Course Outline

EST 361

HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

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Dept. of Environmental Studies
SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Fall 2019, TuTh 2:00-3:20 pm, Marshall 212

DESCRIPTION

Overview
This upper-division course examines the historical and cultural origins, and evolution of the complex, multifaceted, social phenomenon known as the American environmental movement. The course surveys the events, philosophies, and historical/cultural processes that marked and continue to drive various attitudes toward nature in the United States. Course units examine conservationism and preservationism; early urban environmental reform; the 'second wave' of environmental activism in the 1960s and '70s; the environmental justice movement; and contemporary environmental movements including those in response to global issues. Course methods include reading, writing, lectures, films, discussion and debate. As a final course project, students examine in depth an historical or contemporary American environmental issue, campaign, advocate, opponent, or environment-oriented organization of their choosing, employing course concepts, frameworks and understandings in writing a research paper on that topic.

Prerequisite
Sophomore status or consent of instructor

Objectives
By successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate familiarity with key moments in the history of the American environmental movement, including conservationism, preservationism, early urban reform movements, the 'second wave' of environmental concern, the environmental justice movement, and contemporary movements including transnational environmental advocacy;
- Relate contextual environmental, social, political, economic, and cultural factors with the rise, fall, rebirth, diversification, successes and limitations of the American environmental movement;
- Demonstrate proficiency in applying basic course concepts and analytical frameworks in the analysis of a particular historical or contemporary American environmental issue, campaign, advocate, opponent, or environment-oriented organization.
Requirements

- Read all required texts & view all in-class films
- Participate in course discussions and debates
- Write a series of Weekly Reading Notes (@ 1 p.) on the required readings
- Complete three formal essay assignments (@ 3-5 pp.)
- Prepare and submit a final research paper (10-12 pp.)

Grading

Essays (3), 33.3%
Research paper, 33.3%
Weekly reading notes (10) & participation, 33.3%

Communication

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TEXTS

Required


Recommended


Bookstore

ESF Virtual Bookstore, available via myESF. For further information see: http://www.esf.edu/students/books.htm
**VIDEOS**

"The Wilderness Idea: John Muir, Gifford Pinchot and the First Great Battle…" (Thurs., 9/5)
"Wild by Law: The Rise of Environmentalism and the Creation of the Wilderness Act" (Thurs., 9/12)
"Earth Days: Seeds of a Revolution" (Tues., 9/24 & 10/1)
“Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring” (Thurs., 10/10)
"Laid to Waste" (Thurs., 10/22)
"Cesar Chavez: Pesticides Kill Farmworkers" (Tues., 10/29)
"Kids at Risk" (Tues. 10/29)
"Martin Sheen" (Tues. 10/29)
"In Our Own Back Yard: The First Love Canal" (Thurs., 10/31)
"This Changes Everything" (Tues., 11/12)

**ASSIGNMENTS**

Weekly reading notes (due most Tuesdays, as noted below)
Essay #1, "Early American Environmental Movements" (due Tues., 9/24)
Essay #2, "American Environmentalism: The Second Wave" (due Tues., 10/22)
Essay #3, "The Environmental Justice Movement" (due Tues., 11/12)
Research paper (see below)

**RESEARCH PAPER**

Assignment. A detailed assignment will be provided during Week 7.

Proposal (T-1). By Week 10, submit a proposal in the form of an abstract (~1 p.) describing the historical or contemporary American environmental issue, campaign, advocate, opponent or environment-related organization that you would like to examine in your research paper.

Abstract, outline and bibliography (T-2). By Week 12, submit a revised abstract, outline and preliminary bibliography for your research paper. At least 10 relevant, peer-reviewed, scholarly journal articles on your topic should be included in the bibliography, in proper reference form.

Specifications. Term papers should be at 10-12 pp. in length, double-spaced, 11 or 12 pt. Times New Roman, plus coversheet and bibliography.

Deadline (T-3). Due at the beginning of the regularly scheduled Final Exam period for this course.

**SCHEDULE OVERVIEW**

(See next page)
SCHEDULE DETAIL

PART I: EARLY AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

Week 1 – Introduction

Tues., 8/27: Course introduction
- What is a social movement?
- Life-cycles of social movements
- Issue-attention life cycle
- Why an historical perspective?
- Aims of this course
- Assumptions
- Syllabus review

RECOMMENDED
- Johnston, *What Is a Social Movement?* ch.1

Thurs., 8/29: Before environmentalism
- Native Americans and traditional human ecology in North America
- Settlers in the New World
- Discussion

REQUIRED:
- Nash, *Wilderness*, prologue, ch's 1, 2

RECOMMENDED:
- Merchant, *Problems*, ch's 2-4
- Johnston, *What Is a Social Movement?* ch.2, "The study of social movements"

ADDITIONAL:

Week 2 – Preservationism

Tues., 9/3: Romantic wilderness
- Romantic wilderness
- *American* wilderness
- Henry David Thoreau
Discussion/ debate groups (formation)

REQUIRED:
Nash, *Wilderness*, ch's 3-5

RECOMMENDED:
Merchant, *Problems*, ch.6

Johnston, *What Is a Social Movement?* ch.4, "What is a cultural movement?"

ADDITIONAL:

*** Weekly Reading Note #1 due (*Wilderness*, through ch.2) ***

**Thurs., 9/5: American preservationism**


Discussion

REQUIRED:
Nash, *Wilderness*, ch's 6, 7

RECOMMENDED:
Merchant, *Problems*, ch's 8, 9, 11

ADDITIONAL:

*** Weekly Reading Note #2 due (*Wilderness*, ch's 3-7) ***

**Week 3 – Conservationism**

**Tues., 9/10: Establishment of national (and state) parks**

Lecture

Discussion/ debate groups

REQUIRED:
Nash, *Wilderness*, ch.10

RECOMMENDED:
Merchant, *Problems*, ch's 10-11

ADDITIONAL:

*** Weekly Reading Note #2 due (*Wilderness*, ch's 3-7) ***

**Thurs., 9/12: Toward a philosophy of wilderness**


Discussion
REQUIRED:
Nash, *Wilderness*, ch's 11-13

RECOMMENDED:
Johnston, *What Is a Social Movement?* ch.3, "What is a political movement?"

ADDITIONAL:

**Week 4 – Analyzing Social Movements**

**Tues., 9/17: What Do Social Movements Do?**
Lecture
Debate preparation

REQUIRED:
Nash, *Wilderness*, ch's 14-16, epilogue

RECOMMENDED:
Johnston, *What Is a Social Movement?* ch.5, "What do social movements do?"

ADDITIONAL:

*** Weekly Reading Note #3 due (*Wilderness*, ch's 8-13) ***

*** Essay #1 – Early Environmental Movements (due Tues., 9/24) ***

**Thurs., 9/19: Debate #1**
Debate #1: "For the Greatest Good?"

**PART II: THE SECOND WAVE OF AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTALISM**

**Week 5 – Urbanization and the environment**

**Tues., 9/24: Earth Days (Part I)**
Film: PBS, "*Earth Days: The Seeds of a Revolution*" (2010), 100 mins. – Part I
Discussion

**Thurs., 9/26: “One, many American environmental movements”**
Urban and industrial roots of American environmentalism
Discussion
REQUIRED:
Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, intro, ch's 1, 2 (pp. xiii-120)

RECOMMENDED:
Merchant, *Problems*, ch's 5, 12

ADDITIONAL:

**Week 6 – Professionalization of environmentalism**

**Tues., 10/1: 1960s environmentalism (Earth Days, Part II)**
Film: PBS, "*Earth Days: The Seeds of a Revolution*" (2010), 100 mins. – Part II
Discussion
REQUIRED:
Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, ch.3

RECOMMENDED:

ADDITIONAL:

*** Weekly Reading Note #4 due (*Forcing the Spring*, ch’s 1-2) ***

**Thurs., 10/3: Mainstreaming environmentalism**
Discussion/ debate groups
REQUIRED:
Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, ch.4

ADDITIONAL:
Week 7 – Grassroots Response

**Tues., 10/8: Alternative environmental movements**

From the grassroots  
Research paper assignment  
Discussion/ debate groups

REQUIRED:

Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, ch.5 (Grassroots & Direct Action)

RECOMMENDED:

Johnston, *What Is a Social Movement?* ch.6, "Researching social movements"

Lester & Lester, *Writing Research Papers*, ch.2, "Finding a Topic"

*** Weekly Reading Note #5 due (*Forcing the Spring*, ch’s 3-4) ***

**Thurs., 10/10: Gender and environmental issues**

Film: PBS, “Rachel Carson’s Silent Spring” (1993), 55 mins.  
Discussion

REQUIRED:

Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, ch.6 (Gender)

RECOMMENDED:

Merchant, *Problems*, ch's 12, 13, 15

ADDITIONAL:


Week 8 – Diversity in American Environmentalism

**Tues., 10/15: Ethnicity, class and environmental issues**

Lecture  
Discussion  
Debate preparation

REQUIRED:

Gottlieb, *Forcing the Spring*, ch's 7 (Ethnicity), 8 (Class)

RECOMMENDED:

Merchant, *Problems*, ch's 4, 7, 15
ADDITIONAL:


*** Weekly Reading Note #6 due (Forcing the Spring, ch's 5-6) ***

*** Essay #2 – American Environmentalism: The Second Wave (due Tues., Oct. 22) ***

Thurs., 10/17: Debate #2

Debate #2: "Mainstream vs. Grassroots Environmentalism"

REQUIRED:

Gottlieb, Forcing the Spring (all)

PART III: THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

Week 9 – Toxic Wastes and Race

Tues., 10/22: Origins of the environmental justice movement

Film: Robert Bahar & George McCollough, Laid to Waste (1997), 52 mins.

REQUIRED:

Cole & Foster, From the Ground Up, preface, intro, ch.1 (pp. 1-33)

ADDITIONAL:


Thurs., 10/24: Environmental racism and inequality

Lecture
Discussion
The political economy of environmental racism
Discussion/ debate prep
REQUIRED:
Cole & Foster, *From the Ground Up*, ch's 2-3
ADDITIONAL:

*** Research Paper Assignment #T-1 (due Thurs., 10/31) ***

Week 10 – Varieties of Environmental Justice Advocacy

Tues., 10/29: Circle of poison: from fields to plate

Videos: "Cesar Chavez: Pesticides Kill Farm Workers" (1990), 11 mins.; Earth Justice, "Kids at Risk" (2009), 4 mins.; Food, Inc., "Martin Sheen Stands Up for Farm Workers" (2009), 1 min.
Pesticides, food safety, and farmworker health
Discussion/ debate prep
REQUIRED:
Cole & Foster, *From the Ground Up*, ch.4
ADDITIONAL:

*** Weekly Reading Note #7 due (*From the Ground Up*, through ch.3) ***
**Thurs., 10/31: The structure of environmental decision making**

Film: Lynn Corcoran, "In Our Own Backyard: The First Love Canal" (1982), 59 mins.
Discussion

REQUIRED:
Cole & Foster, *From the Ground Up*, ch.5

RECOMMENDED:
Lester & Lester, *Writing Research Papers*, ch's 3, 5, 8, 9, Appendix

ADDITIONAL:

**Week 11 – Indigenous Environmental Action**

**Tues., 11/5: Indigenous Environmental Network**

Discussion
Debate prep

REQUIRED:
Cole & Foster, *From the Ground Up*, ch.6

RECOMMENDED:
Merchant, *Problems*, ch’s 8, 11, 14, 15

ADDITIONAL:

*** Weekly Reading Note #8 due (From the Ground Up, ch's 4-5) ***

*** Essay #3 – The Environmental Justice Movement (due Tues., 11/12) ***

**Thurs., 11/7: Debate #3**

Debate #3: "Is Environmental Inequality Intentional?"

REQUIRED:
Cole & Foster, *From the Ground Up*, ch.7

ADDITIONAL:

*** Research Paper Assignment #T-2 (due Thurs., 11/14) ***
PART IV: FUTURE OF THE AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

Week 12 – Globalization and the Environment

Tues., 11/12: This Changes Everything?
Film: Naomi Klein, "This Changes Everything" (2015), 90 mins.
REQUIRED:
Speth, Bridge at the End of the World, preface, introduction, ch's 1-2
RECOMMENDED:
Klein, This Changes Everything
Merchant, Problems, ch.15
ADDITIONAL:

Thurs., 11/14: System Failure?
Modern capitalism: out of control?
Discussion/ debate groups
REQUIRED:
Speth, Bridge at the End of the World, ch.3
ADDITIONAL:

Week 13 – The Great Transformation

Tues., 11/19: Market-based environmental transformations
Lecture
Discussion
REQUIRED:
Speth, Bridge at the End of the World, ch's 4-6
RECOMMENDED:
Lester & Lester, Writing Research Papers, ch's 7, 10, 12, 13, 15
ADDITIONAL:

*** Weekly Reading Note #9 due (Bridge, through ch.3) ***

**Thurs., 11/21: Beyond today’s capitalism?**
Lecture
Discussion/ debate groups

**REQUIRED:**
Speth, Bridge at the End of the World, ch's 7-9

**ADDITIONAL:**

**THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**Week 14 – New Environmentalism?**

**Tues., 12/3: New consciousness, new politics**
Lecture
Discussion
Debate preparation

**REQUIRED:**
Speth, Bridge at the End of the World (all)

**RECOMMENDED:**
Litfin, Ecovillages
Johnston, What Is a Social Movement? ch.7, "Where are social movements headed?"

**ADDITIONAL:**


*** Weekly Reading Note #10 due (Bridge, ch's 4-9) ***
**Thurs., 12/5: Debate #4**

Debate #4: "Future of the American Environmental Movement"

**Final Exam Week**

*** Research Paper Assignment #T-3 due ***

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**NOTICES**

**Accommodations**

SUNY-ESF works closely with the Office of Disability Services (ODS) at Syracuse University in assisting students with learning and physical disabilities. If you may need accommodations in this course related to a disability, please contact the ESF Office of Student Affairs, 110 Bray Hall, tel. 315.470.6660, for assistance with the process. You may also contact ODS directly, 804 University Avenue, rm. 309; call 315.443.4498, to schedule an appointment. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and issues Accommodation Authorization Letters to students with documented disabilities, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible. To learn more about ODS, visit [http://disabilityservices.syr.edu](http://disabilityservices.syr.edu).

**Academic integrity**

*Plagiarism* is presenting others' work as your own without acknowledgment of its source(s). Plagiarism includes verbatim and close paraphrasing of material from course texts and other published materials, cutting and pasting from electronic sources, and unattributed paraphrasing. Acts of academic dishonesty are defined in the *ESF Academic Integrity Handbook* and violate the College's *Code of Student Conduct*. Students are accountable for such acts. If you have any questions about how to properly quote or reference others' work, please consult writing reference texts, your instructor, or other campus resources.

**Personal electronics**

This course is intended to be an educational experience for all. To ensure that the classroom environment is conducive for learning, please follow these guidelines in use of personal electronics: *Cell phones* should be off while class is in session. If you need to maintain your phone on silent mode due to a personal emergency, please notify the instructor in advance. Digital devices may be used for reading, note-taking, and course-related research activities. *Text messaging*, *social media* viewing, updating, etc., during class is disruptive and not permitted. Use of *ear buds* or *earphones* during class is disruptive to participation and is not permitted. Disruptive behavior is a violation of *ESF’s Code of Student Conduct*. Students who are disruptive may be asked to leave the classroom; persistent disruptions will have further consequences. Thank you for helping us all get the most out of class.

**Fire alarms**

If a fire alarm sounds, exit the building immediately, to the area designated for this course. Stay together as a class until released. Take all personal belongings with you, including keys, backpacks, electronics, and coats. Let your instructor know in advance if you have any special needs in case of a building evacuation. For further information, contact the Office of Student Affairs, tel. 315.470.6660.