

**Environmental History of the United States (HIST 394)**  
 Tuesday and Thursday 12:00 – 1:15  
 University Hall 219

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**Environmental History of the United States (HIST 394)**

*Environmental History of the U.S.* asks, “What is the relationship between humans and the natural world?” Environmental History explores how nature has helped to shape culture as well as how humans have modified the natural world and transformed the land in the process of extracting resources, building structures, producing pollution, and importing exotic species. This interdisciplinary course in environmental history explores numerous diverse perspectives of the environment: history, ethics, literature, art, and, of course, science. Through a variety of case studies in environmental history, students will develop skills of analysis, synthesis, reflection, and exposition.

**Objectives**

Students will demonstrate the ability to:

- analyze and synthesize information from within and across disciplines to: examine existing questions and problems from a variety of perspectives, formulate novel questions and ideas, and explain these questions and ideas in written and oral formats.
- think creatively and flexibly by envisaging new approaches to real-world scenarios or questions.
- learn, think, and solve problems independently and in teams, as is required to engage in the life-long consideration of, and the fostering of cooperative solutions to, complex problems.

**Required Reading** (available at Purdue Bookstore or Amazon and Library Reserve):

- Carolyn Merchant, *Major Problems in American Environmental History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition
- Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*
- Ernest Callenbach, *Ecotopia*

A NOTE ON THE READINGS: This syllabus provides a detailed outline of what we will cover in the course, and I strongly advise you to refer to it often as you plan your studying. Readings average 60 pages per week, but they are generally not difficult. They have been chosen as much as possible to be fun and provocative as well as informative. All texts are available at Purdue University Bookshop and Amazon on Reserve in the library (HSSE).

**Assignments and Grading:**

Reading Quizzes (5 point each)	200
Examination #1	200
Examination #2	200
Paper	200
Presentation	50
Attendance and Participation	150
<b>Total</b>	<b>1000</b>

**Reading Quizzes (50 points each, 200 points total):** In order to reinforce concepts introduced in the course readings and discussions, there will be four quizzes and an additional make up quiz to replace one of the four regularly scheduled quizzes. Quizzes must be taken in class on the day indicated in the syllabus. Missed quizzes will receive no credit. One missed quiz can be replaced by the makeup quiz (Quiz #5).

**Examinations (Exam #1 200 points/ Exam #2 200 points):** There will be two essay exams that will emphasize the connections between readings and lectures and will not be cumulative. The exams should last about one hour each. Exam #1: October 17 in class. Exam #2: See Final Exam Schedule.

**Term Paper (200 points):** As an upper level course, you will need to write a review essay (2000 words) that uses several of the course readings, additional research materials, and your own thoughts to construct an in-depth analysis of one of the central themes of Environmental History. I will provide a list of potential topics, but I welcome additional ideas. This is your opportunity to reflect on the course material, marshal your sources, analyze what you have learned, and develop a reasoned argument based on your findings. Due: Monday, December 1.

**Research Presentation (50 points):** You will also need to prepare a research presentation to present your research paper to the class.

**Final Exam: 200 points**

[See Exam Schedule](#)

**Attendance and Participation (150 points):**

There is no better way to clarify your ideas and sharpen your opinions regarding a new subject than to discuss them with fellow students and the instructor. It is vital that you participate in the online and in class discussions through the discussion board and be prepared to engage each other. To learn, think, and solve problems independently and in teams, students will contribute to on-line and in-class discussions thereby fostering cooperative solutions to complex problems. Professor Davis and graduate assistants will facilitate and monitor participation and students will interact with each other. Starting Week 2, I will track participation. Students will be able to complete the work for the course at their own pace over the course of the week. In class, we will devote part of the class to a discussion of the readings first as part of smaller groups and then with the class as a whole. Together we will relate the readings to the lectures through discussion. This is a challenging but extremely valuable exercise that should stimulate thought and discussion.

**Attendance Policy:**

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

**Academic Honor Policy:**

Purdue University is committed to maintaining a community which recognizes and values the inherent worth and dignity of every person; fosters tolerance, sensitivity, understanding, and mutual respect among its members; and encourages each individual to strive to reach his or her own potential. In pursuit of its goal of academic excellence, the University seeks to develop and nurture diversity. The University believes that diversity among its many members strengthens the institution, stimulates creativity, promotes the exchange of ideas, and enriches campus life. Purdue's nondiscrimination policy can be found at: [http://www.purdue.edu/purdue/ea\\_eou\\_statement.html](http://www.purdue.edu/purdue/ea_eou_statement.html).

Academic integrity is one of the highest values that Purdue University holds. Individuals are encouraged to alert university officials to potential breaches of this value by either emailing [integrity@purdue.edu](mailto:integrity@purdue.edu) or by calling 765-494-8778. While information may be submitted anonymously, the more information that is submitted provides the greatest opportunity for the university to investigate the concern.

“As a boilermaker pursuing academic excellence, I pledge to be honest and true in all that I do. Accountable together - we are Purdue.” For more information, see: [Purdue's Honor Pledge](#).

**Website**

The Syllabus, assignments, style guides, term sheets, and other information relevant to *Environment & Society* can be found at <https://mycourses.purdue.edu>.

**Disability Resource Center**

The Disability Resource Center (DRC) is a resource for students and instructors. Students may present a “Letter of Accommodation” at any point in the semester. Should you have questions about accommodations, please contact the DRC at: 765 494-1247. You may also visit the DRC at [drc@purdue.edu](mailto:drc@purdue.edu).

**CAPS Information:**

Purdue University is committed to advancing the mental health and well-being of its students. If you or someone you know is feeling overwhelmed, depressed, and/or in need of support, services are available. For help, such individuals should contact Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at (765) 494-6995 and <http://www.purdue.edu/caps/> during and after hours, on weekends and holidays, or through its counselors physically located in the Purdue University Student Health Center (PUSH) during business hours.

**Syllabus Change Policy**

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

**Miscellaneous**

If you have any questions or comments that we do not address in class, please feel free to contact me either during office hours or via e-mail: [frdavis@purdue.edu](mailto:frdavis@purdue.edu) (I will respond to all email within 24 hours).

Finally, if you find yourself having difficulty during the semester, do not wait until the last minute to discuss a problem with me. I can usually assist you with any problem, but only if given adequate time.

AVAILABLE IN ALTERNATE FORMAT UPON REQUEST

## Course Schedule (*Subject to Change*)

T = Tuesday  
R = Thursday

### Week 1 Introduction to Environmental History

T 8/22 Introduction to Environmental History  
R 8/24 Environmental History: The Names of Nature  
*Reading:* *American Environmental History*, Ch. 1  
*Writing:* Research in Environmental History

### Week 2 Native American Ecology and European Contact

T 8/29 Disease and Death  
*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 2, Documents  
R 8/31 Biological Invasion  
*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 2, Essays  
*Writing:* The Thesis: What is your argument?

### Week 3 Colonies: North and South

T 9/05 Native Americans and the Fur Trade / Fields and Fences  
*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 3, Documents and Essays  
R 9/07 Tobacco, Rice, and Cotton in the Colonial South Reading Quiz #1  
*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 4, Documents and Essays  
*Writing:* Evidence-Cite your Sources!

### Week 4 Industrial and Agricultural Revolutions

T 9/12 Industrial Revolutions: Rolling on the River  
*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 5, Documents  
R 9/14 Agricultural Revolutions: The Machine in the Garden  
*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 5, Essays  
*Writing:* Analysis-How does your evidence support your argument?

### Week 5 Nature and the Market

T 9/19 Hunters and Hunted  
*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 6, Documents and Essays  
R 9/21 Landscapes of Death  
*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 7 Documents and Essays  
*Writing:* Revision-Refining your essay

### Week 6 Oceans and the Market

T 9/26 Even the Oceans Fail  
*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 8, Documents and Essays  
R 9/28 Oceans, cont. Reading Quiz #2  
*Reading:* Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, 6-23, (skim 23-92), 127-129, 137-141. (If you're using another edition, read the essays entitled "Good Oak," "The Geese Return," "Red Legs Kicking," and "Thinking Like a Mountain.")  
*Writing:* Constructive Criticism-Evaluating Others' Work

### Week 7 Landscapes of the Mind and Conservation

T 10/03 Landscapes of the Mind  
*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 9, Documents

R 10/05 Planning against Disaster

*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 9, Essays

*Writing:* Synthesis-Drawing on Multiple Sources

### **Week 8 Conservation and the New Deal**

R 10/10 The Conservation Vision

*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 10, Documents

R 10/12 New Deal and Conservation

*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 10, Essays

### **Week 9 Examination #1**

#### **Examination #1**

T 10/17 Examination #1

Examination #1

R 10/19 Film: *The Greatest Good*

### **Week 10 Anxieties of A Nuclear Age**

T 10/24 Film: *The Greatest Good*

R 10/26 The Fallout of *Silent Spring*

Reading Quiz #3

*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 13, Documents and Essays

Aldo Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*, Part III, pp. 165-211.

### **Week 11 Wilderness and the Land Ethic**

T 10/31 The Wilderness Movement

*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 11, Documents

R 11/02 Wilderness, cont.

*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 11, Essays

### **Week 12 A New Deal for the Land / Back to Earth**

T 11/07 Planning, Prophecy, and the Population Bomb

*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 12, Documents

R 11/09 The Population Bomb

*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 12, Essays

Film: "Rachel Carson and *Silent Spring*"

### **Week 13 The Consequences of Consumption**

T 11/14 Toxic Landscapes and Natural Disasters

*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 14, Documents and Essays

R 11/16 Ecofiction: *Ecotopia*

Reading Quiz #4

*Reading:* Callenbach, *Ecotopia*

### **Week 14 Doom and Gloom?**

T 11/21 Global Climate Change

Film: *An Inconvenient Truth*

R 11/23 Thanksgiving: No Class

### **Week 15 Looking Ahead**

M 11/28 Environmental History and the Future

*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 15, Documents

W 11/30 The Future, cont.

*Reading:* Merchant, *American Environmental History*, Ch. 15, Essays

**Week 16**

12/05 Paper Presentations

12/07 Paper Presentations

Term Paper due

Reading Quiz #5 (makeup)

**Final Examination**[Check Exam Schedule](#)