Course code: HIS 3310
Course title: Environmental History of North America
Class hours/credits: 3 class hours, 3 credits
Prerequisite: English 1101 and one previous history class from HIS, AFS, LATS, or ARCH 2321 or ARCH 3551
Pathways: US Experience in its Diversity

Catalog Description: This course looks at the role of nature in the unfolding of American history from prehistory to the present. Focusing on both human-induced environmental change and nature’s impact on human development, we will examine large-scale changes in the earth's environmental systems that have accompanied historical changes in culture, society, economics, politics, and technology.

Course Specific Learning Outcomes and Assessment Methods

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<tr>
<th>LEARNING OUTCOMES</th>
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<td>Demonstrate an understanding of major environmental developments that have occurred in North America from prehistory to the present.</td>
<td>Multiple choice and essay questions on the midterm and final exams will test students’ understanding of how specific environmental changes relate to the larger historical context in North America.</td>
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<td>Demonstrate knowledge of how environmental changes relates to the social and cultural values of everyday people.</td>
<td>This will be measured through class discussions of assigned readings, two writing assignments, midterm and final exams. A research paper assignment will ask them to connect a specific environmental change to broader society.</td>
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<td>Demonstrate an understanding of the historical roots of the current environmental situation.</td>
<td>This will be measured through class discussion of assigned readings, class presentations, midterm and final exams.</td>
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General Education Learning Outcomes and Assessment Methods
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<th>LEARNING OUTCOMES</th>
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<td>KNOWLEDGE: Through the assigned readings and the classroom conversations students will learn both historical information related to the environment and about the process of creating history (i.e., how scholars construct knowledge about nature and the environment.)</td>
<td>This will be measured in all class work. i.e., quizzes, essay questions on exams; class discussions of relevant topics, and formal writing assignments.</td>
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<td>SKILLS: Using a variety of both primary and secondary sources, students will develop an understanding of the craft of the historian, and develop and apply the methodological tools of history to critically question, analyze, and discuss nature and the resulting environmental problems and issues.</td>
<td>This will be measured through class discussions based on primary documents and through the research paper where students use a combination of primary and secondary sources in their writings.</td>
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<td>INTEGRATION: In this course students will be able to examine how large-scale changes in the earth’s environmental systems relate to historical changes in culture, society, economics, politics, and technology. They will be able to gather, interpret, evaluate and apply information discerningly from a variety of sources.</td>
<td>This will be measured through students’ research projects that require them to examine how the current environmental issues relate to historical changes in culture, society, economics, politics, and technology.</td>
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<td>VALUES, ETHICS, AND RELATIONSHIPS: Students develop a better informed understanding of humans’ relationship with other parts of nature in order to understand the consequences of their interactions with other aspects of the natural world.</td>
<td>This will be measured through class discussions, and research work.</td>
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* may vary slightly per instructor

**Capstone Course Statement:**
This course fulfills the LAA/LAS Associate Capstone requirement, though it can also be taken for other requirements and electives. The City Tech LAA/LAS Associate Capstone is designed for students entering their second year in the program. LAA/LAS Associate Capstone courses are meant to prepare students to continue their studies in a bachelor's degree, third-year, or junior, level. In addition, Associate Capstone courses are meant to help students develop an awareness of the importance of knowledge, values and skills developed in general education courses; and to integrate this knowledge, these values and these skills into their advanced academic study and professional careers. Please ask the instructor if you have any questions about what the LAA/LAS Associate Capstone requirement entails.

**Suggested Texts:**
Carson, Rachael. *Silent Spring.*

1 Books used in a particular section will be chosen by the instructor of that section but must include some primary documents and a historical monograph.

**Method of Grading** – elements and weight of factors determining the students’ grade

- 3 page essay style paper – 15%
- 5-6 page research paper – 20%
- One mid-term exam – 20%
- One Final exam – 25%
- Quizzes – 10%
- Class participation – 10%

*Suggested allocation; instructors may modify these at their discretion.

**Academic Integrity Policy Statement**

Students and all others who work with information, ideas, texts, images, music, inventions, and other intellectual property owe their audience and sources accuracy and honesty in using, crediting, and citing sources. As a community of intellectual and professional workers, the College recognizes its responsibility for providing instruction in information literacy and academic integrity, offering models of good practice, and responding vigilantly and appropriately to infractions of academic integrity. Accordingly, academic dishonesty is prohibited in The City University of New York and at New York City College of Technology and is punishable by penalties, including failing grades, suspension, and expulsion. The complete text of the College policy on Academic Integrity may be found in the catalog.

**College Policy on Absences and Lateness**

A student may be absent without penalty for 10% of the number of scheduled class meetings during the semester as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Meets</th>
<th>Allowable Absence</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 time/week</td>
<td>2 classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 times/week</td>
<td>3 classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 times/week</td>
<td>4 classes</td>
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**Suggested Course Assignments**

*One midterm exam that is writing intensive (20% of Grade).
*One final exam that is writing intensive (25% of Grade).
*One 3 page essay style paper discussing the different ways that Native Americans and European colonists viewed and used the land (15% of Grade).
*One 5-6 page research paper that deals with a specific aspect of environmental history (20% of Grade).
*Two quizzes to be based on the selected required texts (10% of Grade).
*Class participation (10%).
Suggested Weekly Class Schedule and Relevant Monographs*

Week 1: Course introduction and Native American ecology. An introduction to definitional issues related to nature and ecology and a linking of these to past human actions. Various Native American approaches to the land will serve as examples.


Week 2: Contact, biological exchange and colonial agriculture. The Biological exchange of plants, animals and diseases profoundly reshaped the globe. This class examines biological transfers as well as cultural transfers such as usufruct and property notions of land ownership.


Week 3: Industrialization, commodification, and natural resources. The process of industrialization turned parts of nature into commodities that were fetishized.

3 page essay style paper due


Week 4: Slavery, the American South and the Civil War from an environmental perspective. Plantations in the US South had a very distinct extensive ecology that corresponded with the abuses that slaves suffered. The Civil War was, in many ways, a war fought using food production and distribution.


**Week 5: Conquering the West, the organization of space and water.** Connection of Frederick Jackson Turner’s Thesis and Manifest Destiny to ideas and perceptions of land and water. This includes a discussion of how whiteness relates to control of land and people.


**Week 6: Cultures of consumption and disposability.** Mass production cannot happen without mass consumption. This had ecological consequences as mass consumption created a culture of disposability that changed the ways people valued the material world and thought about trash and pollution.


**Week 7: The conservation movement.** The early conservation movement of the late-nineteenth century occurred in response to the excesses of the industrial revolution. Leaders like Gifford Pinchot and Theodore Roosevelt helped people understand the value of the natural world and the importance of ecological cycles. But this movement was still part of a context of resource utilization, saving nature so that it could be efficiently used.

Week 8: Urban ecology. Urban spaces are ecological spaces. They are part of ecological cycles. This class compares the environmental arrangements of preindustrial and postindustrial cities. Since the industrial revolution, urban ecological cycles have become increasingly linear and extended in time.

Mid-term exam


Week 9: Space, time, and the fetishizing of Food. Technologies of transportation and preservation that developed between the mid-nineteenth century and the present have enabled Americans to eat whatever they want when ever they want, reducing the relevance of geography and time. In these ways, these technologies created fetishized food, stripped of seasonal, geographic and social context.


Week 10: Automobility, suburbanization, and the environment. The automobile and the American suburb has had a dramatic impact on the environment. Both structurally and culturally, automobile based living arrangements led to higher levels of consumption and pollution while maintaining the appearance of being closer to the natural environment.


**Week 11: The throw away society and the environmental response.** Between 1920 and 1940, the culture of disposability increased with the development of products like paper towels and feminine napkins that were designed to be disposed. These products prompted a small backlash of consumers, largely female, who resisted designed disposability.


**Week 12: Pollution and environmental justice in the post industrial city.** Social justice is directly related to the way people shape the environment. This class looks at inequalities related to pollution and environmental protection that are related to class and race, and examines governmental policies that attempt to rectify these problems.


**Week 13: Environmental movement and environmental politics.** This class examines the development of the modern environmental movement that was a part of the counter culture. Initiated by visionaries like Rachael Carson, Americans began to take environmental issues seriously. This led to non-profit and governmental actions focused on preservation.


**Week 14: Manifest destiny, extracting the globe.** In the late-twentieth and twenty-first centuries the U.S. has increasingly globalized it's environmental issues. Whether this relates to resource acquisition, production, or waste management, the U.S. has moved these overseas to avoid stricter U.S. regulations. We have expanded manifest destiny and given it an environmental twist.
5-6-page research paper due


Week 15: Research paper and final exam. Students will discuss their research papers and take the final exam.
*guidelines from which instructors may select or adapt

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Written by: Geoff Zylstra, Ph.D., Fall 2012

Reviewed/Revised by: Stephanie Boyle, Ph.D. Spring 2016