

ENV 306: American Environmental History and Thought
Spring 2011, Tuesday, 1:30-4:20, 121 Lewis Library
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Office and office hours: Guyot M41, before and after class or by appointment

This course explores the many connections between America's national development, natural environment, and how Americans thought about both. It examines how the United States originated and then expanded to cover much of a continent, and how these processes changed the nation. It analyzes how, why, and with what consequences major parts of the American economy such as farming, energy, services, and government have grown or in some cases shrunk. It shows why the nation's landscapes look and have looked the way they do.

Please get the following books, available from Labyrinth Books: Timothy Egan, *The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire That Saved America* (2010); Bill McKibben (ed.), *American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau* (2008); Carolyn Merchant, *American Environmental History: An Introduction* (2007); David Owen, *Green Metropolis: Why Living Smaller, Living Closer, and Driving Less are the Keys to Sustainability* (2009); Adam Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (2001); and Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (2004, 2nd edition).

You will write a take-home exam and a term paper. The exam is a response to a question given several weeks before the due date. The term paper, which should be about 15 pages, may be on any topic you propose and we approve. There will be no shortage of material from which to choose topics or approaches, and we want you to use your imagination to develop adventuresome analytic (not solely descriptive) subjects and treatments. An initial proposal for the term paper is due on March 2 and a revised version on March 23. The last three classes will consist of presentations of your papers.

The exam accounts for thirty percent of your grade, the presentation ten percent, the final paper forty percent, and class participation and general conscientiousness twenty percent.

We expect all written work to meet advanced collegiate standards of writing and will lower the grade of any work that does not. We expect students to attend all classes.

Schedule

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| February 1 | Introduction. |
| February 8 | Forming the American Environment: Merchant 3-110; McKibben xxi-xxxii, 1-70, 632-658. |

- February 15 Fire, the West, and Conservation: Egan; McKibben 71-185
- February 22 Industrial America and Conservation: Merchant 111-193; McKibben 186-238, 260-312. Paper proposal due.
- March 1 The Dust Bowl: Worster; McKibben 239-244, 254-259.
- March 8 Suburbia: Rome; McKibben 318-347, 770-780, 809-814, 874-897. Take-home question distributed.
- March 15 Spring break: no class.
- March 22 Contemporary Environmentalism: Merchant 193-209; McKibben 348-631, 671-715. Revised proposal due.
- March 29 What It All Means: Owen; McKibben 718-769, 849-873, 939-974. Take-home exam due.
- April 5 Presentations.
- April 12 No class meeting.
- April 19 Presentations.
- April 26 Presentations.
- May 10 Dean's Date: papers due.

