

History 280: United States Environmental History

GEP: Historical Perspectives and Environmental Responsibility

UWSP – History
Department

Office Hours: By Appointment

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What can the past teach us about sustainability?

That question is at the root of all we'll do this semester. As an historian, I teach how the past matters today. As an *environmental* historian, I believe that the lessons of the past should be environmental lessons.

In this class, we look for lessons to guide sustainability in three types of places: cities, farms, and forests. Each has its own development patterns, social problems, and ecological concerns. Getting to know them will give you a running start in addressing many of the environmental problems your generation will face. Your work in this course can prove useful for a number of careers, from forestry to urban planning to real estate to rural development, among much else. (It's also just plain interesting.)

In each unit, we will keep in mind the components of sustainability: justice, economics, and ecology. As it turns out, Americans have long thought about these themes, well before the notion of sustainability came on the scene. That's good for us, because it means we can learn from people who have already thought about the things we care about. The past is full of people who can help us decide how to build cities, farm soil, and manage forests.

Enduring Understandings:

Sustainability requires understanding the lessons of the past.

Learning Outcomes: After taking this course, students will be able to:

- Describe and explain major changes in the history of the United States environment
- Evaluate competing claims about the nation's environmental past
- Question the landscape around them with thought and care

Advice from Previous Students: Why listen just to me? Here is what your predecessors want to tell you:

“Read the material and attend class.”

“Attend class, pay attention and from there it’s not hard to do well in the class.”

“Stay on top of the reading. It’s not too hard and the lectures cover the material, but the text gives a lot of depth and examples.”

“Involve yourself in the reading, thinking about how you could apply it to what you care about.”

“Be prepared to read! Pick up on little things.”

“Look beyond just the facts, because it is a very beneficial class.”

“Come to class and speak up. Participate. I found the class much more interesting when more people took part.”



Readings: Our readings will be on Canvas as downloadable PDF’s. Each is a groundbreaking article or book chapter by a leading scholar.

Assignments and Grading: There are twenty Topic Assignments, three Unit Papers and one Final Paper.

20 points for **Topic Assignments** (20@1pt each)

20 points for **Unit One Paper**

20 points for **Unit Two Paper**

20 points for **Unit Three Paper**

20 points for **Final Paper**

100 points total

Letter grades for the semester follow the typical pattern:

A 93-100	B+ 87-89.99	C+ 77-79.99	D+ 67-69.99	F 59.99 and below
A- 90-92.99	B 83-86.99	C 73-76.99	D 60-66.99	
	B- 80-82.99	C- 70-72.99		

Equity of Educational Access: If you have a learning or physical challenge which requires classroom accommodation, please contact the UWSP Disability Services office with your documentation as early as possible in the semester. They will then notify me, in a confidential memo, of the accommodations that will facilitate your success in the course. Disability Services Office, 103 Student Services Center, Voice: (715) 346-3365, TTY: (715) 346-3362, <http://www.uwsp.edu/special/disability/studentinfo.htm>.



Life Happens: I understand you have a life outside this class. I understand that life might make it difficult to complete some assignments, attend class, or simply to do well. I do my best to be flexible because I know those circumstances are out of your control and my control. I'm on your team.

I also know that some real learning has to take place in this class. You will have more opportunity in life if you understand history, read critically, and write well. This class has to be one of your priorities. I do my best to be flexible, but I have to adhere to some standards. If something comes up, let's talk.

Note: *The syllabus is a general plan for the course. Deviations announced via email, or on Canvas may be necessary.*

How Online Works in This Course: Our course is “synchronous,” which means we have specific time allotted for learning each week, just as in a face to face course. There will be a lecture on Monday and Wednesday followed by a discussion on Friday—in most weeks (see Schedule for details). That's a very typical arrangement for a college history course.

In our case, though, the lectures will be recorded and then made available at class time. This pacing of the material will help create a routine. Each lecture is on a topic and these topics each have a small assignment, which will be made available at class time as well, again reinforcing routine.

Our discussions will be via Zoom. It will be a space for us to interact in real time on a regular basis. In planning our semester, I thought it would be best to preserve this time together as “flex time,” where we can make it what we need it to be. I STRONGLY ENCOURAGE students to bring questions to these meetings. I regard them as opportunities to seek clarification on content and course requirements. If you feel in the dark about anything, then let me know in our Friday zoom meetings.

I strongly de-emphasize Canvas in my online teaching. It's important as a place for students to access lectures and assignments, submit completed assignments, check their grades, receive feedback on work, and find announcements. Beyond those functions, we will not be using Canvas much. My concern is that the more we use it, then the more we think that's where learning takes place. In fact, learning takes place by listening, reading, taking notes, and writing. I want to keep your attention there.

Online Course FAQ's

Can I work at my own pace? To some extent, yes. You can access the lectures and work on the assignments anytime between when they are made available and when they are due, typically a 5-7 day range.

Can I work ahead in the semester? No. The course is designed with a particular pace in mind. This pace will help keep students in a routine, and it will also be fair to my own workflow.

Do I have to attend Zoom discussions? Yes. While I do not prepare new information (such as content or assignment details) to share here, I do answer questions about assignments and material here. If I clarify something here, then I assume everyone has heard it.

What if I just don't understand something? Then send me an email right away! The best part of my job is communicating with students. Sometimes students don't even have a specific question, they just "don't get it." I know that can make it hard to email, but just say "Dear Dr. P., I'm not getting this." We can sort it out via email or phone.

How do I find the lectures and assignments? These will be available in Canvas under "Assignments" and listed by Topic Number and Topic Title, corresponding to the Schedule in this syllabus.

Schedule:

Week 1	Monday, January 25th	Introduction	Syllabus and Syllabus Audio Overview Made Available
	Wednesday, January 27th		Getting to Know Environmental History
	Friday, January 29 th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom

UNIT 1: The Farm in America

Week 2	Monday, February 1st	Topic 1: Near Extinction of the American Bison	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Wednesday, February 3rd	Topic 2: Conquest and Its Consequences	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Friday, February 5th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 3	Monday, February 8th	Topic 3: Plantation Ecology Topic 1 and 2 Assignment Due Midnight	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Wednesday, February 10th	Topic 4: The South Beyond the Plantation	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Friday, February 12th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 4	Monday, February 15th	Topic 5: Dust Bowl Topic 3 and Topic 4 Assignments Due Midnight	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Wednesday, February 17th	Topic 6: California Agribusiness	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Friday, February 19th		No Class Meeting
Week 5	Monday February 22nd		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
	Wednesday, February 24th	Topic 5 and Topic 6 Assignments Due Midnight	

	Friday, February 26th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
	Unit 2: The Nation's Forests		
Week 6	Monday, March 1st	Topic 7: New England's Forests	Lecture and Assignment Available
		Paper One Due by Midnight	
	Wednesday, March 3rd	Topic 8: Destruction of Southern Longleaf	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Friday, March 5th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 7	Monday, March 8th	Topic 9: Origins of Forest Conservation	Lecture and Assignment Available
		Topic 7 and 8 Assignment Due Midnight	
	Wednesday, March 10th	Topic 10: Recovery of Great Lakes Forests	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Friday, March 12th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 8	Monday, March 15th	Topic 11: Tree Farming	Lecture and Assignment Available
		Topic 9 and Topic 10 Assignments Due Midnight	
	Wednesday, March 17th	Topic 12: Old Growth Logging and Protection	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Friday, March 19th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
SPRING BREAK			
Week 9	Monday, March 29th	Topic 13: Menominee Forestry	Lecture and Assignment Available
		Topic 11 and Topic 12 Assignments Due Midnight	

	Wednesday, March 31st	Documentary TBA – See Canvas Announcements	No Assignment
	Friday, April 2nd		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
	Unit 3 Urban America		
Week 10	Monday, April 5th	Topic 14: Hurricane Katrina Topic 13 Assignment Due Midnight Paper Two Due by Midnight	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Wednesday, April 7th	Documentary TBA – See Canvas Announcements	No Assignment
	Friday, April 9th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 11	Monday, April 12th	Topic 15: The Industrialized City Part I: Site Topic 14 Assignment Due Midnight	Lecture and Assignment Available (Only one, normal length assignment submission in total for Part I and Part II)
	Wednesday, April 14th	Topic 15 The Industrialized City Part II: Situation	
	Friday, April 16th		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 12	Monday, April 19th	Topic 16: Suburbanization Topic 15 Assignment Due Midnight	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Wednesday, April 21 st	Topic 17: Portland	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Friday, April 23rd		Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom
Week 13	Monday, April 26th	Topic 18: Environmental Justice	Lecture and Assignment Available

	Topic 16 and 17 Assignments Due Midnight		
	Wednesday, April 28th	Topic 19: Green Transportation	Lecture and Assignment Available
	Friday, April 30th	Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom	
Week 14	Monday, May 3rd	Topic 20: Recycling and Urban Waste	Lecture and Assignment Available
		Topic 18 and 19 Assignments Due Midnight	
	Wednesday, May 5th	Topic 20 continued	
	Friday, May 7th	Question, Answer, and Discussion via Zoom	
Week 15	Monday, May 10th	Final Paper Discussion via Zoom	
		Topic 20 Assignment Due Midnight	
		Paper Three Due by Midnight	
	Wednesday, May 12th	Final Paper Workshop via Zoom	
	Friday, May 14th	Final Paper Workshop via Zoom	

Final Paper due at end of Final Exam time. See AccessPoint for Final Exam time.

NOTE: This syllabus is a general plan. Changes may be announced in class, via email, or on Canvas.