

Western Michigan University Department of History
HIST 3180, American Environmental History, Summer II, 2016
TR 3:00–5:30, Dunbar Hall 02210, 3 undergraduate hours

Instructor: Dr. David Benac
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Office Hours: I am available before and after class and by appointment. If you have any questions about the class or need assistance please do not hesitate to ask.

Course Description: The history and theory of human interaction with the environment in the United States. Examination of social, economic, political and cultural issues pertinent to the field. This course will present an opportunity to gain an understanding of the importance of the environment in key historical moments in the United States, its distinct regions, and how leading historians have shaped the field.

Course Outcomes: HIST 3180 is a readings-based course in which you will develop your ability to read critically and communicate your ideas clearly in both written and verbal form.

Course Required Texts: (All students will read the Alagona book and have a choice for the second book from the other two titles listed)

Peter Alagona, *After the Grizzly: Endangered Species and the Politics of Place in California* (2013).

Joachim Radkau, *Wood: A Cultural History* (2011) ** or ** John McPhee, *The Control of Nature* (1990)

Course Assignments: (All written work must be submitted as word documents to the appropriate dropbox in the elearning site for the class.)

You will demonstrate your success in this class by your performance on quizzes, an original research paper, two exams, and participation.

Readings Quizzes (5): During the first 15 minutes of class on the following Thursdays (7/7, 7/14, 7/21, 8/4, and 8/11) every Thursday with the exception of the midterm day. These quizzes can not be made up if you miss them.

Prospectus (7/21): Your prospectus is a well-written plan of how you plan to complete your research paper. The document must contain your topic, argument, thesis, and sources. The prospectus is a working document and it is expected that your project will evolve as you move forward. The completed prospectus will be approximately 750 words.

Prospectus response (7/28): This is a well-written statement acknowledging that you have received your marked-up prospectus and understand all comments. If you have questions this is an appropriate place to address them. The prospectus response should be approximately 200 words.

Midterm: (7/28) This take-home essay exam will cover all readings and discussions to this point. We will discuss this in more detail as the date approaches.

Research paper: (Due 8/18) All topics must be approved in advance. The research paper is a well-written, organized, and thoroughly documented environmental history of a place. Try to conceptualize the place according to its ecological rather than political boundaries. You should use at least 6 sources, at least 3 must not be assigned readings. You may use a maximum of 3 online sources. All sources must be highly reliable. You must use at least 3 primary sources and at least 2 secondary sources. (5 pages)

Final: (8/18) This in-class essay exam will cover all readings and discussions since the midterm. Bring an exam book.

Participation is awarded based on your attendance, completion of and ability to discuss assigned readings, positive contributions to class, use of the elearning forum as assigned, and any in-class activities.

Course Calendar: All reading is due by the beginning of class. Additional reading

may be assigned in class.

6/30: What is environmental history

7/5: Contact in North America: The Columbian Exchange: Were Indians environmentalists

William Cronon, "The Uses of Environmental History," *Environmental History Review* (Autumn 1993) 1–22; J. R. McNeill, "Drunks, Lampposts, and Environmental History," *Environmental History* (Jan. 2005) 64–66; Steve Pyne, "Environmental History without Historians," *Environmental History* (Jan. 2005) 72–74; James Feldman and Lynne Heasley, "Recentring North American Environmental History: Pedagogy and Scholarship in the Great Lakes Region," *Environmental History* (Oct. 2006) 951–958; Nicolaas Mink, "It Begins in the Belly," *Environmental History* (April 2009) 312–322.

7/7: Natives, Colonists, and the forests:

Frank Egerton, "Missed Opportunities: U.S. Fishery Biologists and Productivity of Fish in Green Bay, Saginaw Bay, and Western Lake Erie," *Environmental Review* (Summer 1989) 32–63; Jeffrey Stine, "Environmental Politics in the American South: The Fight over the Tennessee–Tombigbee Waterway," *Environmental History Review* (Spring 1991) 1–24; and Tina Loo, "Disturbing the Peace: Environmental Change and the Scales of Justice on a Northern River," *Environmental History* (Oct. 2007); 895–919.

Quiz 1

7/12: Pioneer period in the East: Transformation of the landscape
Alagona, through chapter 2.

7/14: Southern environment and slavery

Alagona, through chapter 4.

Quiz 2

7/19: Industrialization: Conservation movements: Progressives

Alagona chapter 5

7/21: North American forests: Protection strategies: Wildlife, parks, and tourism:

Alagona, epilogue

Quiz 3

Prospectus

7/26: The New Deal

Tom McCarthy, "The Coming Wonder? Foresight and Early Concerns about the Automobile," *Environmental History* (Jan. 2001) 46–74; William Rollins, "Reflections on a Spare Tire: SUVs and Postmodern Environmental Consciousness," *Environmental History* (Oct. 2006) 684–723.

7/28: Resource development: Hydroelectricity, dams, fish, and local people

Martin Melosi, "Energy and Environment in the United States: The Era of fossil Fuels," *Environmental Review* (Autumn 1987) 167–188; Terrence Fehner and F. G. Gosling, "Coming in from the Cold: Regulating U. S. Department of Energy Nuclear Facilities, 1942–1996," *Environmental History* (Apr. 1996) 5–33.

Prospectus response

Midterm

8/2: The urban environment

Radkau, through chapter 1

Or

McPhee, Atchafalaya

8/4: Transportation, car culture and the environment

Radkau, chapter 2

Or

McPhee, Atchafalaya

Quiz 4

8/9: Rachel Carson

Radkau, chapter 3

Or

McPhee, Cooling the Lava

8/11: Modern environmentalism, 1960s, LBJ

Radkau, chapter 3

Or

McPhee, *Cooling the Lava*

Quiz 5

8/16: Energy regimes: Fossil fuels and nuclear, 1970s

Radkau, chapter 4

Or

McPhee, *Los Angeles Against the Mountains*

8/18: The contested world of modern food protection: Environmental justice, 1980s, Reagan

Radkau, postscript

Or

McPhee, *Los Angeles Against the Mountains*

Research Papers Due

Final Exam

Course Grading Policies: All grades will be posted in the Elearning system's grade book.

Assignment	Percentage of final grade
Readings Quizzes (5)	20% aggregate
Midterm	15%
Prospectus	15%
Prospectus response	This is an ungraded assignment that must be submitted to receive a grade in the course.
Research paper	20%
Final	20%
Participation	10%

Rubric and guidelines for effective essay writing:

1. **Development of an argument or interpretation.** Good history does not merely tell what happened. *It interprets events of the past.* Given the nature of your

assignments, writing interpretive essays will not be difficult. But be sure you convey clearly the argument or interpretation you wish to make. Do this by developing a descriptive title, *a clear thesis statement* in an opening paragraph, and a conclusion. (25%)

2. **Substantiation of your argument with historical data.** While interpretation is the ultimate goal, every interpretation of a historical subject is meaningful only if it rests on *concrete evidence*. In writing history it is important to demonstrate your evidence, not only to support your argument, but also because the details of human activities give history its interest and bring readers into the historical situation. Merely restating the conclusions of historians is not a good way to substantiate your argument. Using the data you find in their work is what is important. It is essential to *identify the sources of your information*. (25%)
3. **Utilizing historical perspective.** History is characterized by a concerned with *change over time*. Historians deal with all facets of human experience including economics, culture, religion, politics, and social customs, but they always focus on how the issues they are investigating are shaped by the particular *historical context*. Historians always avoid judging historical situations by standards belonging to a different era from the one they are investigating. (25%)
4. **Clear communication.** Use a precise, grammatical, well-organized writing style. Write your paper before the deadline so that you can complete *multiple revisions*. Make sure your paper is readable and communicates *exactly what you intend*. (25%)

Course Grade Scale:

Grade	Honor points	Significance
A	4.0	outstanding, exceptional, extraordinary
BA	3.5	
B	3.0	very good, high pass
CB	2.5	
C	2.0	satisfactory, acceptable, adequate
DC	1.5	
D	1.0	poor
E	0.0	failing
X	0.0	failure (unofficial withdrawal)
W		official withdrawal
I		incomplete

CR	credit
NC	no credit
AU	audit (noncredit enrollment)

Academic Ethics and Integrity: You are responsible for making yourself aware of and understanding the policies and procedures in the University's Catalog's that pertain to Academic Integrity.

These policies include cheating, fabrication, falsification and forgery, multiple submission, plagiarism, complicity and computer misuse. If there is reason to believe you have been involved in academic dishonesty, you will be referred to the Office of Student Judicial Affairs. You will be given the opportunity to review the charge(s).

If you believe you are not responsible, you will have the opportunity for a hearing. You should consult with the course instructor if you are uncertain about an issue of academic honesty prior to the submission of an assignment or test.

Non--Discrimination Policy: Western Michigan University prohibits discrimination or harassment which violates the law, or which constitutes inappropriate or unprofessional limitation of employment, University facility access, or participation in University activities, on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, protected disability, veteran status, height, weight, or marital status.

WMU Human Rights Statement: It is a fundamental policy of Western Michigan University not to discriminate on the basis of sex, sexual orientation, color, race, age, religion, national origin, height, weight, marital status, or handicap in its educational programs, admissions, employment, promotions, salaries and social activities. Through its example and teaching, Western strives to foster in its students, faculty, and staff respect for basic human rights. In its external relationships, the University is supportive of those activities that seek constructive change in the development of human rights in this country and abroad.

Specific Needs: Any student with a documented disability (e.g. physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) who needs to arrange reasonable accommodations must contact the professor and/or Disability Services for Students, (269) 387--2116, at the beginning of the semester. Disability information

provided to the instructor will remain confidential. DSS recommends that students with disabilities bring their accommodation letters to the instructor during office hours or by special appointment. During the appointment, the particulars of arrangements for accommodations can be discussed and agreed upon in private.

Classroom Decorum & Etiquette: Every member of this learning community has the right to freely express his/her opinion as long as this is done in such a way as to not impede the rights of other members of the learning community. Along this line, it is expected that all participants in this class will treat all others with respect and dignity. Behavior that is disrespectful, intimidating, threatening, or disruptive of the learning environment will not be tolerated. If any participant in the class has a concern regarding another participant's behavior he/she is encouraged to speak with the instructor.

WMU E-Mail Account is the Official Channel of Communication: Students are expected to use their WMU e--mail accounts regularly, as this is the official channel of communication between the University and student. Students receive notifications of class cancellations, campus emergencies and closures, and other important information through this channel. Problems sending or receiving e--mail through the WMU address may be addressed at the Help Desk (387--HELP), online at <http://www.wmich.edu/oit/helpdesk/>, or in person at the front desk in any on--campus computer lab.