

Honors Program, School of Arts and Sciences, and Planning and Public Policy Program,  
Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University

American Regions and Regionalism: Growth and Decline, 01:090:263:01 and  
10:762:495:01, Fall 2010, 3 credits

Wednesday, 1:10-4:10, Seminar Room, Brett Hall, College Avenue Campus (except for  
meeting on Monday, November 22)

Taught by Frank Popper, Room 535, Civic Square Building, College Avenue Campus,  
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Office hours: Wednesday, 9-12, plus before or after class, or by appointment

Required readings: Edward Ayers, Patricia Nelson Limerick, Stephen Nissenbaum and  
Peter Onuf, "All Over the Map: Rethinking American Regions" (1996), Robert Fishman  
(ed.), "The American Planning Tradition: Culture and Policy" (2000) and Wilbur  
Zelinsky, "The Cultural Geography of the United States" (revised edition, 1992). All are  
available, where possible in paperback, at the Rutgers/Barnes & Noble Bookstore. There  
may be other reading assignments as needed.

This course takes a primarily historical approach to explore the origins, effects and  
implications of American regions and regionalism. The early part of the course consists  
of presentations and question periods, and ends in two take-home exams. The later part  
focuses on the preparation of your term papers.

You do an original paper of about 10-15 total double-spaced pages on a topic you  
choose and I approve. The paper goes through four stages: a proposal, a first draft, a class  
presentation and a final draft. (In some cases more drafts may be needed.) The goals of  
the course are to teach you about the far-reaching subject of American regions, have you  
do high-quality thinking and writing about them, and give you a sense of how to help  
each other in doing these tasks.

The final draft of the term paper counts for 40% of your grade, the class presentation  
10% and the two take-home exams 20% each. Class participation and general  
conscientiousness, including getting work in on time, count for 10%.

I want your written work to reach advanced collegiate standards of writing and will  
lower the grade of any that does not. I expect you to attend all classes, do all the reading  
for them carefully and be prepared to discuss it. The class is relatively small and  
conversational, so the amount of your preparation will quickly become clear and affect  
your grade.

I expect you to know, understand and live up to Rutgers' standards of academic integrity explained at [academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/students](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/students). If you have questions about them, please ask me. Rules of thumb: if you think you may be violating them, you probably are. If you want to avoid plagiarism, do original work.

### Schedule

- September 1 Introduction.
- September 8 No class: Rutgers schedule adjustment.
- September 15 What are American regions?: Zelinsky, Preface-Chapter 3, pp. IX-108.
- September 22 Why do American regions matter? Zelinsky, Chapters 4-5, pp. 109-185.
- September 29 The history of American regions: Ayers *et al.*, whole book. First take-home exam distributed.
- October 6 No class: first take-home exam due.
- October 13 Government/environmental regionalism 1: Fishman, pp. 1-171.
- October 20 Government/environmental regionalism 2: Fishman, pp.172-313. Elinor Ostrom visit.
- October 27 Growth-and-decline regionalism 3: Popper(s) material e-mailed. Second Take-home exam distributed.
- November 3 No class: second take-home exam due: no class.
- November 10 Student presentations.
- November 17 Student presentations.
- November 22 No class: first drafts of papers due in instructor's office.
- December 1 No class: individual meetings on first drafts in instructor's office.
- December 8 To be announced.
- December 15 Term paper due at noon in instructor's office.

### A note on sources

You will find plenty of sources on regions, regionalism and regional history in the United States, starting with the extensive bibliography at the end of the Zelinsky book. Other possible readings for this course might have been Robert Dorman, "Revolt of the Provinces: The Regionalist Movement in America, 1920-1945" (2003), Joel Garreau, "The Nine Nations of North America" (1981), Richard Kluger, "Seizing Destiny: How America Grew from Sea to Shining Sea" (2007), Anne Mackin, "Americans and Their Land: A House Built on Abundance" (2006), Daniel Mathews and James Jackson, "America from the Air: A Guide to the Landscape Along Your Route" (2007), Bill McKibben (ed.), "American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau" (2008), John McNeill, "Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World" (2001), Donald Meinig, four-book series, "The Shaping of America: A Geographic Perspective on 500 Years of History" (1986, 1992, 1995 and 2004), John Opie, "Nature's Nation: An Environmental History of the United States" (1998), Tim Palmer, "The Heart of America: Our Landscape, Our Future" (2009), Ted Steinberg, "Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History" (second edition, 2009), Bret Wallach, "Understanding the Cultural Landscape" (2005) or any number of regional-geography textbooks.

Histories and analyses are available for many multistate regions. For the Northeast and Midwest look at, for instance, William Barillas, "The Midwestern Pastoral: Place and Landscape in the Literature of the American Heartland" (2006), Dona Brown, "Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century" (1995), Patrick Carr and Maria Kefalas, "Hollowing Out the Middle: The Rural Brain Drain and What It Means for American" (2009), Andrew Cayton and Susan Gray (eds.), "The American Midwest: Essays on Regional History" (2001), Tony Hiss and Christopher Meier, "H2O: Highlands to Ocean" (2005), John Hudson, "Making the Corn Belt: A Geographical History of Middle-Western Agriculture" (1994), Richard Longworth, "Caught in the Middle: America's Heartland in the Age of Globalism" (2007), John Madson, "Up on the River: With the People and Wildlife of the Upper Mississippi" (2000), Bill McKibben, "Wandering Home: A Long Walk Across America's Most Hopeful Landscape: Vermont's Champlain Valley and New York's Adirondacks" (2005), John Rennie Short, "Liquid City: Megalopolis and the Contemporary Northeast" (2007) and James Shortridge, "The Middle West: Its Meaning in American Culture" (1989).

Likewise, for the West, South and Great Plains, look at Carl Abbott, "How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America" (2008), Allen Batteau, "The Invention of Appalachia" (1990), Dayton Duncan, "Miles from Nowhere: Tales from America's Contemporary Frontier" (1993), Dan Flores, "Horizontal Yellow: Nature and History in the Near Southwest" (1999) and "The Natural West: Environmental History in the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains" (2001), Jack Kirby, "Mockingbird Song: Ecological Landscapes of the South" (2006), Patricia Nelson

Limerick, “The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West” (1987) and “Desert Passages: Encounters with the American Deserts” (1989), Anne Matthews, “Where the Buffalo Roam: Restoring America’s Great Plains” (second edition, 2002), Paul Sutter and Christopher Manganiello (eds.), “Environmental History and the American South: A Reader” (2009), William Vollmann, “Imperial” (2009), Donald Meinig, “The Great Columbia Plain: A Historical Geography, 1805-1910” (1995), Richard White, “‘It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own’: A History of the American West” (1991) and “The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River” (1995), Alan Williamson, “Westernness: A Meditation” (2006), C. Vann Woodward, “The Burden of Southern History” (third edition, 2008) and Donald Worster, “Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s” (second edition, 2004),

Government regional actions, primarily federal and often operating at the metropolitan or multistate regional level, go back at least to the 1930s New Deal—for instance, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Bonneville Power Administration in the Pacific Northwest, or the National Resources Planning Board. There are numerous sources on these and other governmental regional initiatives. In a way the winning of the American West, going back to the time when the nation barely stretched to the Appalachians, is a federal regional development project, the largest of all, and there is a huge literature on it. Look also at the Regional Plan Association in New York City, both its work in the New York-New Jersey-Connecticut area and its national America 2050 project. For a good introduction to the basics of city planning, see Christopher Duerksen, C. Gregory Dale and Donald Elliott, “The Citizen’s Guide to Planning” (fourth edition, 2009).

There are interesting histories of metropolitan regions—for example, Chicago (by William Cronon and Bessie Louise Pierce), Las Vegas (Hal Rothman), Los Angeles (Mike Davis and Edward Soja), Pittsburgh (Joel Tarr) and Portland, Oregon (Carl Abbott), among many other cities and authors. Blogs, on cities or other places or issues, are sometimes vividly useful and other times a complete waste of time. If you have questions about them, ask me.

One can find large literatures on specific issues of regions such as ecological restoration, energy practices, ethical/religious perspectives, environmental justice, the environmental sides of science and engineering, the federal public lands, gender experiences, historic preservation, Native, African and Hispanic American concerns and other ethnic ones, natural resource economics, particular animals, plants and industries, population pressure, and urban and suburban development. Regionalist figures have been subjects of recent book-length studies: for starters, Bernard DeVoto, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, Dorothea Lange, Robert Moses, John Muir, Lewis Mumford, Gifford Pinchot, John Wesley Powell, Theodore Roosevelt (specifically in his conservation work), Wallace Stegner, Frederick Jackson Turner, and my wife and me.

The nation has a vast literature on cherished regional places: the Everglades, the Mississippi and other rivers, the New Jersey Pinelands, the California coast, the Northern and Northwest forests, the Southwest deserts, and on and on. Any number of specialized periodicals can be useful. Look, for instance, at *Environmental History*, the *American*

Historical Review, Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Journal of American History, Journal of the American Planning Association, Journal of Urban Affairs, Journal of Urban History, Natural Resources Journal, Planning and Urban Affairs Review.

Then there are regional periodicals (such as High Country News, Journal of the West, Pacific Historical Quarterly or Western Historical Quarterly for the West) or disciplinary ones (such as those on air pollution, forestry, hazardous waste, housing, farming, mining or wilderness). Local newspapers can often be enormously helpful. Do not overlook the publications and websites of state, county, local and neighborhood museums and historical societies. Use your imagination to find additional sources.

Specialized encyclopedias are often good places to start research. (One must always go further.) Since 1990 encyclopedias have appeared on, among other places, the Great Plains, the Midwest, the Northeast, the South, the West, New Jersey, New York State, Cleveland, Los Angeles and New York City. Also useful are Carolyn Merchant, "The Columbia Guide to American Environmental History" (2002) and Shepard Krech III, J.R. McNeill and Carolyn Merchant (eds.), "Encyclopedia of World Environmental History" (2003). Wikipedia and other encyclopedias, on-line or off-, are good places to begin research and terrible places to end it. Use them as starting points. But please don't cite them.