Overview

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 in our allocation and management of natural resources? This course takes a critical look at some of the traditional stories in American history and at the historical relationships between Americans and natural resources. Students learn about America’s three conservation movements and the forces that have shaped America from indigenous settlement to the present. (See Figure 1).

Course Learning Objectives

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

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

There are also specific objectives for each lecture, which inform students of the expected learning outcomes for exams.

Textbooks

- Explains environmental history of Chicago and the ways in which the city and its development shaped the surrounding landscapes in the last half of the 19th century

- Examines the ways in which American history is taught and learned

Workload

Poster project
- Composition of an 11 x 17 poster
- Requires research and analysis of a topic of choice
- Enables personalization of the course

Six (6) Brief Assignments & Class Discussion
- Foster assimilation and critical thinking about course concepts

Two (2) Exams
- Based on lecture objectives

Student Feedback from Course Evaluations

- The most important part of the course was how to write and design an academic poster, definitely. The staggered deadlines helped break it up, and kept me and my partner on track. We never really had a major time crunch, as we learned to stay on top of a major assignment. The poster project taught me about concise writing, graphic design, and time management by breaking up a major project. Dr. V led us through our first academic poster step by step so that the first time I did an academic poster, I wasn't just thrown straight into the deep end. It was an incredible amount of work, but I'm proud of what we came out with and I'm glad I took this course. (Spring 2016)

- The most effective part of the course was Dr. Vonhof's excited lecturing style, blending primary sources with her own synthesis to make for a much more engaging history class than one reliant on textbooks. (Spring 2017)

- Learning the differences and intricacies of each environmental movement was very important and informative. (Spring 2017)

- I feel that the most important part was relating past environmental issues to contemporary issues. (Spring 2016)