# HIST 213 North American Environmental History

# Spring 2015: Rivers of North America

Tuesdays & Thursdays 9:30-10:52 Coleman 54

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“Rivers cannot change their source, only their course. Neither can we change their histories or their influence on us.” Del Barber, 2011

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. Like all history, it looks for both change and continuity. But environmental historians may focus on physical or material evidence (sites 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 help us absorb the new and unknown in nature into competing political empires, bodies of knowledge, networks of exchange, and “sense of place.” Nature and society is each actor and acted upon.

There are many ways to approach environmental history, and in this course, we will explore one of the most important features of the North American continent: its rivers. Issues range from political diplomacy and dispute to cultural representations, from settlement adaptations to industrial manipulation. Hopefully, you will take from the class new ways of thinking about both history and landscapes familiar to you.

**Course Outline**

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| January 15 | Introduction |
| January 20 and 22 | Why Rivers? |
| January 27 and 29 | Rivers for Exploration |
| February 3 and 5 | Rivers of Harvest |
| February 10 and 12 | Rivers for Settlement |
| February 17 and 19 | Rivers, Corralled |
| February 24 and 26 | Rivers for Rural Ambition |
| March 3 and 5 | Meetings and mid-term report |
| Week of March 9 | Spring Break |
| March 17 | Rivers and Cities |
| March 24 and 26 | Rivers and Mega-Projects |
| March 31 and April 2 | Rivers and Reclamation |
| April 7 and 9 | Rivers and Identity |
| April 14 and 16 | Rivers as Borders |
| April 21 and 22 | Group Reports |
| April 28 | Review |

Readings

Week 1 Environmental history: Why rivers?

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

Wilbur Zelinksy, “Geography,” in *Pennsylvania: A History of the Commonwealth,* eds. Miller and Pencak(Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002).

Christof Mauch and Thomas Zeller, “Rivers in History and Historiography,” in Mauch and Zeller, eds., *Rivers in history: perspectives on waterways in Europe and North America* (University of Pittsburgh, 2008) 1-10.

Week 2 Rivers for Exploration

D’arcy Jenish, “With the Nor’westers (1797),” *Epic Wanderer: David Thompson and the Mapping of the Canadian West* (University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 89-120.

Richard Ruggles*,* “Mapping rivers and barren grounds inland, 1754-1778,” *A country so interesting: The Hudson's Bay Company and two centuries of mapping, 1670-1870* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1991), 37-49.

David Meyer and Paul Thistle, “Saskatchewan River rendezvous centers and trading posts: Continuity in a Cree social geography,” *Ethnohistory* 42:3 (1995), 403-445.

David Thompson, Chapter 10: “North West Company”; Chapter 16: “Journey down the Stone Indian and up the Red River”; Chapter 18: “Discover Scource [sic] of the Mississippi,” *David Thompson’s Narrative of his Explorations in Western America, 1784-1812* (Champlain Society, 1916 edition), 168-182; 243-254; 266-272. Also the map after p358.

<https://openlibrary.org/books/OL5619733M/Narrative>.

<https://archive.org/details/davidthompsonsna00thom>

Week 3 Rivers of Harvest

Carolyn Podruchny, Chapter 7: “Life at Interior Fur Trade Posts,” *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 201-246.

Dale Standen, “Canoes and Canots in New France: Small Boats, Material History and Popular Imagination,” *Material Culture Review* 68 (2008), 34-47.

<http://journals.hil.unb.ca/index.php/MCR/article/view/18132>

Jean F. Morrison, Chapters 1-3 (“How it all began,” “British Traders at Grand Portage,” and “New Fort Kaministiquia”); Chapter 5 (“The Transfer of Goods”); Chapter 17 (“Fort William Historical Park”), *Superior rendez-vous place: Fort William in the Canadian fur trade*, 2nd edition (Natural Heritage Books, 2007), 7-30, 39-45, 131-137.

Eric C. Morse, “The Influence of Geography,” *Fur Trade Canoe Routes of Canada/Then and Now* (Queen’s Printer, 1969), 27-32.

Week 4 Rivers for Settlement

Matthew Hatvany, Ch. 3: “Amerindian and Agrarian Contexts,” *Marshlands: Four Centuries of Environmental Change on the Shores of the St. Lawrence* (Presses Université Laval, 2003), 49-72.

Jean-Claude Robert, “The St. Lawrence and Montreal’s spatial development in the seventeenth through the twentieth century,” in *Urban Rivers: Remaking rivers, cities, and space in Europe and North America*, Castonguay and Evenden, eds. (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 145-159.

Colin Coates, Chapter 2: “Seigneurial Landscapes,” in *The Metamorphoses of Landscape and Community in Early Quebec* (McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 13-31.

Sherry Olson, “City Streets as Environmental Grid: The Challenge of Private Uses and Municipal Stewardship,” in *Metropolitan Natures: Urban Environmental Histories of Montreal*, eds. Castonguay and Dagenais (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 148-167.

Week 5 Rivers, Corralled

Irene Hanuta, “A Dominion Land Survey Map of the Red River Valley,” *Manitoba History* 58 (2008), 23-25.

Robert Passfield, “’Duff's Ditch’: The Origins, Construction, and Impact of the Red River Floodway,” *Manitoba History* 42 (2001-2), 2-14.

Shannon Stunden Bower, “Watersheds: Conceptualizing Manitoba's Drained Landscape, 1895-1950,” *Environmental History* 12:4 (2007), 796-819.

A.R.C. Management Board, Red River Corridor: Master Development Plan (1981).

<http://files.theforks.com/about/history/heritage-research/bibliography>

Week 6 Rivers and Rural Ambition

Michael Logan, Chapter 4, “The duty of water and agrarian rivalry,” *Desert Cities: The Environmental History of Phoenix and Tucson* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2006), 63-83.

Matthew Evenden, “Precarious foundations: irrigation, environment, and social change in the Canadian Pacific Railway’s Eastern Section, 1900–1930,” *Journal Of Historical Geography* 32:1 (2006), 74-95.

Donald Worster, “The Lord’s Beavers,” “Ideology of democratic conquest,” “A Place named Imperial,” *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the growth of the American West* (Oxford University Press, 1985), 74-83, 111-125, 191-212.

Week 7 Meetings and Mid-term Report

Week 8 Rivers and Cities

Craig E. Colten, “Fluid geographies: Urbanizing river basins,” in *Urban Rivers: Remaking rivers, cities, and space in Europe and North America*, eds. Castonguay and Evenden (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 201-218.

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.

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

Week 9 Rivers and Megaprojects [March 26: Bucknell Sustainability Symposium]

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.

Jerry Bannister, “A River Runs Through It: Churchill Falls and the End of Newfoundland History,” *Acadiensis* 41:1 (2012) 211-225**.**

Heather Cox, “Drowning voices and drowning shoreline: A riverside view of the social and ecological impacts of the St. Lawrence Seaway and power project,” *Rural History* 10:2 (1999), 235-257.

<http://megaprojects.uwo.ca/> : Iroquois

Week 10 Rivers and Reclamation

Andrew Hurley, “Narrating the Urban Waterfront: The Role of Public History in Community Revitalization,” *The Public Historian* 28:4 (2006), 19-50.

Jennifer Bonnell, “[Bringing Back the Don: Sixty Years of Community Action](http://www.academia.edu/428640/Bringing_Back_the_Don_Sixty_Years_of_Community_Action),” in *HtO: Toronto's Water from Lake Iroquois to Lost Rivers to Low-Flow Toilets*, eds. Reeves and Palassio (Toronto: Coach House Press, 2008), 266-283.

Peter St. John, “The Forks Today,” in Crossroads of the Continent: A History of the Forks of the Red & Assiniboine Rivers, ed. Huck (Heartland, 2003), 146-173.

Caru Bowns and Alison Stevenson, “Toward Small Town Revitalization in the Middle Susquehanna River Valley: Re-Assessing Historic and Regional Resources for Collaborative Development,” *Material Culture* 42:2 (2010), 1-27.

Week 11 Rivers and Identity

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.

<http://www.environmentandsociety.org/perspectives/2011/4/big-country-big-issues-canadas-environment-culture-and-history>

Rich Heyman, “Locating the Mississippi: Landscape, Nature, and National Territoriality at the Mississippi Headwaters,” *American Quarterly* 62:2 (2010), 303-333.

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.

Week 12 Rivers as Borders

Murray Clamen, “The IJC and Transboundary Water Disputes: Past, Present, and Future,” in *Water without Borders? Canada, the United States, and Shared Waters*, eds. Norman, Cohen, Bakker (University of Toronto Press, 2013), 70-87.

Daniel Rueck, “When Bridges Become Barriers: Montreal and Kahnawake Mohawk Territory,” in *Metropolitan Natures: Urban Environmental Histories of Montreal*, eds. Castonguay and Dagenais (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2011), 228-244.

Daniel Macfarlane, “A Completely Man-Made and Artificial Cataract”: The Transnational Manipulation of Niagara Falls, *Environmental History* 18:4 (2013), 759-784.

Week 13 Group Reports

Week 14 Group Reports and Review

Evaluation

There are four major 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. Please see the note on professionalism, below: come prepared, and come to engage in considered, thoughtful, informed, and on-topic ways. This includes acting as discussants for the group presentations (see below).

One week, you will be responsible for bringing in and commenting on a news item (article or blog post) that relates to the history of rivers in North America and specifically the theme of that week’s readings. You should prepare a page’s worth of comments explaining why this item is interesting and relevant to the class, and submit this after class (5%).

2. Further Engagement: Writing assignment 15%

Over the course of the semester, you will be asked to write two pieces (750 words each) that respond as if in conversation to either an assigned reading or a topic raised in class. This is an opportunity to provide a rebuttal, critique, or statement of support for a position taken within the class or by one of the authors. The piece should, like all writing, have a clear statement of position in the introduction and a logical series of arguments. This is also an opportunity to refer to current events or material from outside the class. The tone should be that of an opinions column: readable but informed. *It is your responsibility to decide when to submit your two pieces, and to ensure you have done two by the end of term.*

3. Group Project 35%

In groups of three, you will work to create biographies of some of the most storied rivers in the United States. The goal is not a comprehensive history of “your” river, but an accessible introduction to its biophysical and historical character, and an argument as to why it should be considered important in American history.

Your biography should focus on the experience of the river in *two* of the themes of this course:

exploration irrigation/agriculture recreation/reclamation

harvest cities culture/national identity

settlement industry/energy borders

The rivers are:

Colorado Hudson Susquehanna Ohio

Milk/Missouri Columbia Mississippi Rio Grande

The project consists of four steps:

1. Proposal 5% due February 26

A 500-word proposal that includes: the river and the chosen themes, a preliminary bibliography (five scholarly sources), and a research plan that fairly allocates work responsibilities.

1. Mid-Term Meeting 5%

A meeting with me in the week specified to discuss progress to date, the outline of the final report, the plan for the class presentation, group dynamics, and any challenges to date.

1. Final report 15% due April 16

A written report of 2000 words that provides:

- a description of the geographical/physical/environmental features of the river

- an explanation of how the river embodies two of the course themes and the river’s significance in American environmental history

- reference to *at least seven* scholarly sources (articles, monographs) and *two* primary sources (newspapers, journals, literature, archival documents)

1. Presentation and Visual Summary 10 %

Each group will make a 20-minute presentation to the class towards the end of term. This presentation will draw on your research but should notbe merely reading your written report. Instead, discuss:

1. the major conclusions and highlights of your findings
2. anything you found particularly unusual or interesting about the river
3. a comment on the process of research (people love hearing about the unexpected, and “what not to do”)
4. a PowerPoint presentation with at least *five* images – paintings, maps, photographs – that speak to the two themes of your report. Credit all images in a final slide (creator, title, date, repository). These will form the beginning of a digital collection via the Bertrand Library.

e) two discussion questions for the class

4. Final Test 20%

There will be a final test that asks you to draw from the readings, class discussion, and from the other groups’ presentations.

Research Tips

It may be that you will want some sources that will need to be obtained through inter-library loans. Budget your time accordingly.

America History and Life is an excellent database suited to sources for North American history. See <http://researchbysubject.bucknell.edu/amhist?hs=a> .

The Bertrand Library has compiled links to help you access primary sources and other digitalized documents (including maps):

<http://researchbysubject.bucknell.edu/content.php?pid=96349&sid=721440>

<http://researchbysubject.bucknell.edu/content.php?pid=96349&sid=762070>

For images, consider especially the Library of Congress website ([www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov)) and Artstor

<http://researchbysubject.bucknell.edu/content.php?pid=102920&sid=794181>

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.

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. It is incumbent upon you to fulfill these responsibilities.

Style Guide

In History, we generally follow what is called the Chicago Manual of Style. For a guide to this, see <https://my.bucknell.edu/x53459.html>.

Learning Goals

We will aim to achieve the following goals (and History Department learning objectives: <https://www.bucknell.edu/about-bucknell/recent-strides-future-plans/goals-and-educational-outcomes/learning-outcomes/history-outcomes.html> ):

- 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)

- Consider the relationship between history and other disciplines, and the range of available sources, in understanding the relationship between environmental and historical change (3)

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

- Contribute to a group project that demonstrates 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)

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 hereafter) 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. Facebook can wait!) We are very privileged to be here, and should treat these opportunities for learning with the utmost respect.

Academic Integrity

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 me work with you, please contact me. Students with University-recognized disabilities who may need classroom accommodations should contact me as soon as possible. All discussions will remain confidential. See <http://www.bucknell.edu/x7752.xml> for more information.