**Sustainable Systems in Historical Perspective**

**Spring 2021**

**T/TH 1.00-2.15, Kearns 106**

Professor Andrew Busch

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Office Hours: T 230-330 and W 9-12 and by appointment

**Course Description**

This class is an introduction to the history of North American sustainable systems and thinking, exploring how humans have interacted with, imagined, transformed, and otherwise altered the natural world. We will focus on traditional topics of significance: land use, capital accumulation, industrialization, national parks, conservation and environmental movements, food systems, and the role of wilderness. Yet “sustainable” can also be broadly construed to indicate a diverse array of meanings, from the economic and social to the institutional aspects of life. As such, sustainable can and does mean different things to different people, and the relationship between human and nature can be viewed very differently based on categories like race, region, class, and gender. Thoughts about nature are likely to be much different for someone who lives near a pristine forest and someone who lives near a toxic garbage dump. Similarly, scientists and humanists also have very different ways of imagining the environment. By the end of the semester we will be able to view sustainability as a relationship between people and nature but also from a number of other perspectives – including those of poorer people, indigenous people, and others who may imagine “environment” differently. As with most topics, even the natural world itself is bound in a complex political, economic, and social web that changes it as well as human perception of it.

A special theme running through the entire course is the importance of considering urbanization as part of sustainable history. Today, about 80 percent of Americans and over half the global population live in cities or metro areas. As we enter the Anthropocene, the era where human action contributes to environmental change significantly, more and more scholars argue that sustainable urban development lies at the heart of our collective environmental future. So, we will also consider the role of cities in generating environmental problems and in mitigating environmental degradation throughout history.

**Course Objectives:**

Through class meetings and independent work, students will learn to articulate and debate major themes, practices, and aims in American environmental thought and action and understand how and why they have changed throughout history. They will engage in important historical debates regarding sustainability, environmental issues, development, and urbanization, and will become more fluent in historical methodology as well as in the history of sustainability. Students will culminate the semester with an original, independent research project on a topic of their choice regarding the history of sustainability.

**Student Learning Outcomes and Skills:**

Understand the history of sustainable ideas and practices and their relationship to social, economic, political, and cultural situations in the United States.

Identify, assess, and analyze scholarly arguments about topics such as environmentalism, sustainability, industrialization, and urbanization and their relationships to broad societal trends.

Identify, articulate, and assess arguments, orally and in writing.

Be prepared to be more informed as citizens regarding public policy and be ready to contribute to the well-being of your communities and to the greater good by being civically engaged.

Enhance “transferable skills”: reading comprehension, critical thinking, argument analysis, public speaking, and especially clear, cogent, formal writing.

**Readings:**

Lisa Benton Short and John Rennie Short, ***Cities in Nature*** (New York: Routledge, 2008)

The majority of your readings will come from a list of articles, book chapters, and other novels and journalistic pieces that are compiled on our class Canvas site under the “Files” tab to the left. This way you will be able to read a wide variety of materials related to American culture without spending a lot of money. Each week’s readings are listed under “Course Schedule” below.

**Assignments:**

All the assignments listed below will be discussed further in class. Each one has its percent weight in terms of your final grade listed next to it. All written assignments need to use one inch margins, 12 point font, and be double spaced. Papers should conform to MLA or Chicago Manual of Style standards for format and citation of sources. Please consult me, a librarian, and/or the Center for Writing Excellence for additional information. More information is available at: <http://www.units.muohio.edu/cwe/about/index.html>

You must also bring notebook paper and something to write with to every class to complete in class work.

-Research Paper (Due end of the semester – 25%)

The semester’s largest project will be an 8-12 page research paper on a subject of your choosing related to environmental history in the United States. The paper requires significant secondary research but no primary research. We will devote a great deal of class time to the research paper throughout the entire semester and work will be due periodically throughout the semester.

Research Paper Work (10% - throughout semester)

You will be asked to turn in small assignments throughout the semester that pertain to the research paper: a short proposal, bibliography, and perhaps editing. These are primarily to ensure that you are working consistently throughout the semester.

-Midterm (March 12 in class – 20%)

The midterm is the only traditional test used for assessment in this class. The midterm will be a standard blue book exam. You will have the entire class period to finish the midterm (75 minutes). They will consist of a mix of ID questions, designed to test to test your ability to recognize and assess important people, events, and places, and essay questions, which are designed to test your analytical ability regarding larger class themes.

-Response Papers (Three at 10% each for 30% total)

Response papers ask you to summarize and analyze weekly readings in a formal 1.5-2 page essay. We will discuss what is included in a response paper during class. There are four opportunities to turn in response papers noted under ‘Course Schedule’ below. You must turn in three; if you turn in four the lowest grade will be discounted.

In Class Work and Homework(5%)

Because it is based on interaction and critical thinking, this course demands attentive, engaged participation in discussion and activities during class time. In course work can be composed of: class or group discussions; analytical write ups; reading write ups; short reading quizzes; presentations; or research paper editing or brainstorming. Of course students must be present in class to receive points for in class work. Homework will be given out at the instructor’s discretion.

Attendance and Participation (10%)

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Students are obligated to attend class regularly. Absences, excused or not, do not absolve students from the responsibility of completing all assigned work promptly. Students who miss assignments, announced quizzes, or other course work obligations due to excused absences will be allowed to make up the work in a manner deemed appropriate by the instructor. It will be the responsibility of the student to contact the instructor and make arrangements at the convenience of the instructor. The instructor is not obligated to allow a student to make up work missed due to an unexcused absence.

Absences will be excused for documented cases of:

1. incapacitating illness,

2. official representation of the University (excuses for official representation of

 the University should be obtained from the official supervising the activity),

3. death of a close relative, and

4. religious holidays.

The instructor will determine whether other absences from class should be excused or unexcused. In the event of an impasse between the student and the instructor, the Department Chair and/or the Dean of the college shall make the final decision as to whether an absence is to be considered excused. An instructor is permitted to impose a penalty, including assigning the grade of F, for unexcused absences in excess of 25% of the regularly scheduled class meetings (Coastal Carolina Catalog, 2013-2014).

Attendance will be taken in ALL class meetings and a grade will be assigned for attendance. If class is missed, it will be the responsibility of the student to contact the instructor and make arrangements at the convenience of the instructor. The instructor is not obligated to allow a student to make up work missed due to an unexcused absence. You are allowed one free unexcused absence. After that, participation points will be deducted. If you miss six unexcused classes your participation grade will be zero. If you miss eight unexcused classes you will automatically fail the course.

**Grading Policy:**

Late assignments – Assignments turned in after the due date and time are considered late. Your assignments will be due on the day noted on the syllabus under “Course Schedule” below at the beginning of class. Assignments not turned at the beginning of class will be considered late and will have one full grade deducted for each day late (so from an 86 to a 76). Assignments will not be accepted after two full days late (for example, if the assignment is due on Wednesday and it is not turned in by Friday) it will be recorded as a zero.

Exam make ups – Exam make ups MUST be scheduled before the exam. Any missed exams not accounted for before the exam will be recorded as zero with no exceptions. If you are going to miss an exam you must consult directly with Instructor Andrew Busch at least two days before the exam, and you must have documentation as to why you are missing the exam.

Grade changes – You must wait at least 24 hours after receiving a graded exam or paper before meeting to discuss a grade change. After 24 hours you can request a meeting with the instructor for up to four days. After this period you may not meet with the instructor to request a grade change. If you do want a meeting, be sure to have an argument prepared as to why your grade should be changed.

**Plagiarism Statement**

Plagiarism is not tolerated, and any plagiarized assignment will receive the grade of (0) and my warrant failure for the class. Examples of plagiarism include, but are not limited to, the following:

* borrowing words, sentences, ideas, conclusions, examples and/or organization of an assignment without proper acknowledgment from a source (for example, a book, article, electronic documents, or another student's paper);
* submitting another person's work in place of his/her own;
* allowing someone else to revise, correct or edit an assignment without explicit permission of the instructor;
* submitting work without proper acknowledgment from commercial firms, Web sites, fraternity or sorority files or any other outside sources, whether purchased or not;
* allowing another person to substitute for them any part of a course for them, including quizzes, tests, and final examinations;
* submitting any written assignments done with the assistance of another without the explicit permission of the instructor;
* submitting work that was originally prepared for another class without the explicit permission of the instructor;
* knowingly aiding another student who is engaged in plagiarism.

**Closing of the University for Inclement Weather**

In the event of hazardous weather, faculty, staff, and students are requested to listen to local radio and television stations or visit the Coastal Carolina University website for official University closing announcements. Announcements about hazardous weather are also posted on the University’s homepage. Review the [Hazardous Weather and Emergency Conditions Leave Policy](https://www.coastal.edu/policies/pdf/hreo-144%20hazardousweatherandemergcond.pdf) (FAST-HREO-220). Instructors may refer to the [Contingency Instruction website](https://libguides.coastal.edu/contingency) or Section VIII N. Contingency Instruction for information about what to do if class has been cancelled.

**Course Schedule (can be amended by instructor):**

**UNIT ONE: Ideas and Ideals**

**Week One (January 26 and 28): Introduction to Environmental History**

Tuesday: Intro and Syllabus

Thursday: *Read*: Worster, “Thoreau and Wilderness” and Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness”

**Week Two (February 2 and 4): Ecological and Social Collisions**

Tuesday: *Read*: Ferguson and Mansbaugh, “The Atlantic Bridged” and Hames, “Ecologically Noble Savage”

Thursday: *Read*: Cronon, “Bounding the Land”

**Week Three (Feb. 9 and 11): The Pastoral Ideal**

Tuesday: *Read:* Conn, “Anti-Urbanism” and Short, Chapter 1

Thursday: *Read*: Marx, “The Machine in the Garden” and Thoreau, “Where I Lived’”

http://xroads.virginia.edu/~hyper/walden/hdt02.html

**Response Paper One Due Thursday, Feb. 12**

**\*Paper Brainstorm (In class)**

**UNIT TWO: Industrialization**

**Week Four (Feb. 16 and 18): The Industrial City and its Hinterlands**

Tuesday: *Read*: Short, skim Chapter 2 and read Chapter 3

Thursday: *Read*: Cronon, “Grain”

**Week Five (Feb. 23 and 25): Fixing the Urban Environment**

Tuesday: *Read*: Tarr, “The City as Artifact”

Thursday: *Read*: Olmsted, “Public Parks” and Riis, “How the Other Half Lives”

**\*Research Proposal Due\***

**Week Six (March 1 and 3): Conservation and Progressivism**

Tuesday: *Read*: Ross, “Man over Nature,” and John Muir, “Save the Redwoods” http://www.yosemite.ca.us/john\_muir\_writings/save\_the\_redwoods.html

Thursday: *Read*: Miller, “The Greening of Gifford Pinchot”

**Response Paper Two Due Thursday, March 3**

**Week Seven (March 8 and 10) \*Thursday, March 10, MIDTERM QUIZ\***

Tuesday: *Read*: Hays, “From Conservation to Environment”

Thursday: **MIDTERM QUIZ**

**Week Eight (March 15 and 17)**

Tuesday: Research Tutorial Day

Thursday: Research Day

**Week Nine (March 22 and 24): SPRING BREAK! NO CLASS!**

**UNIT THREE: Popular Environmentalism**

**Week Ten (March 29 and 31): Consumer Society**

Tuesday: *Read*: Jackson, “Baby Boom and the Age of Subdivision” and Packard, “Ever-Mounting Consumption” http://krishikosh.egranth.ac.in/bitstream/1/2027517/1/HS1273.pdf

Thursday: *Read*: Carson, “Silent Spring” and Short, Chapter 6

**Week Eleven (April 5 and 7): Suburban Response**

Tuesday: *Read*: Short, skim Chapters 8 and 9 and Rome, “Intro”

 **\*Annotated Bibliography Due\***

Thursday: *Read*: Rome, “Toward a Land Ethic”

**Week Twelve (April 12 and 14): Local and Global Environs**

Tuesday: *Read:* Rome, “Give Earth a Chance”

Thursday: *Read:* Short, Chapter 10

**Response Paper Three Due Thursday, April 14**

\*Paper Meetings\*

**UNIT FOUR: Environmental Justice and Sustainability**

**Week Thirteen (April 19 and 21): Who’s Environment?**

Tuesday: *Read:* Short, Chapter 11

Thursday: *Read*: Pulido, “Environment and Positionality”

**Week Fourteen (April 26 and 28): Sustainability**

Tuesday: *Read*: Short, Chapter 12

Thursday: *Read*: Grey, “Ten Years of Smart Growth”

**Response Paper Four Due Thursday, April 28**

**Week Fifteen (May 3 and 5): Anthropocene Cultures**

Tuesday: *Read*: Hays, “Environmental Society”

Thursday: Wrap Up and Paper workshop: *No readings*

**FINAL RESERCH PAPERS DUE Monday, May 9 AT MY OFFICE**