

NATURAL RESOURCES IN AMERICAN HISTORY

INSTRUCTOR

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Dr. Vonhof's office hours are available on the Teaching Team page of the course website. Undergraduate Teaching Assistants and their Library hours are also posted on that page.

INTRODUCTION

Natural Resources in American History is an overview of the forces that have shaped America from indigenous settlement to the present. Understanding the development and evolution of America's political, economic, and social institutions and their relation to natural resources is important to understanding our current American society; it is a foundation which underlies many other topics and issues that students will encounter in their academic studies, and in their personal self-discovery.

This course is taught from a general survey perspective. The large scope of this course encourages more inference, integration and synthesis of ideas and less in-depth coverage of some traditional history topics. Students will learn to consider the whole of history and its impact on the present by studying various crucial moments throughout the centuries.

History is not just a sequence of events, not just a series of facts and dates. The essence of history is the critical comparison and contrast of continuity and change over time--- how did things come to be the way they are? Have Americans learned from, or simply repeated our actions (some might call them “mistakes”) in our allocation and management of natural resources? We will take a fresh and critical look at some of the traditional stories in American history and at the historical relationships between Americans and natural resources.

OBJECTIVES

After successful completion of this course, students should be able to do the following:

1. Describe the basic narrative of American history, including the related implications for natural resource use and allocation.
2. Identify ten important people, groups, and/or cultures in American history, their perception of the natural world, and their treatment of their environment.
3. Describe the institutions, economy, or society in at least three major eras of American history.
4. Research, interpret, and analyze historical data from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Pay careful attention to these objectives and especially to daily lecture objectives—they will translate into exam questions. Lecture objectives are posted on the course website.

COURSE MATERIALS

Required Texts

There are two required texts, both of which are available at Follett's Orange Bookstore in Marshall Square. There is also an option to rent these texts through Follett's through the website. (<http://www.bkstr.com/Home/10001-10504-1?demoKey=d>).

W. Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1991.

J. Loewen, *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong*. New York: Touchstone, 2007.

Other required readings may be distributed in class or accessed online. Reading assignments and links to online readings are located on the *Lecture and Reading Schedule* page of the course website. Readings should be completed prior to the class session with which they are listed. Some of the online articles, such as JSOR database journals, are available only from campus computers or through library proxy..

COURSE WEBSITE

www.esf.edu/for/vonhof/courses/NRAH

The course website is the primary tool for communicating the lecture schedule, learning objectives, assigned readings, links to online readings, office hours, and any announcements. The web pages will also provide a wealth of information about project directions. **You should consult the course web pages frequently— you are responsible for all of the information posted on the website.**

GRADING

In Class Exercises	15%
Research & Analysis Project	30%
Exams	
First exam in class	25%
Final cumulative exam	30%

Grading Scale

A	93 -100	C+	77-79.9
A-	90-92.9	C	73-76.9
B+	87-89.9	C-	70-72.9
B	83-86.9	D	65-69.9
B-	80-82.9	F	64.9 and below

PLEASE NOTE: All Projects are due at the start of class on the due date. Neither Projects nor In-Class exercises will be accepted via e-mail without prior arrangement. No work will be accepted late.

In Class Exercises

We will complete active learning exercises in at least six class sessions. These will provide the chance to digest, analyze, and react to course material. Some of the exercises will be individual, such as a concept map or an affective response; others might be in pairs or groups. Exercises will be turned in and evaluated either on a Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory basis or on a grading scale of 0 to 10. In order to maintain some flexibility in our schedule and to react to student engagement in course content, exercises may be added, re-scheduled, or cancelled without prior notice. Your final grade will be calculated on completing five of the six exercises—if you complete all, the additional will count as “extra credit.” **Please note: there are no make-up opportunities for missed in-class exercises**, with the exception of emergency circumstances at the discretion of the Instructor.

Research & Analysis Project

This is your opportunity to personalize this course—both by choosing the topic you would like to learn more about, and by choosing the type of project that you would like to complete. There are three alternatives: a Presentation, a Poster, or a Newspaper Article. Each will require you to research a person, place, event, law or court case, ideology, philosophy, or era and then explore and analyze its significance in the context of American environmental history.

The intent of each of these assignments is to improve your research and critical analysis skills. Your choice is in part dependent on the type of communication skills on which you would like to focus. This may be predicated on your discipline and/or your previous experience. Some will choose based on what they like, or what they are good at. Some might choose based on skills they would like to develop or improve. Still others will choose based on the level of creativity or the best way to explore their topic.

I will also consider proposals for alternative projects that require research and analysis. For example, previous students expressed interest in a video project. I will approve these on a case-by-case, and face-to-face basis. I welcome creative and original ideas—but I have found that it is inefficient and ineffective to correspond about project proposals via e-mail. Please stop by during office hours (no appointment needed) or make an appointment at an alternative time so we can chat about your idea.

Each student will submit a memo stating his or her preference for one of the three project options by the memo due date posted on the *Lecture and Reading Schedule* page of the course website. Once the type of project option is selected, no changes may be made unless approved by the professor. Thus, you might need to do some background research and planning before you choose a project type and submit your memo. You do not have to identify a topic in your memo, but your topic might influence your choice since some topics fit one type of project better than another. It would be a good idea to discuss your topic with the professor or teaching assistants before undertaking your project. The due date for the completed annotated bibliographies and posters is also posted on the course *Lecture and Reading Schedule* web page. The presentations will be given in class at the end of the semester. The presentation class sessions may be limited by class size—the first students who select this option and submit their memos will be able to reserve a presentation spot.

We will have a class session to further describe and discuss the three alternative projects. In addition, links to supplemental directions for research and analysis projects, general directions for written assignments (including research tips, and links to citation guides) will be available from the *home* page of the course website. You are responsible for consulting these resources and following these guidelines.

The chart below is an overview and comparison the three research and analysis project options.

Comparison Chart for the Research & Analysis Project Alternatives

Project	Submission requirements	Topic	Skills
Presentation	15-20 minute mini-lecture PowerPoint slides Bibliography	somewhat narrow focus, but also the historic context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Synthesizing & organizing research ✓ Oral communication ✓ Visual presentation
Poster	11x17 Poster Bibliography	both some historic background and an in-depth focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Integrating & condensing research ✓ Written communication ✓ Visual presentation ✓ Creative composition
News Article	2-3 page newspaper article Endnotes Bibliography	both a narrow focus and historic details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Assimilating & interpreting research ✓ Written communication ✓ Imaginative composition

Presentation

If you choose this project, you will select a topic in American environmental history, research at least five scholarly sources, and develop and deliver a mini-lecture presentation using PowerPoint slides. On your presentation date, you will turn in PowerPoint presentation slides (printed two per page) and a bibliography.

The required length for the presentation will be either 15 or 20 minutes, depending on how many students sign up for this project alternative. Your presentation should have two learning objectives and teach the class something interesting and relevant about American environmental history. The purpose is not to cover basic, mundane information—the purpose is to add depth and breadth to the course by presenting an in-depth analysis of a particular theme, idea, event, or person.

The bibliography documents your research process and efforts. The bibliography should include all sources utilized in the development of the presentation, not just those cited or quoted. The minimum is five scholarly sources (books, journal articles, or primary sources) but that is just a minimum (graded at about 70%). You should list in your bibliography every source you have consulted in developing your presentation—the more the better! Include encyclopedias, web sites, non-refereed journals, even newspaper articles or documentary films. Be sure to use an accepted and consistent citation format: APA, MLA, Chicago, or whatever is standard for your discipline.

Grading Criteria for the Presentation

Oral Presentation	20%
PowerPoint Design	20%
Research	20%
Coverage of Topic	20%
Analysis	20%

Poster

If you choose this project, you will select a topic in American environmental history, research at least five scholarly sources, and compose an interesting and engaging poster. You will turn in an 11” x 17” poster (smaller than the standard format size), and a bibliography.

The poster will cover both the description and analysis of your topic. First, you will have to briefly describe the basic “who” or “what”: the person, event, philosophy, work, or discovery. Second you will explain why the person or event or thing is relevant to American environmental history—what the influence or legacy is. This second part, the analysis, should be the focus of the poster and more thorough. Finally, you should illustrate your poster with appropriate graphics, such as maps, charts, timelines, or pictures.

The bibliography documents your research process and efforts. The requirements are the same as they are for the Presentation bibliography (see above).

Grading Criteria for the Poster

Presentation Design	25%
Research	20%
Coverage of Topic	25%
Analysis	30%

Newspaper Article

This assignment is a creative writing exercise that will stimulate your critical thinking skills, deepen your knowledge of history, and provide practice researching and interpreting primary and secondary source documents. You will turn in a two to three page newspaper article, endnotes, and a bibliography.

You will choose an historical event or person, and compose news story-- transporting yourself back in time as if you were a news reporter. In your article, you will describe the basic who, what, where, when based on research of at least five primary and secondary scholarly historical sources. You will include at least two quotations from primary sources—as if you interviewed those people to write your news story. You will also quote at least two secondary sources (scholarly works by historians) about the analysis of the event (the why and how, the cause and effect, and significance in history). You might think of the primary source as a witness or victim of a crime; and think of the secondary source as the police detective explaining the criminal investigation. For example, you might do a story with a headline of “Lincoln Delivers Gettysburg Address.” You could “interview” and quote the reaction of a soldier in the Union Army—your primary source could be

that soldier's diary. You might also research the reaction of the Confederate soldiers using a secondary source by an historian. You could also "interview" an emancipated or escaped slave.

You must include notes within the text of the article (when you quote and/or paraphrase) and compile a page of endnote citations. The bibliography documents your research process and efforts and includes all sources researched, not just the minimum two primary and three secondary quotations. The requirements for the bibliography are the same as they are for the Presentation and Poster bibliography (see above).

Grading Criteria for Newspaper Article

Coverage of Event	20%
Critical Analysis of Event	20%
Primary Sources Utilization	15%
Secondary Sources Utilization	15%
Writing	20%
Research and Bibliography	10%

Exams

We will have one exam in class, and a cumulative final exam. The exams will contain both objective and subjective questions. The objective questions-- such as true/false, multiple guess, and matching-- primarily test your knowledge of basic concepts. The subjective questions, such as essay questions, are designed to evaluate your deeper understanding and analysis of history and the linkages among concepts. The subjective questions will require you to clearly articulate, communicate, and support your thoughts. All material presented in class or posted on the website is "fair game" for exam questions. The final exam will be cumulative and will include a timeline to label with the major features of American History that we have discussed in the course. Study hint: look at the lecture objectives ! These are posted on the course website.

TEACHING & LEARNING: A BIT OF PHILOSOPHY AND POLICY

There is shared responsibility in teaching and learning. I am excited to be teaching this class, and I would like this class to be an enjoyable, beneficial, and successful learning experience for you. It is my sincere hope that all of you will attain the level of achievement to which you aspire; and I am dedicated to helping you meet that goal. I do not grade on a 'curve,' so grades are not relative to the rest of the class: your grades reflect your level of accomplishment. There is a high correlation between effort and achievement— but effort is a choice. I will do my best to provide an interesting journey through history, and I ask that you do your best to engage yourself in this endeavor.

Here are some tips for success.

- Come to class. Although you are not graded on attendance in this class, those who show up will undoubtedly learn more than those who don't. As college students, you are responsible for making this choice--- just remember that you are also accountable for the consequences.

- Ask questions in class or e-mail the professor or the teaching assistants. As the old saying goes, “The only silly question is the one not asked.” Any time you would like assistance with or clarification of an assignment, please contact us. Feel free to stop by and see us during office hours or library hours. The teaching team is happy to run through drafts of assignments and provide feedback for improvement (provided there is adequate time before the due date). There is absolutely no charge for this service :-)
- Study the lecture objectives. Some students recommend making flashcards for the objectives as you go through the semester. It is an outstanding way to learn the course material and to study for exams.

Extenuating Circumstances and Accommodations for Learning Disabilities

I understand that everyone has a personal life. Sometimes extenuating circumstances may affect a student’s academic performance. I am willing to work with you, but cannot help if you do not communicate with me. Please inform me if there are problems, conflicts, learning accommodations, or extended absences—any circumstances—that you believe have an adverse affect your participation or performance in the course. You may prefer to share your circumstances with the Senior Counselor, Career and Counseling Services in 110 Bray (470-6660), who may send a memo regarding any extenuating circumstances that may affect (or have affected) your course work. That office is also the contact for accommodations for students with learning disabilities. Accommodations sometimes take a while to get set up. It would be a good idea to get the process started right away. The forms for exam accommodations must be completed and discussed with me no less than one week prior to an exam.

Please note that I will be extremely reluctant to accommodate requests made “after-the-fact.” Do not wait until the day an assignment is due to request an extension. Do not wait until graded exams are returned to explain performance circumstances. Do not wait until the end of semester to apply yourself and then ask for extra credit. The best approach is to contact me immediately, via e-mail or phone. This may sound harsh, but the truth is that I have a high degree of empathy and understanding. I’ve been known to provide opportunities for make-up exams for students who simply overslept that fateful morning of the final exam. The nub of the issue is whether students maintain a proactive mentality or a victim mentality.

Extra Credit

I generally dislike the concept of extra credit; I consider it antithetical to my teaching philosophy. Lives and careers do not come with opportunities for extra credit—why should college learning? One of the biggest dilemmas with extra credit is equity: providing the same opportunity for each and every student in the class. For example, at the end of a semester, it is not fair to allow one person to raise his or her grade through an extra credit assignment, when other students do not have the same chance to raise their grades. I do provide an opportunity to earn a few extra points through bonus questions on exams, usually worth one point each. And there is also the opportunity to boost your grade by completing each and every one of the in-class exercises.

Academic Civility and Integrity

I expect students in my class to be professional and courteous in the classroom, and in written and oral communication with the professor or with teaching assistants.

The College-wide standard for written communication is *The Everyday Writer*, by A.A. Lunsford. This is an excellent resource for all types of writing assignments you have in college. There are sections on grammar, citation formats, how to write lab reports, and even how to format memos and resumes. Copies are available at Folletts Orange Bookstore, or you can purchase an electronic version.

- In certain circumstances, the professor or teaching assistants may need to contact individuals or the entire class via e-mail. These messages will be sent to official college e-mail addresses—the list on file with the Registrar. If you do not use your college account (syr.edu) frequently, you may want to set up your college account to forward mail to an alternate address.
- All correspondence with the Instructor or TAs should be professional and courteous. E-mail messages should begin with a greeting and end with a signed name. Please also identify which class (WCE, FOR 203) you are in. We will not respond to anonymous messages.
- Please check the syllabus and web pages for the information you seek before contacting the Teaching Team. We are happy to clarify, or explain, or answer questions; but if the answers are contained in course resources, you will be referred to those sources (e.g., office hours are posted on the Teaching Team page).

To maintain a productive teaching and learning environment, please follow these basic guidelines for civil and polite classroom behavior:

- Be courteous and professional during lectures and discussions.
- Come to class on time, and don't leave early or start packing up before the end of class.
- Engage and focus your attention on the class. Do not attend class and then behave inappropriately and unprofessionally: don't eat, sleep, read the newspaper, check e-mail, surf the web, or do other work in class.
- Keep side conversations to a minimum to avoid disrupting class or distracting other students (or the instructor).
- Be sure cell phones are turned off (not silent-- OFF). Do NOT send or receive text messages during class.

Academic Integrity

The College does not tolerate academic dishonesty. Cheating on exams, presenting other students' work as your own, submitting work completed in previous or other courses¹, and plagiarizing sources and web pages are all forms of academic dishonesty. The penalty may be a grade of zero for the assignment, or failure of the course. All offenses are reported to Judicial Affairs.

Plagiarism is presenting someone else's ideas, work, or words as if they were your own. Plagiarism includes copying from a source without citing it, using the same words without using quotation marks (even with a citation), or improperly paraphrasing (re-wording) another's work. Always cite sources you consult. You must attribute words, ideas, interpretations, information, and knowledge that is not your own to the appropriate author or source. Although many consider information in encyclopedias common knowledge, I would like you to identify and cite information that is new to you in the history discipline. Below are links to web resources about plagiarism, even unintentional plagiarism (i.e., improper paraphrasing). You are responsible for reading and understanding this material. If you have any questions about plagiarism, please see me or visit the Writing Center in Moon Library.

You may want to consult the following resources if you have questions about academic integrity.

SUNY- ESF Student and Judicial Handbooks, and also the Academic Integrity Handbook.
<http://www.esf.edu/students/handbook/>

Avoiding Plagiarism. Purdue University Online Writing Lab.
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_plagiar.html

Plagiarism: What It is and How to Recognize and Avoid It. Indiana University Bloomington, Writing Tutorial Services. <http://www.indiana.edu/%7Ewts/pamphlets/plagiarism.shtml>

As a student in this class, you acknowledge your responsibility for abiding by the Code of Student Conduct; and you acknowledge your understanding of academic dishonesty and the penalties for academic dishonesty, which are applicable to both individual and group assignments.

¹ Assignments that have been previously submitted for this course, or work that has been or is going to be submitted for other courses may not be turned in for credit in this course without permission of the instructor.