Natural Resources in American History

Instructor

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My 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 through the ESF Virtual Bookstore.


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 JSTOR 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 Poster Project* 20%
Memo 5%
Individual draft poster 5%
Meeting to review draft poster 5%
Exams
First exam in class 25%
Final cumulative exam 25%

*Detailed Grading Rubrics for the components of the Research & Analysis Project are available on the course website.

Grading Scale

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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93-100</td>
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<td>A-</td>
<td>90-92.9</td>
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<td>B</td>
<td>87-89.9</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>64.9 and below</td>
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PLEASE NOTE: All Projects are due at the start of class on the due date. No student work will be accepted via e-mail without prior arrangement and approval. 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 points will be figured into your grade. **Please note:** there are no make-up opportunities for missed in-class exercises.

**Research & Analysis Poster Project**

I have found that working with students on draft projects is the most productive and effective part of the teaching and learning experience. With a smaller class size, I can approach the course project differently. We will have at least one class session to further describe and discuss the project and guidelines.

You will choose a classmate to work with to compose a poster. The two of you will research a person, event, topic, ideology, philosophy, or era and then explore and analyze its significance in the context of American environmental history. Each two-person team will submit a memo that identifies members and their e-mail and alternate contact information (optional). The memo will also outline the proposed topic and intended approach to analysis. Thus, you will need to do some background research and planning in order to submit a satisfactory memo.

Each individual person on the team will compose a draft poster and submit an 11” x 17” poster (smaller than the standard format size) and a properly formatted bibliography (on a separate 8 ½” x 11” paper). The team members will meet with me and/or the TAs for a review of their drafts. We will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the two posters and provide suggestions for the final draft. The team will then revise the poster and submit one 11” x 17” poster (smaller than the standard format size), and a team bibliography. The draft posters will be graded on an individual basis, while the final poster will be a team grade.

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. Second you will explain why the person or event or thing is relevant to American 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 bibliography should include all sources utilized in the development of your presentation, not just those cited or quoted. The minimum is ten scholarly sources (books, journal articles, primary sources), but that is just a minimum (meaning a grade of 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, preferably whatever is standard for your discipline.

Supplemental directions for the project, detailed grading rubrics, and 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 expected to consult and follow these.
The due dates for the memo, draft, and final poster project will be posted on the Lecture and Reading Schedule page of 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.

One of my overarching principles is equity: providing the same opportunity for each and every student in the class. And that is why some of my policies might seem harsh—strict due dates, for example. It seems unfair to let one student turn in an assignment after class, or later in the afternoon; when others worked hard to turn in their assignments at the beginning of class. Who wouldn’t have liked an extra few hours? I dislike the concept of “extra credit” generally; but that can also be an equity dilemma. At the end of a semester, it is not fair to allow one person to raise his or her grade because he requests and completes an extra credit assignment, when other students do not have the same chance to raise their grades.

Here are some tips and expectations:

- Come to class; and arrive on time. 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.
- Follow the basic standards for professional and polite behavior during class sessions. It is pretty depressing to even have this in my syllabus, but I find that I still need to remind folks about inappropriate and impolite behaviors: don’t send text messages, check e-mail, browse FaceBook or the web, or do work for other courses. Keep talking with classmates to a minimum during lectures. **Cell phones should be set to Airplane Mode and put away during class.**
- 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.
- Be sure your written or verbal correspondence with the Instructor or TAs is professional. All e-mail messages should begin with a greeting and end with a signed name. Please also identify which class (NRAH, FOR 204) you are in. We will not respond to anonymous messages. Also, please check the syllabus and web pages for the information you seek before shooting off an e-mail question for which you might already have an answer.

**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. Please inform me if there are problems, conflicts, learning accommodations, or extended absences—any circumstances—that you believe have an adverse affect on your participation or performance in the course. You may prefer to share your circumstances with Student Wellness and Support in 110 Bray (470-6660 or wellness@esf.edu).

The Office of Student Affairs is the contact for learning about the process for accommodations for students with learning disabilities. Accommodations sometimes take a while to get set up, so it is
recommended that you get the process started right away. ESF works with the Syracuse University Office of Disability Services (ODS). You can find information about SU ODS on the web at http://disabilityservices.syr.edu. 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. The best approach is to contact me immediately, via e-mail or phone (470-6594).

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 for plagiarizing will be a grade of zero for the assignment. All offenses will be reported to Judicial Affairs as required under College policy.

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/are not your own to the appropriate author or source.

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 a member of the teaching team or visit the Writing Center in Moon Library.

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


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 resulting penalties, which are applicable to both individual and group assignments.

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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.