

## HTS 3005: AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

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Office Hours: Wednesdays, 2:30 – 4:00pm

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M,Tu,W,Th 12:30 – 2:20

Architecture (East) 107



### Course Overview

*American Environmental History* explores the major forces shaping environmental change in the United States. We will examine how society shapes, and is shaped by, the natural world, and how human-environment relationships have changed over time. The course emphasizes the ways in which science and technology, politics, economics, and competing interest groups have influenced human-environment relations throughout U.S. history. We will begin in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and will place greatest emphasis on the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Learning Objectives

This course fulfills Georgia Tech's Learning Goal E (Social Sciences): "Students will demonstrate the ability to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence social behavior."

More specifically, students who are successful in this course will be able to:

- Identify historical examples that illustrate how American society has shaped, and been shaped by, the natural world.
- Explain how commodification\* has influenced humanity's relationship with natural resources, using examples from water, forest, and wildlife management in the U.S.
- Analyze social, political, and economic causes and consequences of major changes in land use, industry, transportation, and agriculture in the U.S.
- Compare and contrast the ways in which different groups (scientists, activists, business leaders, elected officials) have viewed conservation and environment in different time periods, and provide examples that illustrate some of the ways they have influenced discourse and policy.
- Evaluate a variety of tools used to manage resources and solve environmental problems in the U.S., and explain how they have changed over time.

*\*Commodification is the process of transforming resources, services, and ideas into commodities, or something that can be bought and sold.*

### Course Requirements & Grading

In-Class Assignments & Assessments	
Reading checks	10%
In-class group work	10%
Reading responses	10%
Exams	30%
Book Review Paper	20%
Final exam	20%

## **Description of Graded Components**

### *Reading checks*

Three scheduled reading checks, at the beginning of class, are designed to encourage you to keep up with the reading. The questions will be taken from the reading guides provided on T-Square.

### *In-class group work*

You will complete several in-class group assignments that provide opportunities to apply and explore in new ways the ideas discussed in lecture. Earning full credit for these assignments depends largely on your full participation in the process.

### *Exams*

A compressed, five-week course does not give you a great deal of time to adjust your class preparation and review strategies. For that reason, I have scheduled regular assessments to ensure you receive feedback on your progress early and regularly. The three Thursday tests will be a combination of short-answer and short essay questions. These assessments are designed to help you develop the skills you will need to be successful on the final exam. The format of the final exam will be very similar and will require you to make arguments supported by evidence from lectures and course readings.

### *Reading responses*

Two reading responses are assigned as homework. Each response should be 1-2 pages in length (double-spaced, 1-inch margins, 12 point font). You may use the reading guides as prompts or choose a different theme from the assigned readings.

### *Book Review*

The book review assignment is a 5-page paper (double-spaced) that discusses the major arguments in the book you select in relation to the themes in this course. You will receive a detailed description of the requirements for the paper and a rubric that will be used for assessment. You will be required to submit a complete draft the week before the final paper is due and to complete peer reviews for the draft of one other student. I will provide a list of suggested titles on the first day of class.

## **Grading Scale**

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

A	90-100%
B	80-89%
C	70-79%
D	60-69%
F	0-59%

## Course Materials

### *Texts*

Sabin, Paul. 2013. *The Bet: Paul Ehrlich, Julian Simon, and Our Gamble Over Earth's Future*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Steinberg, Ted. 2002. *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History*. Oxford University Press.

Both of these books are available (new and used) from multiple online sources and from the Georgia Tech bookstore (Barnes & Noble).

In addition to these two books you will need to purchase or borrow the book you select for the book review assignment.

Your reading assignments also include a number of book chapters, journal articles, and print media articles. All of these readings have been posted to T-Square under "Resources."

### *Classroom Management Tools*

I will use "Announcements" in T-Square to communicate with you outside of class. Please see me during office hours or contact me by email with any questions that come up outside of class (my email address is listed at the top of the syllabus).

## Course Expectations & Guidelines

### *Academic Integrity*

Georgia Tech seeks to cultivate a community based on trust, academic integrity, and honor. Students are expected to act according to the highest ethical standards. For information on Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code, please visit

<http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/policies/honor-code/> or

<http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/18/>.

Any student suspected of cheating or plagiarizing on a test or assignment will be reported to the Office of Student Integrity, which will investigate the incident and identify the appropriate penalty for violations.

### *Accommodations for Individuals with Disabilities*

If you are a student with learning needs that require special accommodation, contact the Office of Disability Services at (404) 894-2563 or <http://disabilityservices.gatech.edu/> *RIGHT AWAY* to make an appointment to discuss your special needs and to obtain an accommodations letter. Please also e-mail me *BEFORE OUR THIRD CLASS* to set up a time to discuss your learning needs.

### *Attendance and Participation*

In this course, participation in group discussions and classroom activities is essential to your success and that of your classmates. You will note from the Course Requirements & Grading section, above, that there are many graded activities in this class. This structure is designed to encourage you to keep up with the assigned readings and participate fully in class. If you have an emergency or are ill and cannot attend class, you must contact me (via email) *BEFORE* the class if you want an opportunity to make up missed work.

### *Collaboration & Group Work*

Opportunities for collaboration will be provided through in-class activities and peer review of papers. Other assignments completed outside of class are intended to represent your independent thinking and writing. Please do not compare work and consult with your peers on independent assignments. Violation of this policy will be considered a breach of Georgia Tech's Academic Honor Code.

### *Extensions, Late Assignments, & Missed Exams*

Extensions may be granted for assignments in the case of Institute approved exceptions (e.g., your participation in an Institute sports event or field trip) or in the case of illness or emergency, provided you contact me *BEFORE* the assignment due date or scheduled exam. Assignments without an approved excuse that are submitted up to 24 hours late are eligible for a maximum grade of 90%. Due to the compressed time schedule of the course, assignments turned in more than 24 hours late (without a pre-approved extension from me) are not eligible for credit.

### *Student Use of Mobile Devices in the Classroom*

Please do not use laptops, tablets, smartphones or other mobile devices in this class except in the case of group projects, as needed. You will need to take notes in this class and there is evidence that taking notes by hand produces better learning outcomes than note taking with the use of a mobile device. I will provide a break during each class, so please plan to check your devices (if you so choose) at that time. If you feel you have a compelling reason for taking notes on your laptop (instead of in a notebook), please talk with me about it.

### *Student-Faculty Expectations*

At Georgia Tech we believe it is important to continually strive for an atmosphere of mutual respect, acknowledgement, and responsibility between faculty members and the student body. See <http://www.catalog.gatech.edu/rules/22/> for an articulation of some basic expectations – that you can have of me, and that I have of you.

## Course Schedule

Date	Read <b>before</b> class	Classwork	Due dates
<b>Part One: Commodification and Expansion</b>			
Mon 5/15	Syllabus	Introduction to course <i>What is Environmental History?</i>	
Tues 5/16	Steinberg (2004): preface and chs. 1-3	<i>How did commodification and changing legal frameworks change human-environment relations?</i>	
Wed 5/17	Steinberg (2004): ch. 4 & Cronin (1991): ch. 2	<b>READING CHECK ONE</b> <i>How did environment shape expansion--and vice versa--in the nineteenth century?</i>	
Thurs 5/18	Warren (2003): ch. 4 (101-113 only)	<b>TEST ONE</b> Intro to Part Two: <i>Industrialization &amp; urbanization</i>	Book review choices due
<b>Part Two: Urbanization, Scientific Management, &amp; Conservation (1890 - 1930s)</b>			
Mon 5/22	Merchant (2012a): ch. 12 Gottlieb (1993): ch.2	<i>How did Progressive Era reformers and others respond to the challenges of urbanization and industrialization?</i>	Reading Response #1 due (T-Square)
Tues 5/23	Worster (1977): ch.13	<i>How did Progressivism shape forest and wildlife management, and how/why did those practices begin to change in the 1930s?</i>	
Wed 5/24	Fitzgerald (2003): Intro & ch.1 Pollan (2006): ch. 3	<b>READING CHECK TWO</b> <i>Why and how was agriculture "rationalized" in the 1920s and beyond?</i>	
Thurs 5/25	Merchant (2012b): ch.10 (343-348 only)	<b>TEST TWO</b> Video: <i>Dust Bowl</i>	
<b>Part Three: "From Conservation to Environment" (1930s to WWII)</b>			
Mon 5/29	<i>No class (Memorial Day)</i>		
Tues 5/30	Worster (1977): ch. 12	<i>A New Deal: How did the Dust Bowl and Great Depression influence agricultural and conservation practices?</i>	Reading Response #2 due (T-Square)
Wed 5/31	Maher (2002)	<i>How did New Deal programs and politics expand and change the conservation movement?</i>	
Thurs 6/1	Warren (2003): ch. 9 (256-269)	<b>TEST THREE</b> Intro to Part Four: <i>Changing perceptions of science and technology</i> Video: <i>Silent Spring</i>	
<b>Part Four: Cold War and the Modern Environmental Movement (1945 - 1970)</b>			
Mon 6/5	Robertson (2012b) Sabin (2013): 1-95	<i>How did the early Cold War context influence environmental perspectives in the U.S.?</i>	PAPER DRAFT DUE
Tues 6/6	Steinberg (2002): ch. 13	<i>Growing pains: How have urban and regional planning addressed urban/suburban challenges?</i>	
Wed 6/7	Hamilton (2003) Steinberg (2002): ch. 14	<i>How did the U.S. become a mass consumer society? How does it matter?</i> <b>READING CHECK THREE</b>	
Thurs 6/8	Needleman (2000)	<i>Why did the Modern Environmental Movement emerge in the late 1960s?</i> Video: <i>Earth Day</i>	PEER REVIEW DUE

<b>Part Five: Contemporary U.S. Environmental History (1970-present)</b>			
Mon 6/12	Rome (2010); Sabin (2013): Pp. 96 - 130	<i>What were the outcomes of Earth Day 1970 and the Modern Environmental Movement?</i>	REVISED BOOK REVIEW DUE
Tues 6/13	Sabin (2013): Pp. 131-227	<i>Why have environmental issues become so politically polarized?</i> <b>Begin final exam review work</b>	
Wed 6/14	Langston (2009)	<i>What are the legacies of past environmental practices and policies in the U.S.?</i>	
Thurs 6/15	Review	<b>Complete, share and discuss group review work</b>	
Mon 6/19		<b>FINAL EXAM</b> (regular class time)	

### Readings provided on T-Square:

Cronin, William. 1991. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (Ch. 2). New York: W.W. Norton & Co.

Fitzgerald, Deborah. 2003. *Every Farm a Factory* (Intro & Ch. 1). New Haven: Yale University Press.

Gottlieb, Robert. 1993. *Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement* (Ch. 2). Washington, DC: Island Press.

Hamilton, Shane. 2003. "The Economies and Conveniences of Modern-day Living: Frozen Foods and Mass Marketing, 1945–1965." *Business History Review* 77(01):33-60.

Langston, Nancy. 2009. "Paradise Lost: Climate Change, Boreal Forests, and Environmental History." *Environmental History* 14 (4): 641-650.

Maher, N. M. 2002. "A new deal body politic: Landscape, labor, and the civilian conservation corps." *Environmental History* 7(3): 435-461.

Merchant, Carolyn (Ed). 2012a. *Major Problems in American Environmental History: Documents and Essays* (First Edition, Ch. 12). Boston: Wadsworth.

Merchant, Carolyn (Ed). 2012b. *Major Problems in American Environmental History: Documents and Essays* (Third Edition, Ch. 10). Boston: Wadsworth.

Needleman, Herbert L. 2000. "The Removal of Lead from Gasoline: Historical and Personal Reflections." *Environmental Research* 84:20-35.

Pollan, Michael. 2006. *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (Ch. 3). New York: Penguin Books.

Robertson, Thomas. 2012. "Total War and the Total Environment: Fairfield Osborn, William Vogt, and the Birth of Global Ecology." *Environmental History* 17(2):336-64.

Rome, Adam. 2010. "The Genius of Earth Day." *Environmental History* 15(2):194-205.

Warren, Louis S., ed. 2003. *American Environmental History* (Chs. 4,9). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Worster, Donald. 1977. *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (Chs. 12-13). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.