History 424
American Environmental History
(Semester in the Wild Version)
Fall 2015

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COURSE

Context. The course satisfies a number of requirements. As an upper-level history course, it can fulfill social science and history major elective credits. Because of its environmental focus, it helps other majors (e.g., Conservation Social Sciences, Environmental Science) meet breadth requirements. These are distinct purposes, and that means the course can seem to be an odd interdisciplinary hybrid. It can also mean that it is an exciting class where many different perspectives come together to generate insights not typically found in an upper-level class filled mostly with students in a single major. The Semester in the Wild version of this class will do all that, but then it will add the unique experience of learning intensively in a wilderness setting.

Description. Simply, environmental history (EH) is the story of humans interacting with non-human nature over time. EH offers two distinct things to scholarship. 1. It puts nature into history. 2. It puts history into nature. What does that mean? Here are two examples:

- When most American schoolchildren learn about the thirteen original colonies, they don't think about how non-human things made history happen. But cows and sheep and pigs did much to shape the relationships between the English and Native Americans. So, in addition to the religious ideas of Puritanism or the political notions of republicanism, we will discover how profoundly livestock (or disease or climate or grasses and weeds) shaped American colonial history. All of history unfolds in an environmental context.
- When most Americans think about a modern environmental issue—say, organic food—they don't consider the deep historical roots and imagine it as a relatively recent phenomena, an outgrowth of 1960's radicalism perhaps. Researching the history, though, would reveal concerns about "natural" food that go back more than a century or reasons why farmers rely on chemical inputs that go back more than two centuries. Every environmental issue has a history.

When we bring nature and history into conversation, we can discover surprising connections that deepen the sense of our past and our environment.

Philosophy. All your professors come into their classrooms—or, wildernesses—with a teaching philosophy, and you should know mine. Every semester, I hope to create a learning environment that supports exploring ideas, learning information, and developing critical thinking and communication skills. Since learning is accomplished by doing things, as your professor with a bit more experience in this field, I create things for you to do and assess them in a way that allows you to move forward and improve. In this class, we use environmental history as the tools to help us work on those aspects of education.

To my mind, an ideal course is one where we set off together to explore the topic and learn from each other, so that when we leave we will know more and be able to continue learning independently. We will ask questions and search for answers. We will formulate answers and test ideas. We will agree and disagree. We will practice communicating our questions, confusions, and informed conclusions through many types of writing and oral and

visual presentations. We will think about things in diverse ways and increase the sophistication of our thinking. To support a learning environment like that, we will need to be prepared for every class and on-task in class. We will need to participate with active listening and mindful speaking—not tuning out or dominating the discussion, but being conscientiously involved. In other words, the course depends on all of us, and the more each of us contributes, the more each of us will learn.

BOOKS

The following books are assigned;

- Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History*, third edition
- Bill McKibben, *American Earth: Environmental Writing since Thoreau* (selections)
- Ken Robison, *Defending Idaho's Natural Heritage*

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learning outcomes and course goals are ways for universities, departments, and professors to articulate what they want students to learn and be able to do. Ideally, too, they help professors design the learning activities they assign. Below are the learning outcomes adopted by UI, the Department of History, and me for this course.

University of Idaho

1. **Learn and Integrate**: Through independent learning and collaborative study, attain, use and develop knowledge in the arts, humanities, sciences and social sciences, with disciplinary specialization and the ability to integrate information across disciplines.
2. **Think and Create**: Use multiple thinking strategies to examine real-world issues, explore creative avenues of expression, solve problems and make consequential decisions.
3. **Communicate**: Acquire, articulate, create and convey intended meaning using verbal and non-verbal methods of communication that demonstrate respect and understanding in a complex society.
4. **Clarify Purpose and Perspective**: Explore one's life purpose and meaning through transformational experiences that foster an understanding of self, relationships and diverse global perspectives.
5. **Practice Citizenship**: Apply principles of ethical leadership, collaborative engagement, socially responsible behavior, respect for diversity in an interdependent world and a service-oriented commitment to advance and sustain local and global communities.

Department of History

A. Students should be able to explain the historical context which shapes human consciousness and action, and to identify those factors which shape continuity and change in diverse human communities.
B. Students should be able to recognize the rich diversity of human artefacts, to reflect upon how they illuminate the historical past, and to use them to make meaning of the human experience.
C. Students should be able to understand historical evidence and interpretation, to assess their strengths and weaknesses, and to situate both in broader scholarly debate.
D. Students should be able to formulate historical questions and to engage in independent research and inquiry.

E. Students should demonstrate command of formal language and to be able to exchange ideas in a cogent, coherent, and respectful manner.
F. Students should be able to apply historical knowledge so they can reflect upon global human experience and complexity.

History 424
a. Recognize and explain historical developments from multiple perspectives.
b. Understand and articulate how human history has a natural context, how non-human factors are agents of historical change, and how nature itself is historical and dynamic.
c. Research, evaluate, and synthesize primary and secondary sources into various writing projects, with analysis incorporating the understanding above.
d. Articulate ideas increasingly better through the semester in oral and written forms, formally and informally.
e. Read critically, pose intelligent questions, listen attentively, and write coherently.
f. Recognize the similarities and differences of past societies and communities with our own to broaden perspectives.
g. Use new knowledge appropriately and responsibly, now and in the future, as part of an educated citizenry.

ASSIGNMENTS

Engagement and Low-Stakes Writing (25%): To make this work, especially in the wilderness context, we have to be engaged with each other and the material at hand. Because of the nature of Semester in the Wild, most of our time together will be packed with activities and we need to be on task and ready to participate whenever we are together. Discussions will be work best when they reflect the ideals described in the Philosophy section above—"active listening and mindful speaking."

Journals (25%): For readings assigned for such, I'm asking you to keep a reading journal. Instructions are below.

Wilderness Research Paper (35%): In a normal EH class, you would be free to define a research project of your own choosing. However, you would also have a library and unlimited internet access, luxuries you do not enjoy this term. So, each of you will write a paper about wilderness in Idaho. In readings for this class (and some of your others), you will develop a good sense about wilderness history and the values and challenges wilderness reflects. In addition to the assigned readings, you will be provided two primary source texts. (Primary sources in history mean artifacts created at the time by participants or observers.) These texts are hearings held in McCall, Idaho, in 1961 concerning the Wilderness Act and in 1983 as part of the RARE II requirements. What you research within these huge and rich resources is up to you, but you will produce a ten-page paper that makes and argument or develops an interpretation about wilderness in Idaho. (We will discuss this project in much greater detail during the second session at Taylor. You can also see a more detailed assignment on the thumbdrive.)

Poster Presentation (15%): Although you will be writing your own research papers, you will all be working with the same materials and same general topic. Because of that commonality, you are asked to come up with a research poster about Idaho Wilderness History that you can present to the campus community when you return to campus. The trickiest task will be

working together to provide an integrated history/poster and not four mini-posters on the same page. At this point, however, you will have become experts at cooperation. (We will work together to prepare this when you return to Moscow.)

SCHEDULE

The schedule below is incomplete to preserve flexibility. Compressing a 3-credit, 400-level history class into a two short sessions at Taylor Ranch and some time back in Moscow will require flexibility, dedication, and creativity. Working within course frameworks to achieve course goals, we will adjust as needed.

Before our first session at Taylor Ranch. As soon as you have the chance, read through the handouts made available on the thumb drive.

There is little time for you to read before our first session together, but at least start turning your thinking toward history. The night or morning before I arrive, read the Preface from Steinberg. Check out the schedule planned (always adjustable if necessary) for this first session, so you can prepare yourself for we will be working on and doing.

First Taylor Session (September 23 – 27)

Note: In the schedule below, I have not put in time for meals and breaks, although I have considered them in sketching this out.

September 23 (arrival):

- *Orientations*. It will have been a month since we've been together. We will spend some time orienting ourselves to one another, especially me to Taylor Ranch. This will also include a short discussion about Steinberg's Preface.
- *Reading time (1 hour)*. Using the strategies outlined in the Reading Hints handout (thumb drive), read Steinberg (chs. 2-3; we are skipping the Prologue & ch. 1). To reinforce the importance of this skill of "gutting" books, you have only an hour. (That actually works out to two minutes per page, and since there are photos and maps, that should be plenty of time.)
- *Discussions: An ecological revolution (or two)*. We will reconvene to consider the reading you just completed, trying to make sense of the colonial ecological revolution and its implications.
- *Free (i.e., reading & writing) time*. See tomorrow's planned schedule to use your afternoon/evening's time well for reading and journal writing.

September 24:

- *Discussions: Commodities & their Consequences*. We will meet to discuss the readings below and any supplementary information needed.
    - McKibben, 1-8, 19-36 (Thoreau); 71-80 (Marsh); 48-58 (Cooper); 192-204 (Stratton-Porter)
        - Read all four authors. Write a reflective reading journal and bring to our discussion. Rather than listing "facts" or summarizing each selection in your journal, use the journal to keep track of ideas, connections, and questions the readings raise. The purpose is to begin thinking through the environment in American history. How do these readings help you understand the environment *in* time *with* people and people *in* nature? The

journal will not need to address every selection or every author, but it should address more than one. Write as much as you need to fully express your engagement with these reading selections. Less than 200 words seems likely to be insufficient; more than 600 words seems likely to be unfocused. So, if your reading journal is outside these parameters, you might want to reconsider.
    - Steinberg, ch. 4 (spend no more than 30 minutes reading this)
- *Reading/ Conference time*. I will meet with each student to discuss reading journals, while the other students read Steinberg (chs. 5-7).
- *Discussions: The American South.* We will meet to discuss the readings above and any supplementary information needed.
- *Free (i.e., reading & writing) time*: For tomorrow have these sets of reading need to be completed. These are some of the course highlights on the West and on Conservation. We'll use them for conversational grist for tomorrow's hike/class. I've grouped the readings into an order that makes sense to me, but read them however you'd like.
    - West: Steinberg, ch. 8; McKibben, 37-45 (Catlin); 134-39 (Austin)
    - Conservation: Steinberg, ch. 9; McKibben, 84-112 (89-104 optional) (Muir); 113-19 (Murray); 132-33 (Roosevelt); 172-80 (Pinchot)

September 25:

- *Walking & Talking: Conserving the West:* Today, unless the weather is truly prohibitive, we will spend the day on the trail. Along the way, we will discuss the West and Conservation, while walking through an area of the West that is protected because of Conservation. We'll try to make sense of all that on the trail.
- *Reflecting and Writing Time*: Once we return, think about where we have been, what we discussed, and what you read. Before we convene tomorrow, produce another journal to share. Work to improve based on any feedback given yesterday. Although I do want you to incorporate your experience hiking, the journal ultimately needs to be rooted in your thinking about environmental history. This one should probably be longer, since it will incorporate more readings than your first one, as well as our time outside Taylor Ranch. Perhaps 500-750 words.

September 26:

- *Reading/ Conference time*. I will meet with each student to discuss reflections on their journals, while the other students read the following:
    - Steinberg, ch. 10
    - McKibben, 120-25 (Olmsted); 186-91 (Dreiser); 245-50 (Peattie)
        - As you did earlier, read all these authors and write a reflective reading journal to bring to our discussion this afternoon. If you get stuck on what you might write about, check out the How to Read Primary Sources (thumb drive). Since these readings are a bit shorter, this journal will likely be shorter.
- *Discussions: Cities*. We will meet to discuss the readings above and any supplementary information needed.
- *Reading/ Conference time*. I will meet with each student to discuss reflections on their journals, while the other students read the following:

    - McKibben, 209-223 (MacKaye); no journal necessary
- *Capstone Discussion: MacKaye's "The Indigenous and the Metropolitan"*. This piece is written by a particularly important intellectual. It is a rich source that, in many ways, summarizes much of what we have done so far. For our final intellectual time together, we will explore this together and how it fits in American Environmental History.
- *Transitions*: Introduce next unit and research project. (either tonight or tomorrow)

September 27 (Departure):
- *Transitions*: If not completed last night, introduce next unit and research project.

Second Taylor Session: October 28 – November 1, 2015

Normally, I would teach a course chronologically and just continue moving through the Steinberg text and the McKibben reader. But the opportunity to read about Idaho wilderness and the environmental movement and discuss it while we are in Idaho wilderness is too good to pass up. So, we will skip ahead in the reading a bit to take advantage of an immersive educational experience.

In the few days before I arrive, you have some work time. Use it to get some reading done for our days together. Remember to use the Reading Hints, especially on Robison's book. A note on that book: It is full—really FULL—of detailed information, but Robison is not a historian and does not necessarily make an argument. Do not get too distracted by all the details. Zoom out to see the big picture; otherwise, we will all be stuck seeing no forest, only millions of trees.

- Read Steinberg, ch. 15
- Read the first six chapters of Ken Robison's *Defending Idaho's Natural Heritage*
- Spend at least three hours perusing the McCall Hearings (thumb drive) to prepare for the research assignment

You do not need to prepare a journal for these readings. However, since the hearings and Robison will likely inform your research paper, you should be taking good notes.

I will share the details of our sessions as I plan them before I arrive, but I will adjust as I need to based on our experience during our first session and routines established. But by the time I leave, you can expect to have finished reading Robison, read Steinberg (chs. 15, 11-13), and numerous selections from McKibben.

Remaining Schedule TBA

POLICIES

Grading Policies:

Late: Assignments received late will be penalized by 7.5% per day but no more than 25% overall. And when graded, there will be no comments, just a grade. Let me know beforehand if possible and as soon as possible afterward why you are missing class. (With legitimate, documented excuses or for absences arranged ahead of time, exceptions can be made.)

Failures/Retries: If you receive a grade below 70% (before any late penalty is assessed), you may reattempt it. You must turn it back in within 10 days of when the assignment was graded. You are strongly urged to meet with me in planning your second attempt. Only one retry is allowed, and there are no retries for the final paper.

Challenges: Mistakes occur, so I will discuss your grade and change it if there is an error. To initiate a grade challenge, you will need to submit your challenge in writing and wait 48 hours after the assignment has been returned before you hand in your objection. Then, set up an appointment with me to discuss the assignment and grade. Also, you must initiate this process within one week of the time the assignment was returned to the class. After re-evaluating a grade and meeting with you to discuss the assignment and evaluation, I may change it.

Plagiarism: To plagiarize is to present someone else's work as your own. To present someone else's work as your own means to use someone else's (1) information, (2) ideas, or (3) writing without explicitly acknowledging with quotation marks and/or citations that the ideas and/or writing are not your own. Please note, you may be plagiarizing even if you are not directly quoting. Plagiarism is a serious offense and I will give a 0 to the first assignment in which a student plagiarizes (no retries allowed). If a student plagiarizes again, I will fail that student in the course. Further actions may be warranted, including reporting the offense to the Dean of Students. If you have ANY questions or confusions about plagiarism, please let me know before you turn in your work. It is essential to be using others' ideas and information; however, you just must provide credit where credit is due. You may find additional information about Academic Honesty (and dishonesty) as part of the Student Code of Conduct: http://www.webpages.uidaho.edu/fsh/2300.html.

Classroom Decorum: As the Civility Statement (see below) indicates, learning environments need to be respectful to work well. A number of behaviors can disturb that setting, we must agree to eliminate—or at least drastically minimize—them. We need to commit to arriving on time ready to work and to having prepared for class so that our time isn't wasted. When we are in class, we need to be focused on the tasks at hand. If we miss class, it is the responsibility of the person who missed to find out what is missed and how to make it up. When communicating with people, expect an answer but do not demand one immediately (expect a response from me within 48 hours during the work week and slightly longer over weekends or if I'm traveling).

MISCELLANEOUS (from various UI Offices)

Accommodations. Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have documented temporary or permanent disabilities. All accommodations must be approved through Disability Support Services located in the Idaho Commons Building, Room 306 in order to notify your instructor(s) as soon as possible regarding accommodation(s) needed for the course. Contact information: 885-6307; dss@uidaho.edu; http://www.uidaho.edu/studentaffairs/asap/dss.

Civility Statement. In any environment in which people gather to learn, it is essential that all members feel as free and safe as possible in their participation. To this end, it is expected that everyone in this course will be treated with mutual respect and civility, with an understanding that all of us (students, professors, guests, and teaching assistants) will be respectful and civil to one another in discussion, in action, in teaching, and in learning.

Should you feel our classroom interactions do not reflect an environment of civility and respect, you are encouraged to meet with your instructor during office hours to discuss your concern. Additional resources for expression of concern or requesting support include the Dean of Students office and staff (5-6757), the UI Counseling & Testing Center's confidential services (5-6716), or the UI Office of Human Rights, Access, & Inclusion (5-4285).

Library Resources. As a UI student, you not only have access to valuable print and electronic resources from the university's library, but you also have are entitled to personal assistance from a librarian. If you have assignments or research questions and aren't sure how to make the most of library resources, feel free to contact the history liaison librarian with questions: Rochelle Smith, 885-7850, rsmith@uidaho.edu.