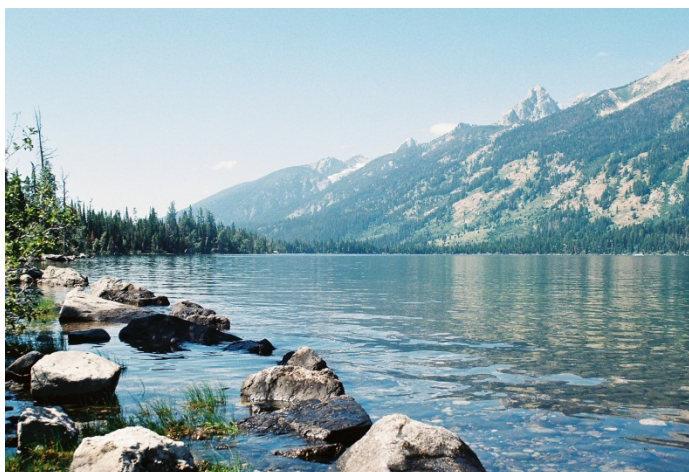


# SYLLABUS

## AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

HIST 3540-001  
SPRING 2012



**Instructor:** Dr. Jamie H. Eves, [jamie.eves@uconn.edu](mailto:jamie.eves@uconn.edu); [themillmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:themillmuseum@gmail.com)

**Student Hours:** I will be available to meet with students before class in the vicinity of our classroom, or from 8:20 to 8:50 in the vicinity of 202 KNS.

**Classroom:** 407 MSB

**Class Meetings:** MWF, 11:00-11:50 AM

### **Subject: What we'll be doing**

HIST 3540 is an upper-level undergraduate history course, designed for students from all majors. It introduces you to the relatively new field of environmental history, within the context of broader United States history. Because I am a historian, not an ecologist or geographer, I will teach the course from a historical perspective. We will tackle the following questions:

- Why and in what ways have Americans transformed their environment?
- In what ways have Americans adapted their culture to their environment?
- How have American nature writers, scientists, philosophers, and others perceived nature and its role in shaping American culture; how and why have their perspectives changed over time; and what impact have they had on the ways that Americans have interacted with their environment?
- What has been the impact of weather, natural disasters, and disease on American history?
- How have broad economic and technological changes affected the ways that Americans have interacted with their environment?
- How have climate changes affected American history?

- What caused the rise of conservationist and preservationist movements in the United States during the past 150 years, and what impact have those movements had on American history?
- How and why has the role of government in both protecting and exploiting the American environment changed over time?

To answer these questions, we will begin by examining Native American land-use practices, continue into the colonial period, and then examine both the industrial and postindustrial eras, concluding at the present – or as close to it as we can get before we run out of semester.

## **Outcomes: What you'll get out of this**

1. **A structure of American environmental history:** You will learn the basic outline of American environmental history from pre-Columbian times to the present.
2. **Theoretical tools to help you interpret (explain/analyze) American environmental history:** You will learn how environmental historians have answered questions about the how and why the interaction between Americans and their environment has changed over time.
3. **Theoretical tools to help you interpret American history generally:** In learning about American environmental history, you will learn new ways of thinking about and interpreting the broad sweep of American history generally.
4. **Greater familiarity with historical sources:** You will learn to work with new and different historical sources, such as professional monographs, nature essays, photos and other images, climate and weather data, the land itself, and the “built environment” of houses, mills, fences, dams, canals, and roads.
5. **Improved critical thinking and writing skills:** You will improve your ability to think and write critically about complex subjects.
6. **Learning to think and behave like a professional:** You will have an opportunity to practice being a professional historian.

## **Method: How all this happens**

To achieve these outcomes, we will use a variety of learning techniques, including analytical lectures, storytelling, guided discussions, analyzing photographs, taking exams, and writing online posts and short papers. The reason that we will be doing so many different things is because different students learn best in different ways, and there will be a lot of diversity in this class.

On most days, I will deliver analytical lectures and/or tell stories. I do not intend to repeat or summarize the factual material from the readings. Rather, I will supplement them by providing broad interpretive frameworks into which the material in the readings can be fit. For this reason, I expect you to do the assigned readings, attend each class, take good notes, review those notes frequently, and think critically about what I have said and what you have read. Exams and papers will give you the opportunity to integrate your class notes with the readings. I encourage you to speak out in class, especially to challenge any ideas, information, or viewpoints that seem wrong to you. I especially want you to challenge me. But I also expect you

to be able to back up what you say with hard data; historical interpretation (or explanation) is not simply a matter of having an opinion, but is instead an honest and thorough application of logic and historical methods to empirical evidence.

### **Required readings: The tools we'll use to do this**

1. Ted Steinberg, *DOWN TO EARTH: NATURE'S ROLE IN AMERICAN HISTORY*, 3rd ed.
2. William Cronon, *CHANGES IN THE LAND: INDIANS, COLONISTS, AND THE ECOLOGY OF NEW ENGLAND*
3. Stephen Pyne, *YEAR OF THE FIRES: THE STORY OF THE GREAT FIRES OF 1910*
4. R. A. Scotti, *SUDDEN SEA: THE GREAT HURRICANE OF 1938*
5. Various materials on Blackboard

### **Practice and assessment: Helping you test yourself and improve**

I will grade you on the following activities.

#### ***Class participation (10%)***

You will actively contribute to class discussions.

#### ***Online posts (30%)***

Six times during the semester you will use Blackboard to post online blog-style responses to questions that I will have placed there for you. You must log your posts by midnight on the day they are due. Each post should be at least a good, solid paragraph in length; thorough, original posts will receive better grades than cursory responses that don't say anything significant, or which merely repeat something that one of your classmates has already written. Each post will be worth 5% of your grade.

#### ***Papers (30%)***

You will write three short papers. Each paper will be worth 10% of your semester grade. Your papers should be typed, double spaced, and four-to-five pages long, using standard one-inch margins and an eleven-point Times New Roman font, which is the default setting for Microsoft Word. Late papers will be penalized one-half letter grade for each class day they are late. (Exceptions may be made if you can present empirical evidence of a genuine emergency. The acceptance of any and all such excuses is solely up to me.) Papers delivered to me by any means other than handing them to me during class are at your risk. Balky, unreliable word processors and printers are your problem, not mine. For every quote, idea, example, or fact that you use, you must cite the source where that quote, idea, example, or fact can be found. For learning purposes, I ask that you base your papers solely on class materials – please do not use any outside sources unless I have given you permission to do so.

First paper. According to William Cronon in *Changes in the Land*, what “changes” occurred “in the land” when Anglo-American colonists supplanted Native Americans in New England in the 1600s and 1700s?

Second paper. According to Stephen Pyne in *Year of the Fires*, before 1910 there were different ideas about what policies the federal government should follow regarding forest fires on federal lands. What were these ideas, which approach was eventually adopted, and why?

Third paper. According to R. A. Scotti in *Sudden Sea*, how did the 1938 hurricane transform New England?

### **Examinations (30%)**

You will take two exams, a midterm exam (worth 10% of your semester grade) and a final exam (worth 20% of your semester grade). You will write them in ink during class, in exam booklets that I will provide for you. I will post study guides in advance on Blackboard. You will be allowed to bring one 8 ½ x 11" sheet of paper with notes to each exam, which you will hand in with the exam.

### **Instructor: Who am I?**

My name is Jamie Eves, and I have been teaching history at the university level for more than twenty-five years. I have a Ph.D. in American History from the University of Connecticut, as well as an M. A. in American History from the University of Maine. My research specialties are nineteenth-century American environmental history, the history of New England, and public history – although over the years I have taught more than a dozen different subjects. My doctoral dissertation was a study of the interrelationship of nature and culture in a river valley in northern Maine during the first 70 years of the nineteenth century. I am also the Director of the Windham Textile and History Museum in Willimantic, CT, and the official town historian of Windham. Most of my published articles have been about Maine and Connecticut history – some have appeared in professional history journals, while others have been in publications aimed more at popular audiences. I was drawn to history by a love of the narrative form, and I try to emphasize good storytelling in my classes.

### **Schedule: What you need to do for each class**

01/23 Introduction to the Course.

01/25 1491: An Environmental History of Precolumbian America. **Steinberg, Chapter I.**

01/28 NO CLASS. **First online post due.**

01/30 1491: An Environmental History of Precolumbian America. **Steinberg, Chapter I, Cont'd.**

02/01 Ecological Imperialism and the Columbian Exchange. **Steinberg, Chapter II.**

02/04 Ecological Imperialism and the Columbian Exchange. **Steinberg, Chapter II, Cont'd.**

02/06 Discussion of *Changes in the Land* by Cronon. **First discussion paper due.**

02/08 Names on the Land: A History of American Placenames.

- 02/11 Valleys White with Mist: An Ecological History of the Frontier Movement. **Steinberg, Chapter III. Second online post due.**
- 02/13 Valleys White with Mist: An Ecological History of the Frontier Movement. **Steinberg, Chapter III, Cont'd.**
- 02/15 A Gneiss Prospect: Industrial Revolution in New England. **Steinberg, Chapter IV.**
- 02/18 A Gneiss Prospect: Industrial Revolution in New England. **Steinberg, Chapter IV, Cont'd.**
- 02/20 The Humboldt Current: The Environmental Epiphany of Henry David Thoreau.
- 02/22 The Humboldt Current: The Environmental Epiphany of Henry David Thoreau.
- 02/25 NO CLASS. **Third online post due.**
- 02/27 Using Photographs and Other Images as Historical Sources.
- 03/01 Using Photographs and Other Images as Historical Sources.
- 03/04 The Great Food Fight: An Environmental Interpretation of the Civil War. **Steinberg, Chapters V, VI, and VII. Note: This class will be a discussion of these three chapters from Steinberg.**
- 03/06 Wilderness Preservation: John Muir. **Steinberg, Chapter VIII.**
- 03/08 Nature Conservation: Theodore Roosevelt and Gifford Pinchot. **Steinberg, Chapter IX.**
- 03/11 Urban Parks and National Parks. **Steinberg, Chapter IX, Cont'd.**
- 03/13 Pastoral Preservation: State Parks.
- 03/15 Discussion of *Year of the Fires*. **Second discussion paper due.**
- SPRING BREAK
- 03/25 NO CLASS
- 03/27 **Midterm examination.**
- 03/29 The Rise and Fall of the Organic City. **Steinberg, Chapter X.**
- 04/01 Technology, Food, and the Environment: Steel Cans, Refrigeration, and Railroads. **Steinberg, Chapters XI and XII. Fourth online post due.**
- 04/03 Pox Americana: Smallpox and American History.
- 04/05 Influenza and Polio in American History.
- 04/08 Rising Tide: The Great Mississippi River Flood of 1927.
- 04/10 Discussion of *Rising Tide*. **Third discussion paper due.**
- 04/12 The Bulldozer in the Countryside: The Suburbanization of America. **Steinberg, Chapter XIII.**
- 04/15 The Bulldozer in the Countryside: The Suburbanization of America. **Steinberg, Chapter XIV. Fifth online post due.**
- 04/17 The Green Movement. **Steinberg, Chapter XV.**
- 04/19 The Green Movement. **Steinberg, Chapter XV, Cont'd.**

04/29 NO CLASS. Sixth online post due.  
05/01 Postindustrial America. **Steinberg, Chapter XVI.**  
05/03 Some Connecticut Naturalists.

**Final exam during Finals week.**

## **Classroom management: Other important things to remember**

### ***Accessibility***

If you have a disability that you believe will require accommodations, it is your responsibility to contact the appropriate University official and obtain an accommodation letter. I cannot provide accommodations based on your disability without an accommodation letter.

### ***Cheating***

As always, cheating – including plagiarism – is completely unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism includes quoting someone else without quotation marks and/or without proper citation; using someone else’s ideas without proper attribution; and “close” paraphrasing. In your papers, you **MUST** cite all of the sources you have consulted. (Because of time and space constraints, I will not require you to use proper citations on exams, except in the case of direct quotes.) Unless it is enclosed in quotation marks and properly cited, all of the material included in your papers and exams **MUST** be in your own words. If you are unsure about what constitutes plagiarism, you should seek guidance from me. The penalty for plagiarism in this class will be: (1) For papers, you will receive a grade of “0” for the assignment. (2) For exams, you will receive a grade of “0” for the exam question on which the plagiarism occurred. (3) For a second offense, you will receive a grade of “F” for the course. Cases of plagiarism and other forms of cheating may also be reported to the Dean of Students for further action. For the full University of Connecticut Policy on Academic Misconduct, see <http://www.sp.uconn.edu/~m1201vc/misconduct.html>.

### ***Attendance***

You will be permitted three absences without penalty. After three absences (regardless of the reason you missed class), I will deduct 1% from your final course letter grade for each additional absence. (The only exception to this policy is missing class because you are participating in a University sanctioned event.) If you have serious illnesses or other issues that result in your missing numerous classes, you should discuss the situation with me during my office hours; I will address such issues on a case-by-case basis, and my decision in the matter will be final.

### ***Etiquette***

Although your participation is encouraged and your comments are welcome, I nevertheless expect you to treat me, your classmates, and the material with respect. I expect you to arrive on time, pack up to leave only after the class is dismissed, and refrain from getting up in the middle of class and wandering around. I reserve the right to remove disruptive and/or unprepared students from the classroom. I do not expect you to agree with everything I say or laugh at my lame jokes. I greatly respect and admire students who are able to present their own positions, provided that they do so in a rational, logical, and well-spoken manner.