HIST 3345.001: America By Nature

[This syllabus is subject to change prior to or during the semester]

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Fall 2017

MWF/1:00 p.m.–1:50 p.m.

OCNR 133

Instructor: Dr. Jen Corrinne Brown

Office Hours: MW/2:00 p.m.–4:00 p.m.

Or by appointment

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“…the idea of nature contains, though often unnoticed, an extraordinary amount of human history.”—Raymond Williams

COURSE DESCRIPTION

America by Nature examines the central role of nature in the nation’s past, looking beyond more traditional historical topics to discover how the environment has shaped society and the ways in which humans, in turn, have shaped nature throughout American history. We will connect nature and its creatures to larger historical trends and events starting with the pre-Columbian era and ending with the environmental justice movement of the 1970s and 1980s. In class, there will be lectures, discussions, and other activities that will require your participation. Out of class, there will be reading, writing, and studying. Throughout, we will explore our own connections to nature and place.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of HIST 3345, students will:

- learn more about the role of the environment as well as transnational (across nations) and comparative factors in American history.
- gain a better understanding of human interactions with nature over time on a variety of geographic scales.
- demonstrate information retrieval skills required for historical research.
- be able to place the present in a historically-based context.
- improve writing skills.
- become familiar with the Chicago Manual of Style.

REQUIRED TEXTS


Note: these books will be available on a three-hour reserve in the library.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS/GRADING (1,000 total points possible)**

Note: more detailed assignment directions and grading rubrics will be posted on Blackboard.

**Short Papers (300 points):** These short essays based upon the books will help to strengthen your writing skills and comprehension of important aspects of environmental history.

**Community-Engaged Learning Project (100 points):** This project will address a local environmental issue here on the island or in the surrounding area. It is designed to supplement classroom knowledge by illustrating that learning extends beyond the classroom.

**Discussion Leaders (200 points):** Groups will take turns leading discussion for various book chapters in order to facilitate participation, class attendance, contributions to discussion, preparedness, and classroom citizenship.

**Take-Home Midterm Exam (200 points):** This take-home essay exam will cover key environmental history topics that we have learned in the first half of class.

**Take-Home Final Exam (200 points):** The final exam will be in format similar to the midterm and will cover important topics that we have learned throughout the semester. It will require you to synthesize and evaluate course readings and materials.

**GRADING SCALE**

- A=1,000–895 points
- B=894–795 points
- C=794–695 points
- D=694–595 points
- F=594 points and below

**LATE POLICY**

You may also turn in assignments late, but unless you have received prior instructor approval, assignments received after their due time and date will be marked down 5% for arriving after the due time (even one minute late) and 10% for each day late.

**ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT**

Academic integrity is an important requirement for this course. Plagiarism, cheating, and other forms of academic misconduct will not be tolerated. As a student, you are responsible for knowing how to avoid plagiarism. For more information, please see definitions of academic misconduct on the College of Liberal Arts’ website, available at [http://cla.tamu.edu/about/documents/academicmisconductprocedures1.pdf](http://cla.tamu.edu/about/documents/academicmisconductprocedures1.pdf). Any student guilty of academic misconduct may receive a failing grade for the course and will be reported to the university’s Judicial Affairs Officer.
HOW TO SUCCEED IN UPPER-DIVISION HISTORY CLASSES

- Learning history will provide you with information and context to understand the world and the nation. It will help you improve your intellectual and civic skills, building you a foundation for future studies and life outside of college.
- You should know that learning is a struggle, you will make mistakes, and no one is naturally good at history. It takes work, especially in upper-division courses that are reading and writing intensive.
- I want everyone to succeed and do their best in this class, but that means you have to put in the work. Successful students work hard and try to improve throughout the semester.
- Carefully review the syllabus and make note of important dates, including exam days and due dates for readings and assignments. Familiarize yourself with the course Blackboard site and the resources available to you.
- Manage your time wisely. Set a reading and studying schedule. And stick to it. Start early and work ahead on assignments.
- Take reading notes and be sure to write down page numbers for citations.
- Show up to class on time and prepared to take notes, to discuss readings, and to ask questions.
- Take good notes during both lecture and discussion.
- Attend class regularly, contribute to discussion, and be a model classroom citizen.
- View writing as a process in which you will only get better if you make the conscious attempt to improve. You should start assignments early, read the directions carefully, develop an outline first, and then write.
- Revise, revise, revise. Ask peers, the Writing Center, or the instructor for feedback prior to turning in assignments.
- Remember, you are a historian in practice; stop worrying and learn to love the Chicago Manual of Style.

COURSE SCHEDULE
The instructor reserves the right to modify the syllabus as needed prior to or during the course. Any changes will be announced in class.

Unit 1: What is Environmental History?
In this unit, we will explore the discipline of environmental history, both in its early roots and its emergence from the environmental movement of the 1960s. We will learn how environmental historians approach the study of history using readings and our own observations.

Guiding Questions:
- What is environmental history? What is nature? How do landscapes reflect human history?

Monday, 8/28: Course Introduction; What is Nature?

Wednesday, 8/30: The Nature of the Field; The Modern Environmental Movement
Reading Due: Down to Earth, pp. v–viii, 3–7

Friday, 9/1: Friday Field Trip (Campus Walking Path; meet in classroom)
Unit 2: Early American Encounters and Exchanges
Throughout this section of class, we will look at the periods of contact and colonization of North America, addressing the different ways that Native Americans and European settlers viewed nature and land use, and how they negotiated between them. We will investigate the consequences of disease, pigs, potatoes, and other European environmental baggage.

Guiding Questions:
- What did the Americas look like in 1491?
- Compare and contrast the uses and views of nature among natives and settlers. What changed over time?
- What were the environmental and social consequences of European and American imperialism?

Wednesday, 9/6: The Pristine Myth
Reading Due: *Down to Earth*, pp. 11–21

Friday, 9/8: The Columbian Exchange
Reading Due: *Down to Earth*, pp. 22–39

Monday, 9/11: Discussion Leaders (Group 1)
Reading Due: *Pumpkin*, pp. vii–31

Wednesday, 9/13: Settlers and Natives in Colonial America
Reading Due: *Down to Earth*, pp. 40–54

Friday, 9/15: Discussion Leaders (Group 2)
Reading Due: *Pumpkin*, pp. 32–56

Unit 3: Nature’s Nation
This unit examines the environmental history of the early American republic and its transformation with the rise of industrial capitalism. We will learn about the physical and economic growth of the new nation—and the environmental and social costs that accompanied it. We will also focus on how Americans began to consider the limits of the industrial era.

Guiding Questions:
- Why did revolutionaries and early Americans use nature to define their rights and liberties?
- Compare and contrast the whaling and cotton industries of the nineteenth century.
- During the nineteenth century, why did Americans start to appreciate the beauty of nature?
- What environmental changes accompanied westward expansion and industrialization?
- What gave rise to the conservation movement? How did the various branches of the movement differ in their goals and actions?

Monday, 9/18: American Independence and the Empire of Liberty
Reading Due: *Down to Earth*, pp. 57–71

**Assignment Due: Short Paper #1**
Wednesday, 9/20: Discussion Leaders (Group 3)
Reading Due: *Pumpkin*, pp. 57–84

Friday, 9/22: Animals in 19th-Century America

Monday, 9/25: King Cotton and Slavery
Reading Due: *Down to Earth*, pp. 72–88

Wednesday, 9/27: The American Naturalist Tradition and Romanticism

Friday, 9/29: Friday Field Trip (Downtown 1p–3p; details TBA)

Monday, 10/2: You have died of dysentery.
Reading Due: *Down to Earth*, pp. 116–135

Wednesday, 10/4: NO Class, Bb assignment (Dr. B. at OHA)

Friday, 10/6: NO Class, Bb assignment (Dr. B. at OHA)

Monday, 10/9: Railroads, Industrialization, and Commodities
**Assignment Due: Take-Home Midterm Exam**

Wednesday, 10/11: Nationalistic Nature: Two Ways

Friday, 10/13: Nature’s Nation (con’t)
Reading Due: *Pumpkin*, pp. 85–111

Monday, 10/16: The Conservation Movement
Reading Due: *Down to Earth*, pp. 136–154; you should also start reading *Crimes against Nature*.

Wednesday, 10/18: The Audubon Movement

Friday, 10/20: Friday Field Trip (Hans and Pat Suter Wildlife Refuge; details TBA)

Monday, 10/23: Discussion Leaders (Group 1)
Reading Due: *Crimes against Nature*, pp. xv–78

Wednesday, 10/26: Discussion Leaders (Group 2)
Reading Due: *Crimes against Nature*, pp. 81–146

Friday, 10/28: Discussion Leaders (Group 3)
Reading Due: *Crimes against Nature*, pp. 149–203

**Unit 4: The Prodigal Century**
This unit appraises the vast environmental changes in the United States and the world during the twentieth century. We will cover a variety of topics including the changing nature of cities and their hinterlands, food, fossil fuels, and media portrayals of environmentalism. We will also analyze the interplay between race, class, and gender in environmental history.
Guiding Questions:
- What contributed to suburban sprawl in the postwar era? How did these new spatial arrangements create inequalities in society?
- How did the Cold War shape American landscapes?
- How did environmental justice movements of the 1970s and 1980s differ from the modern environmental movement of the 1960s and 1970s?

Monday, 10/30: Community-Engaged Learning Project
**Assignment Due: Short Paper #2**

Wednesday, 11/1: Cleaning Up Cities in the Progressive Era
Reading Due: Down to Earth, pp. 155–169

Friday, 11/3: Farming and Rural Life in the Early to Mid-20th Century
Reading Due: Down to Earth, pp. 173–186
Pumpkin, pp. 112–138

Monday, 11/6: The Green Revolution
Reading Due: Down to Earth, pp. 187–202
Pumpkin, pp. 139–163

Wednesday, 11/8: Metropolitan and Suburban Sprawl
Reading Due: Down to Earth, pp. 203–239; you should also start reading Seeing Green.

Friday, 11/10: The Environmental History of the Color Line

Monday, 11/13: Rise of Ecology

Wednesday, 11/15: The Modern Environmental Movement, Part Two
Reading Due: Down to Earth, pp. 240–268
Seeing Green, pp. 1–32

Friday, 11/17: Discussion Leader (Group 1)
Reading Due: Seeing Green, pp. 35–106

Monday, 11/20: The Fantastically Strange Cold War History of Dolphins

Wednesday, 11/22: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Break
Friday, 11/24: NO CLASS, Thanksgiving Break

Monday, 11/27: Oil and Energy Crises
Reading Due: Down to Earth, pp. 269–300

Wednesday, 11/29: Discussion Leader (Group 2)
Reading Due: Seeing Green, pp. 109–184

Friday, 12/1: The Environment Justice Movement
Monday, 12/4: Discussion Leader (Group 3)
Reading Due: *Seeing Green*, pp. 187–257

Wednesday, 12/6: Last Day of Class and Final Course Business
Reading Due: *Seeing Green*, pp. 258–276
**Assignment Due: Short Paper #3**

Wednesday, 12/13, 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.: Take-Home Final Exam Due

CLASSROOM ETIQUETTE AND COURSE POLICIES
Class attendance, participation, and etiquette are key expectations. In order to facilitate your learning and not distract others, please keep in mind the following guidelines:

- All students should help foster a respectful atmosphere that considers and includes different viewpoints and beliefs.
- You are expected to attend every class, arriving prepared and in a timely fashion. Important announcements will be at the start of class.
- Please turn off all cell phones and electronic devices during class time.
- Due to recent studies about poor note-taking skills and lower testing averages with computer use, you may NOT use computers during class.
- In the event of a college-sponsored absence, you must notify the instructor ahead of time and turn in all assignments or take any exams before you leave. Failure to do will result in a zero.
- Please include your course number in all email correspondence and on all assignments (i.e.: HIST 3345).
- Be sure to keep all class materials and returned assignments. Your grades will be posted on Blackboard and you should periodically check them to verify accuracy.
- In the event of a hurricane, we will follow the published policies of TAMU-CC.

ACADEMIC ADVISING
The College of Liberal Arts requires that students meet with an Academic Advisor as soon as they are ready to declare a major. Degree plans are prepared in the CLA Academic Advising Center. The University uses an online Degree Audit system. Any amendment must be approved by the Department Chair and the Office of the Dean. All courses and requirements specified in the final degree plan audit must be completed before a degree will be granted. The CLA Academic Advising Office is located in Driftwood #203. For more information, please call 361-825-3466 or log onto [http://www.tamucc.edu/advising/](http://www.tamucc.edu/advising/).

DISABILITY AND VETERANS SERVICES
The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is a federal anti-discrimination statute that provides comprehensive civil rights protection for persons with disabilities. Among other things, this legislation requires that all students with disabilities be guaranteed a learning environment that provides for reasonable accommodation of their disabilities. If you believe you have a disability requiring an accommodation, please call or visit Disability Services at (361) 825-5816 in Corpus Christi Hall, Room #116. If you are a returning veteran and are experiencing cognitive and/or physical access issues in the classroom or on campus, please contact the Disability Services office for assistance at (361) 825-5816.

GRADE APPEALS
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures, a student who believes that he or she has not been held to appropriate academic standards as outlined in the class syllabus, equitable evaluation procedures, or appropriate grading, may appeal the final grade given in the course. The burden of proof is upon the student to demonstrate the appropriateness of the appeal. A student with a complaint about a grade is encouraged to first discuss the matter with the instructor. For complete details, including the responsibilities of the parties involved in the process and the number of days allowed for completing the steps in the process, see University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.01, Student Grade Appeal Procedures (available at [http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C2.01_student_grade_appeal_procedure.pdf](http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C2.01_student_grade_appeal_procedure.pdf)). For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, [http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html](http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html). For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s Office.