

**TOPICS IN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY:
POWER, INEQUALITY, AND NATURE IN U.S. HISTORY**

NJIT-Rutgers, Newark: Spring 2018
Graduate Course: History 657
Time: Thursdays, 6:00 p.m. — 9:00 p.m.
Location: 307 Cullimore Hall (NJIT)/Conklin Hall 324 (Rutgers, Newark)

INSTRUCTOR: Prof. Neil Maher
Federated History Department, NJIT-Rutgers University, Newark

OFFICE HOURS: 325 Cullimore Hall
Thursdays, 2:00 – 4:00 p.m.
And by appointment

CONTACT: E-mail: maher@njit.edu
Office Phone: 973-596-6348 (NJIT)
Cell Phone: 646-325-2704 (not before 9:00 a.m. or after 10:00 p.m.)

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

Throughout human history, people's relationship to nature has always been influenced by power. While some groups of people have the authority to gain access to nature, to transform it into natural resources for profit, and then to distance themselves from the negative consequences of such use, other groups do not. This environmental inequality can stem from obvious differences involving race, class, and gender, but is often also based on more subtle distinctions involving age, physical disability, sexual orientation, political affiliation, and cultural practice. In all cases, however, while the powerful tend to reap nature's benefits, the weak pay the price. This seminar in environmental history examines this longstanding, unequal relationship to nature in the United States and beyond.

This reading course will serve as an introduction to the study of different forms of inequality examined within environmental history literature. Over the course of the semester students will explore environmental inequality as it relates to such topics as workplace health, outdoor recreation, urban pollution, food and agriculture, toxic waste, the environmental justice movement, and the uneven impact of climate change across the United States and the developing world.

REQUIREMENTS:

Attendance and Class Participation: Class participation should involve active listening and engagement — more than simply showing up, and more than sheer volume of oral output. As graduate students, you should not miss class unless an emergency arises.

Readings: The readings for this course will entail on average one book and one scholarly article per week. While I do not expect you to read every word, you should understand and be comfortable discussing the factual content of the work as well as the author's argument and his or her use of sources. You should also be able to think critically about the theoretical and interpretative issues raised by the readings. Please purchase hard copies of the books for the class. They are all available online, and cheaper, used editions are acceptable. Copies of the assigned articles are available via Dropbox (I will send you an invitation).

Weekly Discussion Assignments:

Beginning in week 4 (February 8), one student will serve as discussion leader for the first 20 minutes of the class. While you are not expected to give a formal presentation, leading this discussion should be thought of as a serious assignment (it will inform your class participation grade).

The discussant for each week should begin by spending some time (approximately 5 minutes) introducing the readings. These introductions should describe the readings and illustrate that the discussant fully understands their historical content.

The discussant should then guide the class through four questions that he/she has prepared beforehand (bring 8 copies to hand out to your classmates). The questions should spark discussion, debate, and dialogue, and refrain from being factual. Some issues to consider when preparing these questions include the readings' overall arguments, organizational structures, conceptual frameworks, sources and methodologies, theoretical approaches, and historiographical connections. It is always good to pose questions that place the week's two readings (book and article) in dialogue with one another as well as in dialogue with other readings from the semester. It is also beneficial if the four questions themselves somehow relate to one another or guide the discussion in a specific direction.

Discussants can meet with me beforehand during office hours to talk about their "introduction" and four questions, and I will jump in if needed and help guide the conversation. After 20 minutes or so, I will lead the conversation for the rest of each class.

Papers:

During the semester, you will be asked to write two short essays, and a longer final paper. The goal of the shorter essays is to help jump-start you on your final paper. We will discuss all three paper assignments in more detail as the due dates for them approach.

Short Essay #1: Theme Analysis:

Your first paper of the semester will be an analysis of a specific theme that is explored by the authors of the readings from the first 7 weeks of the course (including the readings from week 7). For this paper you will choose one theme that is explored in all of these

books and articles, and compare and contrast how each author engages this particular theme. The paper will be limited to 4 pages in length.

Short Essay #2: Methodological Analysis:

Your second paper of the semester will be a methodology analysis of the readings from week 8 through week 11 (including the readings from week 11). For this paper you will compare and contrast the methodologies of these historians – you will focus your analysis on how each historian “does” their history. This will entail an examination of each historian’s source materials, both primary and secondary. As with your first essay, this second paper will also be limited to 4 pages in length.

Final Historiographical Paper:

You will also be asked to write a final paper of approximately 15-17 pages in length (please pace your writing to fall within these limits). Students may choose between three types of assignments based on your earlier papers. First, you may choose a major theme from the semester’s readings and examine how various environmental historians have approached that theme. Second, you may write a paper that compares and contrasts the various methodologies undertaken by environmental historians examining power and inequality. Finally, your final paper can combine these two options – your paper can examine both a theme and the various methodologies used by environmental historians to analyze that theme. For all three types of papers, you should analyze as many of the assigned books and articles as possible.

Final Paper Outline: To help organize and conceptualize your final paper, you will also be asked to submit a detailed outline of your project. The outline should include a brief paragraph explaining your argument. The outline is due in class on April 9 (week 14).

GRADING:

Attendance and Participation:	50% (including leading class discussion)
Written Assignments:	50% (10% for 2 short papers, 30% for final)

Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading.

REQUIRED BOOKS:

Robert Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (Westview Press, 1990).

Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (University of North Carolina Press, 1995)

Traci Brynne Voyles, *Wastland: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015)

Marsha Weisiger, *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country* (University of Washington Press, 2009)

- Carl Zimring, *Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism in the United States* (New York University Press, 2015)
- Colin Fisher, *Urban Green: Nature, Recreation, and the Working Class in Industrial Chicago* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015)
- Robert Gioielli, *Environmental Activism and the Urban Crisis* (Temple University Press, 2014)
- Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (University of California Press, 2003)
- Laura Pulido, Laura Barraclough, and Wendy Cheng, *A People's Guide to Los Angeles* (University of California Press, 2012)
- Sarah Fox, *Downwind: A People's History of the Nuclear West* (University of Nebraska Press, 2014)
- Ted Steinberg, *Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disasters in America* (Oxford University Press, 2000)
- Andrew Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest* (Princeton University Press, 2014)
- Wen Stephenson, *What We're Fighting For Now Is Each Other: Dispatches From the Front Lines of Climate Justice* (Beacon Press, 2015).

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS:

PART I: ORIGINS

- WEEK 1: **WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY?** (January 18)
In-Class Reading:
 Mart Stewart, "Environmental History: Profile of a Developing Field," *The History Teacher* 31 (May, 1998): 350-368.
- WEEK 2: **BORROWING FROM OTHER FIELDS** (January 25)
Required Reading:
 Robert Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (Westview Press, 1990).
 Martin Melosi, "Environmental Justice, Ecoracism, and Environmental History," in Dianne Glave and Mark Stoll, eds., *To Love the Wind and the Rain: African Americans and Environmental History* (University of Pittsburg Press, 2005): 120-132.
 Eileen McGurty, "Identity Politics and Multiracial Coalitions in the Environmental Justice Movement," in Dianne Glave and Mark Stoll, eds., *To Love the Wind and the Rain: African Americans and Environmental History* (University of Pittsburg Press 2005): 133-149.

- WEEK 3: **EMBRACING INEQUALITY** (February 1)
Required Reading:
Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary, Indiana, 1945-1980* (University of North Carolina Press, 1995)
Ted Steinberg, "Down to Earth: Nature Agency and Power in History," *American Historical Review* 107, 3 (2002): 798-820.

PART II: PEOPLE

- WEEK 4: **NATIVE AMERICANS** (February 8)
Required Reading:
Traci Brynne Voyles, *Wastlanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015)
Coll Thrush, "City of the Changers: Indigenous People and the Transformation of Seattle's Watersheds," *Pacific Historical Review* 75, no. 1 (2006): 890-117.
- WEEK 5: **WOMEN** (February 15)
Required Reading:
Marsha Weisiger, *Dreaming of Sheep in Navajo Country* (University of Washington Press, 2009)
Rob Nixon, "Slow Violence, Gender, and the Environmentalism of the Poor," *Journal of Commonwealth & Postcolonial Studies* (2008): 14-37.
- WEEK 6: **MINORITIES** (February 22)
Required Reading:
Carl Zimring, *Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism in the United States* (New York University Press, 2015)
Mary Mendoza, "La Tierra Pica/The Soil Bites: Hazardous Environments and the Degeneration of Bracero Health," in *Disability Studies and the Environmental Humanities* (University of Nebraska Press, 2017): 474-501.
- WEEK 7: **WORKERS** (March 1)
Required Reading:
Colin Fisher, *Urban Green: Nature, Recreation, and the Working Class in Industrial Chicago* (University of North Carolina Press, 2015)
Andrew Kahrl, "Fear of an Open Beach: Public Rights and Private Interests in 1970s Coastal Connecticut," *Journal of American History* (September 2015): 433-462

ASSIGNMENT: First Methodological Paper Due in Class

PART III: PLACES

WEEK 8: **CITIES** (March 8)
Required Reading:
Robert Gioielli, *Environmental Activism and the Urban Crisis* (Temple University Press, 2014)
Laura Pulido, "Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90, no. 1 (2000): 12-40.

WEEK 9: **NO CLASS – SPRING BREAK** (March 15)
Required Reading:
None

WEEK 10: **THE COUNTRYSIDE** (March 22) (**note: Harvard Conf-reschedule**)
Required Reading:
Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation* (University of California Press, 2003)

NOTE: Assigned article to be determined

WEEK 11: **LOS ANGELES** (March 29)
Required Reading:
Laura Pulido, Laura Barraclough, and Wendy Cheng, *A People's Guide to Los Angeles* (University of California Press, 2012)
Mike Davis, "The Case for Letting Malibu Burn," in *Ecology of Fear* (Vintage Books, 1998): 95-147.

ASSIGNMENT: Second Thematic Paper Due in Class

PART IV: POWERS

WEEK 12: **THE STATE** (April 5)
Required Reading:
Sarah Fox, *Downwind: A People's History of the Nuclear West* (University of Nebraska Press, 2014)
Kate Brown, "Securing the Nuclear Nation," *Nationalities Papers* 43, no. 1 (2015): 8-26.

WEEK 13: **NATURE** (April 12) (**note: Dallas Talk - reschedule**)
Required Reading:
Ted Steinberg, *Acts of God: The Unnatural History of Natural Disasters in America* (Oxford University Press, 2000)
Char Miller, "Streetscape Environmentalism: Floods, Social Justice, and Political Power in San Antonio, 1921–1974," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly* CXVIII, no. 2 (October 2014): 159-177.

WEEK 14: **ENERGY** (April 19)
Required Reading:
Andrew Needham, *Power Lines: Phoenix and the Making of the Modern Southwest* (Princeton University Press, 2014)
Chad Montrie, "Expedient Environmentalism: Opposition to Coal Surface Mining in Appalachia and the United Mine Workers of America, 1945-1975," *Environmental History* 5, no. 1 (January, 2000): 75-98.

ASSIGNMENT: Paper Outlines Due in Class

WEEK 15: **POLITICS** (April 26)
Required Reading:
Wen Stephenson, *What We're Fighting For Now Is Each Other: Dispatches From the Front Lines of Climate Justice* (Beacon Press, 2015).
Sharon Harlan, David Pellow, and J. Timmons Roberts, "Climate Justice and Inequality," In *Climate Change and Society: Sociological Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015):127–63)