HIST 5380.001: Topics in History: Environmental History
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi
Spring 2019
Monday/7:00 p.m.–9:30 p.m.
OCNR 258

Professor: Dr. Jen Corrinne Brown
E-mail: Jennifer.Brown@tamucc.edu
Office: FC 253C
Office Phone: (361) 825-2641

Office Hours: M/5p–6:45p
MW/2p–3:15p
Or by appointment

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

COURSE DESCRIPTION
In this graduate-level reading seminar, we will examine 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. Through extensive reading, writing, and discussion, we will connect nature and its creatures to larger historical trends and events in US history. The aim of this class is to provide you with a better understanding of environmental history including the field’s scholarship, key questions, major developments, and methodologies.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
Upon successful completion of HIST 5380: Space and Place in Modern America, students will:

• gain a better understanding of American history and the role of both natural and built environments in shaping the nation’s past.
• develop the ability to think systematically about how historians make arguments, use evidence, construct narratives, and engage with a larger body of scholarship.
• identify the various themes and debates within the historiography of environmental history.
• improve writing skills and gain the ability to craft book reviews suitable for journal publication.
• enhance oral communication and listening skills by thoughtfully contributing to weekly discussions.

REQUIRED TEXTS


Note: these books are also in the library on a 3-hour reserve.

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

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

**Participation (2 halves@100 points each=200 points):** Your attendance at each class meeting is required and you are expected to show up on time. Participation, class attendance, contributions to discussion, preparedness, and classroom citizenship are key requirements which will be rewarded. Your participation for each half of class will be graded separately.

**Discussion Leaders (50 points):** You all will take turns leading discussion for various books in order to facilitate participation.

**Historiographical Essay (350 points total):** In order to better understand the study of environmental history and to practice skills you need to study history at the graduate level, you will write a ten-page historiographical essay. To help guide you through the process and improve the final product, the project will be broken down into the following components: Topic and Tentative Bibliography (50 points), Annotated Bibliography (50 points), Rough Draft (50 points), Final Essay (200 points).

**Book Reviews (7@50 points each=350 points):** The 600-word book review is an important and distinct form in the history discipline, and one that we will practice throughout the course.

**Conference Abstract (50 points):** Public presentation of your own scholarship also represents a significant part of the practice of history. You will each be required to submit an abstract for the College of Liberal Arts Graduate Symposium held each year in April.

**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
If you have a serious, documentable excuse, please contact the professor about making up any missed in-class work or participation points. You may also turn in any assignments late, but unless you have received prior professor 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.tamucc.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 SURVIVE (AND THRIVE) IN GRADUATE SCHOOL
• Graduate study can be extremely demanding and hard. You should know that many students struggle, especially during the first couple years of graduate work.
• The reactions to the high expectations and substantial workload of graduate study usually range from having zero confidence in your abilities to being overly—and annoyingly—arrogant. Trust that you belong here, but also be sure to practice humility and to treat others with kindness.
• In order to succeed, you will need to perfect your time management. Set a reading and writing schedule. And stick to it. Start early and work ahead on assignments.
• Read every day. You should also take detailed reading notes for each book.
• Show up to class on time and prepared to discuss readings.
• View writing as a process in which you will only get better if you make the conscious attempt to improve. You should start essays and book reviews early.
• Revise, revise, revise. Ask peers, the Writing Center, or others for feedback prior to turning in all written work.
• Hard work, being reliable and organized, and a positive attitude will not only help you thrive in your classes but also will often translate into better funding or job opportunities in the future.

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

Monday, 1/14: Course Introduction; What is Environmental History?
Reading Due: Worster “Transformations of the Earth”

Monday, 1/21: NO CLASS, MLK Day
Monday, 1/28: In-Class Workshop
**Assignment Due: Conference Abstract**
**Assignment Due: Topic and Tentative Bibliography**

Monday, 2/4: Colonial Interactions
Reading Due: Ott, *Pumpkin*
**Assignment Due: Book Review #1**

Monday, 2/11: The Early Gulf World
Reading Due: Davis, *The Gulf* (Part One)

Monday, 2/18: Nineteenth-Century Cities
Reading Due: Kiechle, *Smell Detectives*
**Assignment Due: Book Review #2**

Monday, 2/25: Cities (con’t)
Reading Due: Thrush, *Native Seattle*, 2nd ed.
**Assignment Due: Book Review #3**

Monday, 3/4: The American Gulf World
Reading Due: Davis, *The Gulf* (Part Two)

Monday, 3/11: NO CLASS, Spring Break

Monday, 3/18: South Texas Agriculture and Labor
Reading Due: Bowman, *Blood Oranges*
**Assignment Due: Book Review #4**
**Assignment Due: Annotated Bibliography**

Monday, 3/25: Consuming Nature
Reading Due: Price, *Flight Maps*
**Assignment Due: Book Review #5**

Monday, 4/1: The Modern Environmental Movement
Reading Due: Rome, *The Genius of Earth Day*
**Assignment Due: Book Review #6**

Monday, 4/8: Marine Mammal Protection
Reading Due: Colby, *Orca*
**Assignment Due: Book Review #7**

Monday, 4/15: Film Showing (TBD)
**Assignment Due: Rough Draft**

Monday, 4/22: Individual Meetings
Monday, 4/29: The Modern Gulf World
Reading Due: Davis, The Gulf (Parts Three and Four)

Monday, 5/6 at 7:15 p.m.: Class Potluck
**Assignment Due: Final Essay**

COURSE POLICIES
- All students should help foster a respectful atmosphere and uphold university codes of conduct.
- You are expected to attend every class, arriving prepared and on time.
- Please turn off or silence all cell phones and electronic devices during class time.
- All students should help foster a respectful atmosphere, regularly contribute to discussion, model excellent classroom citizenship, and promote the active participation of others.

DISABILITIES ACCOMMODATIONS
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 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.

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.

DROPPING A CLASS
I hope that you never find it necessary to drop this or any other class. However, events can sometimes occur that make dropping a course necessary or wise. Please consult with your academic advisor, the Financial Aid Office, and me, before you decide to drop this course. Should dropping the course be the best course of action, you must initiate the process to drop the course by going to the Student Services Center and filling out a course drop form. Just stopping attendance and participation WILL NOT automatically result in your being dropped from the class.

GRADE APPEALS
As stated in University Procedure 13.02.99.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals, 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.C2.03, Student Grade Appeals. These documents are accessible online at: http://academicaffairs.tamucc.edu/rules_procedures/assets/13.02.99.C0.03_student_grade_appeals.pdf. For assistance and/or guidance in the grade appeal process, students may contact the Associate Dean’s office in the college in which the course is taught. For complete details on the process of submitting a formal grade appeal in CLA, please visit the College of Liberal Arts website, http://cla.tamucc.edu/about/student-resources.html.