HIST 5540: North American Environmental History
#yorkhist5540

Fridays 11:30am to 2:30pm
Department of History
Instructor: Sean Kheraj
Office: Vari Hall 2124
Office Hours: Fridays 9:30am-10:30am; Fridays 2:30pm-3:30pm
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Course Description

To understand the past, historians must consider the role of the reciprocal relationship between people and the rest of nature. This course examines the historiography of the North American environment since the advent of the Industrial Revolution spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We cover a broad range of topics, taking a thematic approach to the field of environmental history. At the same time, we will explore these themes along a chronological framework to convey an understanding of change over time. Because ecological boundaries do not always conform to political boundaries, this course will examine both Canada and the United States. This course also considers some of the theoretical and methodological approaches to environmental history.

Organization of the Course

The course involves three-hour seminar sessions once per week. These sessions will combine discussion of key concepts and themes from course readings. All listed readings are mandatory and essential to completion of this course. Active oral participation is crucial to success in this course. Overall, students will focus on a single historiographical review essay assignment. Students must consult with the instructor to determine the topics of their essays. Students will also complete an essay proposal and an in-class presentation.

This course includes online participation using Moodle and Twitter. Students are encouraged to follow the #yorkhist5540 hashtag on Twitter for course announcements, discussion questions, and other relevant course information.

Readings

All books used in this course are available from Scott Library and other local libraries in the Greater Toronto Area. These books are also available for purchase online. All articles used in this course are available electronically through the York Library e-resources. Links to electronic readings will be posted to Moodle.
Assignments and Evaluation

The grade for the course will be based on the following percentages:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay Proposal</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Review Essay</td>
<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>20%</td>
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General Rules, Policies and Expectations

Please make sure that all work that you hand in and present for this class is your own. The university takes this issue very seriously. We expect you to be familiar with all of the university policies relating to academic integrity. Violations of the York Senate Policy on Academic Honesty – including submitting work written by someone else or submitted in another course, failing to use quotation marks and citations when using or paraphrasing the printed or electronically-transmitted work of others, collaborating on written assignments, cheating during examinations, and aiding or abetting academic misconduct – will be treated severely. Recent penalties have included failure on the assignment, failure in the course, suspension from the University, and withholding or rescinding a York degree. For further information, see [http://www.yorku.ca/univsec/policies/document.php?document=69](http://www.yorku.ca/univsec/policies/document.php?document=69).

All assignments should be submitted as PDF files in Moodle. Please double-space all written assignments and print them in standard 12-point font with 1-inch margins. Include your name and the assignment’s title at the top of the paper (no separate title pages necessary). All sources should be credible scholarly sources and should be cited, using the Chicago Manual of Style (notes and bibliography) ([http://www.library.yorku.ca/eresolver/?id=996235](http://www.library.yorku.ca/eresolver/?id=996235)), in footnotes. You must also provide a properly formatted bibliography for each assignment. Please also keep copies of all drafts and rough work.

Please submit all assignments on the designated due dates. The instructor will not grade assignments submitted later than five days. All deadline extension requests must be made in writing via email to the instructor.

We will accommodate students with disabilities working with the York University Learning Disability Services office ([http://www.yorku.ca/cds/lds/](http://www.yorku.ca/cds/lds/)). Please contact the instructor directly to make sure we are informed of your needs. If you will require any kind of accommodation for religious reasons, please let us know as soon as possible. Attendance is otherwise mandatory (see “Course participation” section below).

**Essay Proposal** Due: February 3

All students are required to submit a short 2-3 page essay proposal along with a 1-page bibliography. This assignment is worth 10% of your final grade. Please consult the detailed assignment description available on the course website.

**Review Essay** Due: April 7
Students must write a critical review essay (20-25 pages). This essay should survey and review a selection of 5-7 key works in a given sub-field of environmental history. Please consult the detailed assignment description available on the course website.

**Presentation**

All students are required to complete a presentation no longer than 10 minutes. This presentation will be based on the readings and topic of a given week of the course. Students will be required to provide an outline of key issues and topics covered in the readings as a way of leading into seminar discussion. Please consult the detailed assignment description available on the course website.

**Course participation**

Your active participation in class is essential, and we will measure it in a variety of ways. You must show that you are engaging with course readings and themes by orally contributing thoughtfully to in-class discussions.

All course participation must be in compliance with the York University Student Code of Conduct (http://www.yorku.ca/oser/pdfs/StudentCodeOfConduct.pdf). In order to ensure this, students should try at all times to be respectful toward one another and toward all faculty and staff. Active and respectful student participation is essential to establishing a productive and engaging learning environment for everyone.
Course Schedule

Week 1: Introduction to Course

Friday, January 6, 2017
• Review course syllabus and expectations

Week 2: What is environmental history?

Friday, January 13, 2017

Week 3: Surveying the Field

Friday, January 20, 2017

Week 4: Rural Environments

Friday, January 27, 2017

Week 5: Parks and Conservation

Friday, February 3, 2017

Week 6: Wildlife
Friday, February 10, 2017


Week 7: Mining

Friday, February 17, 2017


Week 8: Urban Environments

Friday, March 3, 2017


Week 9: Animals and Cities

Friday, March 10, 2017


Week 10: High Modernism

Friday, March 17, 2017


Week 11: Energy History
Friday, March 24, 2017


Week 12: Toxicity

Friday, March 31, 2017