Environmental and Resource Studies Program

ERST-CAST-HIST 467H - Environmental History

Fall session, 2007/2008

Professor: Stephen Bocking
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Office hours: Monday 1 – 3 p.m.
Thursday 11 – 1 p.m.
and by appointment, or just drop in

Secretary: Deb Mills, ESB B202, 748-1011 x7199

Course time & location: Tuesday 12:00 – 1:50 p.m. CC A1

Description of the course

Humans have been thinking about, and using, the environment for a long time. This course is about the history of our relationship with the environment. This encompasses such topics as the development of our scientific understanding of the natural environment, the history of concerns about human impacts on the environment, and efforts to address these concerns through environmental policies, or through other means. We will see, among other things, how concern about pollution, or about deforestation (for example) is not a recent phenomenon. An underlying theme is that our relationship with the environment is about both how we have changed it over time, and how it, in turn, has influenced us: our economy, our society, and our ideas about our place in the world.

One objective of this course is to provide opportunities to actually do history: to read original materials, such as first-hand accounts of environmental problems, and to practice interpreting these materials in the light of information provided by other historians. We’ll also go outside, to look at, and think about, changes in the environment, and how we understand these changes.

Environmental history is full of fascinating stories. It is also an essential part of understanding our world today. By studying this history, we will be able to better understand current environmental issues and controversies. Science, politics, and the environment itself are all historical entities: their current shapes and forms can't be understood without understanding where they came from.

This course will meet every week for two hours. As this is a senior level course, I won't run it as a formal lecture. There will be much opportunity for you to participate in each class. I also
encourage you to meet individually with me whenever you would like. I am often in my office, and whenever I am, please drop in. I welcome your questions or problems or conversation.

Course Assignments

There are five short class papers, two class assignments, a book review essay, and a final exam. The short class papers are to be based on the readings for one class, and should be approximately 500 words. They are due at the beginning of the relevant class, and at least two must be done before reading week. The class assignments are opportunities to examine in more detail two of the specific topics discussed in the course, using both primary and secondary materials. The book review essay is an opportunity for a detailed discussion of a specific book of environmental history. More information about this essay, including a list of books, will be available early in the term. The final exam will include all material from the course, including the readings.

Grading Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class papers (due during term, at least two before reading week)</td>
<td>5 x 5% 25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assignments (due during term)</td>
<td>2 x 12% 24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Book review essay (due November 6 &amp; December 4)</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam (December exam period)</td>
<td>35%</td>
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Quality of Written Work

The ability to write clear, well organized, grammatical and properly documented academic essays is essential. I encourage students to take advantage of the opportunities for assistance that are provided by the Academic Skills Centre. It would also be an excellent idea to consult the Academic Skills Centre's publications that discuss essay preparation.

I also encourage you to consult with me on your writing. I am extremely willing to review preliminary drafts and works-in-progress, in order to help you to express your ideas and research results clearly. Consultation with me on your written work, and a serious effort to use the advice that I can give you, will almost certainly result in a higher mark. This is the purpose of handing in your first draft of the book review essay on November 6.

Academic Dishonesty

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offense and carries penalties varying from failure in an assignment to suspension from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University’s Academic Dishonesty Policy which is printed in the University Calendar.

Access to Instruction

It is Trent University’s intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and/or health consideration and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in this course, the student should contact the Disability Services Office (BL Suite 109,
748-1281, disabilityservices@trentu.ca) as soon as possible. Complete text can be found under Access to Instruction in the Academic Calendar.

**Required texts**

Required readings are available in a coursepack, and in a text: David Freeland Duke, ed., *Canadian Environmental History* (2006). Both texts are available in the Trent Bookstore. A few readings will also be available online. I will expect students to have done the readings for each class, as they will be the basis for much of the discussion, as well as the six short class papers and the two class assignments. Knowledge of these readings will also be essential in writing the final exam.

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**Course Schedule**

**Section I: Introduction to the course, and to environmental history**

**September 11:** Syllabus, grading, class mechanics, questions

**September 18:** Doing and using environmental history  
**Readings**

**Section II: Environmental attitudes and issues in the 19th and early 20th centuries.**

**September 25:** The environment and the formation of Canada.  
**Readings**
October 2: Resource exploitation and degradation, and the origins of natural resources conservation and management in Canada.

Readings


Section III: Field study in environmental history

October 9: Environmental history in the field: Trent Nature Reserves

Readings


Stephen Bocking, “Nature’s Stories? Pursuing Science in Environmental History,” Reader in Canadian Environmental History (forthcoming) [available online].

October 16: Environmental history: studying the records

Readings


<< Reading Week >>

Section IV: Coming to terms with diverse environments

October 30: The urban and industrial environment

Readings


November 6: The history of ecology: the emergence of new ways of understanding nature and ecosystems

Readings

November 13: no class

Section V: The background of contemporary environmental politics

November 20: Evolving science, policy, and values: predators and nature

Readings

November 27: The origins of environmental concern: how does the environment become a political issue?

Readings

December 4: Gender and environmental history

Readings

Final exam: during exam period