

HTS 3005: AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY
Spring 2018, Georgia Institute of Technology
Dr. Todd M. Michney

Meeting Place/Time: Architecture (East) 309
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TR 9:30-10:45pm
M 10am-12pm, W 3-4pm,
or by appt.

Environmental history is a relatively new field of historical inquiry that encompasses all aspects of human interaction with the natural world. This course surveys the complex ecological, economic, cultural, social, and political outcomes that have resulted from this relationship in the geographical region encompassing the United States.

Learning Outcomes (Core Area/Attribute: E – Social Studies)

Students will demonstrate the ability to describe the social, political, and economic forces that influence social behavior. Students will demonstrate that they have met the Area E learning outcome through a combination of paper assignments and a group presentation.

Learning Accommodations:

Classroom accommodations will be made for students with disabilities. These accommodations must be arranged in advance and in accordance with the ADAPTS office; please visit

<http://www.adapts.gatech.edu>

Academic Integrity:

Students are expected to comply with the Georgia Tech Academic Honor Code, including the provisions regarding plagiarism (see discussion below), and the Student Code of Conduct, available online at:

<http://osi.gatech.edu/content/honor-code>

<http://www.policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-affairs/code-conduct>

Required Texts (4):

- William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, rev. ed. (2003)
- Mark David Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (1999; 2000)
- Andrew Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest* (2016)
- Susan Strasser, *Waste and Want: A Social History of Trash* (1999; 2000)

Weekly Class Schedule and Readings

Week 1

Jan. 9 – INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

Jan. 11 – *Read/Discuss:*

- Bartow Elmore, "An Environmental History of the Real Thing," *AHA Perspectives on History* 53 (October 2015): 27-28
- Bartow Elmore, "Hydrology and Residential Segregation in the Postwar South: An Environmental History of Atlanta, 1865-1895," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 94 (Spring 2010): 30-61

Week 2

Jan. 16 – *Read/Discuss:*

- Ted Steinberg, "Down to Earth: Nature, Agency, and Power in History," *American Historical Review* 107 (June 2002): 798-821
- Alan M. Kraut, *Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the "Immigrant Menace"* (1994), 11-30

Jan. 18 – Film: TBA

Week 3*

Jan. 23 – *Read/Discuss:* Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, xv-xviii, 1-81

Jan. 25 – *Read/Discuss:*

- Ted Steinberg, *Nature Incorporated: Industrialization and the Waters of New England* (1991), 21-49

Week 4*

Jan. 30 – *Read/Discuss:* Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 82-185

Feb. 1 – *Read/Discuss:*

- William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (1991), 148-206

Week 5*

Feb. 6 – *Read/Discuss:* Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness*, 1-70

Feb. 8 – *Read/Discuss:*

- James L. Machor, *Pastoral Cities: Urban Ideals and the Symbolic Landscape of America* (1987), 144-174
- Paul S. Sutter, *Driven Wild: How the Fight against Automobiles Launched the Modern Wilderness Movement* (2002), 19-53

** CRONON PAPER DUE FEB. 8 **

Week 6*

Feb. 13 – *Read/Discuss:* Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness*, 71-139

Feb. 15 – *Read/Discuss:*

- Mark Fiege, *Irrigated Eden: The Making of an Agricultural Landscape in the American West* (1999), 42-80
- Louis S. Warren, *The Hunter's Game: Poachers and Conservationists in Twentieth-Century America* (1997), 48-70

Week 7

Feb. 20 – Read/Discuss:

- Matthew Mulcahy, *Hurricanes and Society in the British Greater Caribbean, 1624-1783* (2006), 10-32
- Craig E. Colten, *Unnatural Metropolis: Wrestling New Orleans from Nature* (2005), 162-185

Feb. 22 – NO CLASS; MICHNEY AT CONFERENCE

Week 8*

Feb. 27 – Read/Discuss: Needham, *Power Lines*, 1-90

** SPENCE PAPER DUE FEB. 27 (note Tuesday) **

March 1 – Read/Discuss:

- Matthew Gandy, *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City* (2002), 24-51

Week 9*

March 6 – Read/Discuss: Needham, *Power Lines*, 91-182

March 8 – Read/Discuss:

- David Stradling, *Smokestacks and Progressives: Environmentalists, Engineers, and Air Quality in America, 1881-1951* (1999), 6-36
- Richard White, *The Organic Machine* (1995), 59-88

Week 10*

March 13 – Read/Discuss: Needham, *Power Lines*, 183-257

March 15 – Read/Discuss:

- Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History* (2002), 157-172
- Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (2001), 87-118

** SPRING BREAK MARCH 19-23; NO CLASS **

Week 11*

March 27 – Read/Discuss: Strasser, *Waste and Want*, 1-68

March 29 – Read/Discuss:

- Martin V. Melosi, *Garbage in the Cities: Refuse, Reform, and the Environment*, rev. ed. (2005), 17-41
- David Naguib Pellow, *Garbage Wars: The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Chicago* (2002), 21-39

** NEEDHAM PAPER DUE MARCH 29 **

Week 12

April 3 – Read/Discuss: Strasser, *Waste and Want*, 69-160

April 5 – NO CLASS; MICHNEY AT CONFERENCE

Week 13*

April 10 – Read/Discuss: Strasser, *Waste and Want*, 161-228

Week 13* (cont.)

April 12 – *Read/Discuss*:

- Nancy Tomes, *The Gospel of Germs: Men, Women, and the Microbe in American Life* (1998), 183-204
- Suellen Hoy, *Chasing Dirt: The American Pursuit of Cleanliness* (1995), 87-121

Week 14

April 17 – *Read/Discuss*: Strasser, *Waste and Want*, 229-293

April 19 – GROUP PRESENTATIONS I

Week 15

April 24 – GROUP PRESENTATIONS II

** STRASSER PAPER DUE APRIL 24 **

Course Requirements and Grading:

| | |
|--------------------------------|----------------|
| Class Participation | 15% |
| Lead weekly discussion (group) | 15% |
| Book Reviews (2) | 50% (25% each) |
| Final Group Presentation | 20% |

Readings: This course includes both required texts and supplementary readings which will be available through T-Square, under “Resources” on the relevant course tab. This is an intermediate-upper level course, for which the reading load averages 115 pages per week. It is imperative that you do the required readings beforehand, since they form the basis of our class discussions and writing assignments. Also, please be sure to bring the readings with you to class, to facilitate discussion.

Class Participation and Attendance Policy: You should come to class prepared to participate verbally; successful class discussions depend on it, and I will take your participation over the course of the term into account in formulating your final grade (15%). For this component, one contribution per week would translate into an average passing grade (“C”). Discussion will center mainly around the assigned readings and supplementary audiovisual content. I will also consider as participation your comments on the course blog (available through T-Square).

Mini-lectures (interspersed throughout the term) will supply you with information to help contextualize the readings, so be sure to take good notes. NOTE: *Laptop use is not allowed in class.* Research has demonstrated that handwritten notes are far more effective than typed as a means of retaining information. If you have a documented disability that requires you to take notes on a laptop, please request permission in advance in order to use your computer in class. Attendance is mandatory, and more than FIVE unexcused absences will result in the *total forfeiture* of this portion of your grade; missing more than NINE classes will result in automatic failure of the class. NOTE: *my definition of “absent” includes, but is not limited to, the following:*

failure to bring the textbook to class; chronic tardiness without explanation of a special circumstance or documented disability; disruptions, texting/phone-calling, and, of course, sleeping during class.

Georgia Tech students are required to follow instructors' stated attendance policies, with absences excusable only in a handful of situations (for example participation in athletics). In such non-ordinary cases I may ask you to provide official documentation. For details, see:

<http://studentlife.gatech.edu/content/class-attendance>

Paper Assignments: For this course, you will write two mid-length papers on the assigned course readings, each worth 25% of your grade. These papers are to be 5-7 pages in length, and will center on the required texts for the course but **MUST** also incorporate insights from the various supplementary readings. Although described as a "book review," the goal of these papers is not to simply summarize the book in question; rather, the idea is to grasp the major ideas from the assigned readings and to critically raise key issues derived from your growing knowledge of U.S. environmental history and a close reading of the text itself.

One of these papers will be due before midterm, and one after. For the first, you must choose between Cronon, *Changes in the Land* (due February 8) and Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness* (due February 27); for the second, you must choose between Needham, *Power Lines* (due March 29) and Strasser, *Waste and Want* (due April 24). Note that we typically finish reading and discussing the books on Tuesdays, with the paper due the following Thursday (i.e., nine days later, exceptions due to breaks noted); these should be submitted in hard copy and I will collect them at the beginning of class.

The papers are to be typewritten, in a 12-point font, double-spaced (or 1.5), with 1-inch margins. Do not add additional breaks between paragraphs. Be sure to spell-check your papers. **THERE IS TO BE NO SUBMISSION OF PAPER ASSIGNMENTS VIA E-MAIL WITHOUT MY EXPLICIT AND PRIOR APPROVAL.** I accept late work with a one letter-grade penalty (10 percentage points) per week, starting the day following the deadline. Extensions are at my discretion and in granting such, I normally require supporting official documentation.

Group Work: As part of your grade (15%), you are charged with the responsibility of leading one week's discussion (i.e., two class sessions) through collaboration in a small group (approximately 3 individuals). This responsibility should include the preparation of some potential discussion questions to be circulated, at the very latest, the evening before our upcoming class (email to me; you can submit questions for the entire week, i.e., for Tuesday and Thursday, in one batch on Tuesday if you wish). There are nine out of the fifteen weeks in which you can complete this requirement (Weeks 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13; marked with an asterisk*), so I will be circulating a signup sheet on the first day of class. Please exchange contact information with your fellow group members upon getting your group assignment (I may have to finalize the groups as necessary after the Drop/Add date of January 12).

In addition, in another small group you will present an approximately 15-minute presentation on a topic of your choice in American environmental history (worth 20% of your final grade). I

will circulate a list of groups by about Week 8; please run your topic by me for approval and begin planning your presentation well in advance. I will also circulate a list of potential topics if you do not already have a topic in mind, and I am available for consultation to advise you on possible presentation topics, if you wish. Group presentations will be delivered on the last two days of class, April 19 and 24.

Contractions: The use of contractions (such as can't, won't, I've, didn't) is inappropriate in formal writing, as is the use of most abbreviations (especially "etc.") and colloquial expressions (slang). Instead substitute the full wording ("cannot" for can't, "will not" for won't, "I have" for I've, "did not" for didn't, and so on). If you should happen to use a contraction in a paper, I will draw this to your attention. If you subsequently persist in using such, I may refuse to grade your paper or will assess a penalty of up to 5 percent on the assignment in question.

Plagiarism: Plagiarism is defined as the use of another's ideas or verbiage without proper citation; it is a direct violation of the Georgia Tech Honor Code and is completely unacceptable; plagiarism includes lifting as few as three words verbatim, or paraphrasing without crediting the source. It falls under the category of cheating; any offender will receive a "0" on the assignment in question, or else fail the course outright, at my discretion. For more details on plagiarism, see:

<http://www.plagiarism.org/>

THE OFFICIAL POLICY AT GEORGIA TECH IS THAT ALL INCIDENTS OF PLAGIARISM MUST BE REPORTED TO THE OFFICE OF STUDENT INTEGRITY (<http://osi.gatech.edu/>). For an overview of the process that follows upon the reporting of such an incident of academic misconduct, see:

<https://policylibrary.gatech.edu/student-life/academic-misconduct>

Writing Assistance: For assistance in preparing the assigned papers, you can make an appointment with the Communication Center (Clough Learning Commons, Suite 447); for more information see

<http://www.communicationcenter.gatech.edu/content/frequently-asked-questions>

I would also be glad to glance over rough drafts of papers, provided you submit these at least four days in advance. I may not have time to provide you with detailed feedback if you allow me less time to do so than that.

Grades: By my standards, "A" quality work demonstrates a mastery of the materials covered in the course; "B" work is characterized by a full understanding of the materials, but a less thorough evaluation of them; and "C" work shows a satisfactory understanding, but an even less-thorough evaluation. Work not showing an understanding of the course materials or a highly inadequate evaluation will earn either a "D" or an "F." On all assignments, you will receive letter grades along with a numerical score on the following scale: A=90-100; B=80-89;

C=70-79; D=60-69; F=59 and below. NOTE: If you are taking this class Pass/Fail, a “C” is the minimum grade required to pass.

Disturbances during Class: Laptops, tablets, cell phones and similar electronic devices must be silenced and/or turned off during class; repeated texting or phone ringing may result in your class participation grade being lowered (see above). Verbal disruptions or any other inappropriate conduct during class may also be penalized. Discussion and debate on the content and over how to interpret American Environmental History will doubtless be contentious at certain points, but you should take care to maintain the proper respect for your fellow classmates and the instructor at all times.

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DISCUSSION LEADERS SIGNUP

Week 3 (Jan. 23, 25)

Week 8 (Feb. 27, March 1)

Week 4 (Jan. 30, Feb. 1)

Week 9 (March 6, 8)

Week 5 (Feb. 6, 8)

Week 10 (March 13, 15)

Week 6 (Feb. 13, 15)

Week 11 (March 27, 29)

Week 13 (April 10, 12)
