.

David Neufeld, “Learning to drive the Yukon River: Western Cartography and Athabaskan Story Maps,” in *Big Country, Big Issues: Canada’s Environment, Culture, and History*, eds. Knopfler and Mauch, *Perspectives*, 4 (Rachel Carson Center, 2011), 16-43.

**November 13 and 15 Rivers and Borders**

J.M.S. Careless, “Two River Empires: An historical analysis,” *American Review of Canadian Studies* 5:2 (1975), 28-47.

Daniel Macfarlane, “Dam the Consequences: Hydropolitics, Nationalism, and the Niagara–St. Lawrence Projects,” in Macfarlane and Heasley, eds., *Border Flows: A Century of the Canadian-American Water Relationship* (University of Calgary Press, 2016), 123-150.

**Thanksgiving**

**November 27 and 29 Rivers and Restoration**

Martin Doyle, Ch. 12: “The Restoration Economy,” *The Source: How rivers made America and America remade its rivers* (Norton & Co., 2018) 283-305.

Sam Austin, “A River Runs Under it: Daylighting Saw Mill River,” [*Spacing Atlantic*](http://spacing.ca/atlantic/2014/11/10/river-runs-daylighting-sawmill-river/) (10 November 2014).

David Jones, “Daylighting Punmakati: The story of Dartmouth’s Sawmill River,”  [*Halifax Today*](https://www.halifaxtoday.ca/remember-this/remember-this-daylighting-punmakati-the-story-of-dartmouths-sawmill-river-866891) (19 March 2018) and Stephen Archibald, “Seeing Daylight at the end of Sawmill River,” [*Noticed in Nova Scotia*](https://halifaxbloggers.ca/noticedinnovascotia/2018/05/seeing-daylight-at-the-end-of-sawmill-river/) (17 May 2018)

**December 4 Review**

**Evaluation**

There are five components to your final grade:

1. Discussion and Participation 30 %

Discussion, driven by curiosity and a sense of discovery, and informed by the literature on the subject, is key to evolution of scholarship. To quote Bill Cronon, one of the United States’ leading historians, “Learning how to talk intelligently and enthusiastically about significant subjects is actually one of the most important skills you can learn in college.”

This is a collaborative environment in which we are learning together. Come prepared, and come to engage in considered, thoughtful, informed, and on-topic ways. This is an aspect of professionalism (see below). I’ll occasionally offer discussion questions, but it’s more important for you to engage directly with the material.

2. Map Study 10% Due September 18

In one of the following map archives, locate an historical map of the Susquehanna River, either in full (through New York, Pennsylvania, and Maryland) or in part. In 750-1000 words, assess the map and its historical significance. Consider two sets of questions: those that deal with the historical context and production of the map, and those that read the map for environmental clues. For example:

* what does the map convey, emphasize, or omit? who, and what, is featured?
* by whom was the map created and published, and for whom or what purpose?
* whose territorial ambitions are visible?
* what kinds of knowledge about nature are recorded on the map? In other words, what sense would someone have of the river based on this map?
* is there a specific network (infrastructures of transportation, defense) or types of place (towns, properties, industries, Indigenous lands) that make this map valuable?
* how does this map add to our understanding of the history of the river?

You should consider both textual and visual elements, such as the title and cartouche, author and publisher, context and date, stylistic choices and symbols, scale and dimensions. Please include the hyperlink to the map (which will confirm the archival location), and upload this assignment to Moodle (because of the link).

Archives:

Commonwealth of Pennsylvania State Archives:

* Melish-Whiteside Maps (1816-1821)

<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bah/dam/rg/di/r17-534WhitesideMaps/r017-534WhitesideMapInterface.htm#melish-whiteside>

* County Maps & Atlases (1850s-1870s) <http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bah/dam/mg/di/m011/CountyMapsInterface.htm>
* T.M. Fowler Bird’s Eye Maps (1887-1906)

<http://www.phmc.state.pa.us/bah/dam/mg/di/m011_0567/Fowler.htm#Fowler>

You may also use these archives identified in the Research by Subject guide on Archival Maps: <https://researchbysubject.bucknell.edu/archmaps>

* David Rumsey <https://www.davidrumsey.com>
* Library of Congress <https://www.loc.gov/maps/collections/>
* John Carter Brown Library <https://jcb.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet/JCBMAPS~1~1>

3. Riverwalk Journal ­­­­15% Due October 16

This assignment requires not just some research, but a camera, a phone (with Google Maps), a notepad, a couple of hours on a dry day (ideally), and a decent pair of shoes. (If you need any of these, please let me know.)

First, consult the following:

* [online aerial photographs of Bucknell University Archives](http://www.sscommons.org/openlibrary/#3%7Csearch%7C6%7CBucknell20University20History3A20aerial%7CFiltered20Search%7C%7C%7Ctype3D3626kw3Daerial26geoIds3D26clsIds3D26collTypes3D26id3D3737333030333626bDate3D26eDate3D26dExact3D26prGeoId3D26origKW3D)

*and*

* [the **1925** Sanborn fire insurance maps of Lewisburg](https://collection1.libraries.psu.edu/cdm/search/collection/maps1/searchterm/Lewisburg%21Sanborn%20Fire%20Insurance%20Maps/field/geogra%21collec/mode/all%21exact/conn/and%21or/order/nosort).

Look for points of interest along the river and the creeks as they flow through the town.

You’re now going to see what this looks like on the ground. Begin where Limestone Run meets the Susquehanna River. The closest you can get is the end of Mill Street or Ball Alley. Follow, as best you can, the route of Limestone Run. It divides into two just before the rail tracks, on St. George Street at South 4th St. Then follow either:

* Miller Run (to the south) through campus, under Highway 15 to the Bucknell golf course;

or

* Limestone/Bull Run (to the north) across Highway 15 to the newly reclaimed wetland.

Please be safe and sensible – we don’t want to be fishing anyone out of a stream!

As you walk, think about our relationship with these waterways.

* Take notes about what you see: the route of the streams, the way the town is built over and around the water, obstacles and points of access, things scenic or hidden. What do you see on, in, and around the streams? Where do they lead? How do they change as they move through the town? What does it mean that the water has been “restored”?
* Take photographs. Look especially for the original sites of interest you identified on the aerial photographs and insurance maps. How does that spot look now?
* Ask people you meet how they interact with the water.
* \*One photograph must be of an “interesting but invisible” artifact: some evidence of human intervention in the landscape of interest to you as an environmental historian but that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Then:

1. In about 500 words, summarize your impressions of the river course through town, and at least three points of interest from the perspective ofenvironmental history.
2. Select and curate 3-5 of what you consider your most important photographs, plus one archival photograph *and* one Sanborn map. For each, write a short caption (2-3 sentences) explaining their significance to the whole. *One* of these photographs and their captions will be used in a class map for the [Susquehanna River Symposium](https://www.bucknell.edu/RiverSymposium) October 26-27.
3. Submit the introduction and the field notes in paper copy, and the photographs (in powerpoint) via Moodle.

4. Primary Source Analysis 20 % Due November 13

This assignment focuses on two research skills: locating and analyzing primary sources. You are responsible for unearthing new material about our history on the Susquehanna.

1. Decide which of the following themes is of interest to you: settlement, industry, or urbanization. The class will be divided into roughly equal groups based on these themes.
2. We will be searching the Harrisburg *Patriot,* available from 1854-72 and 1866-1922 through the database America’s Historical Newspapers.
3. Browse through the *Patriot* looking for references to the Susquehanna in the context of your chosen theme. Remember that environmental history is about the intersection of place *and* time *and* theme, so: you may wish to cluster around certain dates (e.g. during the Civil War); a keyword search; a particular location; or select sample dates (e.g. a generation apart) for a wider comparison.
4. You will need to collect *at least five* articles for the final assignment. This means you will likely want to collect many more and then choose the best five from that larger group. Keep your eyes and your mind open to stories that may be about the river, but not in so many words.
5. Your group is your research network; we will devote time in class on November 1 to offering written and oral feedback in our groups as to your findings and preliminary analysis.
6. Keep a research journal. At the end of every research session, document: your method and process, your findings, and your thoughts on what you’ve found. This should be as honest and as authentic as possible.
7. In a final writing assignment (1000-1200 words), craft an argument based on close readings of the articles. What do they say about people’s relationship with the river? How do they illustrate or contribute to your theme? Make sure to ground your analysis in the language of the primary sources themselves, and to relate the sources to each other.
8. Submit the writing assignment along with copies of the articles.

Research journal 5%; final written assignment 15%.

5. Final exam 25%

There will be a final test in the exam period that asks you to draw from the lectures, readings, and class discussion.

Research and Writing

Nancy Frazier, the research librarian for history, will be an *invaluable* resource. Her contact information is available on the library website: <https://researchbysubject.bucknell.edu/prf.php?account_id=8589>

Style matters. Part of this is academic credibility (appropriate referencing, the depth of research); but part too is the clarity of argument, the lyricism of the phrasing. Yes, this is where grammar and spelling help. There’s a science to research, but writing is an art.

In History, we follow the Chicago Manual of Style. For a guide to this, see <https://researchbysubject.bucknell.edu/citations/chicago>

Late assignments will be penalized 5% per day. Please keep an electronic copy of any assignment you submit. I do not assign extra work in lieu of the assignments outlined in this syllabus.

Expectations and Professionalism in the Classroom

The university and the classroom can be spaces for wonderful freedoms – freedom of thought, of discussion, of exploration – but are also places that (like workplaces and the public sphere writ large) require mutually respectful and professional behaviour. This means arriving on time and prepared, and treating each other civilly and generously in listening and conversation. (It also means refraining from using electronic devices in ways that might be considered disruptive or disrespectful to others.) We are very privileged to be here, and should treat these opportunities for learning with the utmost respect.

Academic Responsibility

Academic integrity and honesty are at the core of the community of scholarship of which we are a part. I will follow University policies for academic honesty and plagiarism, which can be found at http://www.bucknell.edu/x1324.xml.

Please note the University Honor Code.

As a student and citizen of the Bucknell University community:

1. I will not lie, cheat, or steal in my academic endeavors.

2. I will forthrightly oppose each and every instance of academic dishonesty.

3. I will let my conscience guide my decision to communicate directly with any person or persons I believe to have been dishonest in academic work.

4. I will let my conscience guide my decision on reporting breaches of academic integrity to the appropriate faculty or deans.

Bucknell University expectations for academic engagement

Courses at Bucknell that receive one unit of academic credit have a minimum expectation of 12 hours per week of student academic engagement. Student academic engagement includes both the hours of direct faculty instruction (or its equivalent) and the hours spent on out of class student work. Half and quarter unit courses at Bucknell should have proportionate expectations for student engagement.

Student Needs and Accommodation

If you have anything you would like to talk to me about that would help you succeed in this class – at any point in the semester me – please contact me, either in person or by email.

Students with recognized disabilities who may need classroom accommodations should contact the Office of Accessibility Resources. See this website for more information.

Learning Goals

We will aim to achieve the following goals (and History Department learning objectives):

- Develop an understanding of the practice and purpose of the field of environmental history, and specifically, the relationships between people and nature in North America in the past (1, 2, 7)

- Situate historical study with other fields in understanding the relationship between environmental and historical change, and imagining responses (2, 7)

- Speak and write reflectively and articulately in response to class material and sources of research (3, 4, 5)

- Complete assignments that demonstrate intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, a thorough and considered plan of research, and delivers the findings in a convincing and accessible format (4, 5, 6)

- Learn more about the value of history in understanding the state of landscape and society in the present (7)