

FALL 2021

U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

HIS 51601 - 001

Dr. Camden Burd



Fall 2021

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Class Time: Thursday 7:00 – 9:30 PM

Class Location: Coleman Hall 2750

Instructor: Dr. Camden Burd

Contact: crburd@eiu.edu

Office & Office Hours: My office is Coleman Hall 2532. I will offer open office times designated on Tuesdays from 11:00am-12:00pm, Wednesdays from 9:00am-11:00am, and Thursday from 10:00am-11:00am. I am willing to meet virtually via Zoom as well. Please email me to establish a virtual meeting or if you are having difficulty attending the office hours.

Email Response Policy: I will try to answer emails as quickly as possible. That being said, I cannot get to every message right away. Therefore, I will commit to responding to any email within 24 hours.

COVID-19: Rules and Expectations

The University is asking all of us to take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. EIU's policy is intended to protect all of us on campus, as well as the community, your roommates, and loved ones at home. EIU's COVID-19 campus practices include face coverings, when and where required, avoiding campus if sick, sanitizing surfaces, social distancing, and hand washing, all of which are based on the best available public health guidance. Everyone in the campus community is responsible for following practices that reduce risk.

- All students, regardless of vaccination status, are required to wear face coverings during class. Students may sit in any classroom seat where they are most comfortable. All reasonable efforts will be made to provide modifications to classroom seating arrangements if needed; however, this may not be possible in all situations.
- Students should not attend class if they are ill and should consult the student health clinic if they have any COVID-19-like symptoms. Accommodations for instruction and make-up work will be made for students with documented medical absences according to IGP #43: <https://castle.eiu.edu/auditing/043.php>
- If you have a health condition that may require a potential classroom accommodation or variation from current EIU COVID-19 policy, please contact Student Disability Services (studentdisability@eiu.edu or 581-6583) to determine what options may be available based on current CDC guidance.
- If you are unwilling to follow EIU's COVID-19 guidelines, you will be asked to leave class or office hours as compliance with public health guidance is essential.
- To view the latest EIU COVID-19 related information and any policy updates, please visit <https://www.eiu.edu/covid/>.

****The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus****

Course Overview

This seminar introduces students the field of environmental history with a special focus on the history of United States of America. Course readings will offer new interpretations of the nation's history with a particular emphasis on the tangled relationship between humans and the natural world. Through readings and discussion, we will follow the development of the field and its broader significance in historical scholarship.

Required Texts

We will be reading several books and articles over the course of the semester. You will also read others as your final project takes shape. Articles will be available on D2L. Many of the books are available at the Textbook Rental. For the remainder of the texts I encourage you to utilize the Interlibrary Loan System or, if you wish, you may purchase the books on your own. Examine the syllabus below to identify key texts.

Assignments

There are three main components to your grade in this course:

1) Discussion

You will come to class prepared to discuss the readings. **Every student will lead discussion for one of the week's discussion.** "The class is yours, not mine; talk to each other. No personal attacks; be kind, but feel free to disagree, preferably passionately. Take personal responsibility for leading, not dominating, discussion. Listen. Think. One of you every week will start the discussion, and it will not be someone I designate. Work together; work it out. Teach yourselves; that's what a humanist education means—that you are capable of teaching yourself new subjects of great complexity (maybe not brain surgery). You do not really need me here at all; well, maybe a little."¹

2) Review Sheets

Every week you will submit a review sheet based on the weekly readings. The reviews will demonstrate to me your ability to identify the author's argument, breakdown a book's structure, and critically analyze the overall effectiveness of the text. As a mentor once said, "I do not care whether you like the books; that is beside the point. You need to come to terms with them, while avoiding caricature and simple-minded reductionism. Try starting your analysis from a point of modesty; assume that the author is smarter than you are (not necessarily true) and knows vastly more about the subject than you do (highly likely). If the author makes an argument that seems to you wrong, try to imagine her/his rejoinder to your criticism. Then, and only then, engage in critical analysis. Assume also that you do not know how to write a book as ambitious as the ones assigned; if you ever do, we will all be very proud."²

3) Final Podcast Assignment

You will research, write, record, and publish a short podcast by the end of the semester. This podcast will focus on some theme discussed in class and will demonstrate your ability to research and present your own environmental history. We will discuss this more as the semester progresses.

I will weigh all three components together when assigning your final grade.

Late Work and Missed Assignments

Due dates for writing responses, quizzes, and other assignments will be clearly marked in D2L and the syllabus. Exam dates and assignment deadlines are made clear at the beginning of the course

¹ This is original language often used by Professor Thomas Slaughter.

² Ibid.

which means there are few reasonable excuses for missing them. That being said, I want you to succeed in this course. If, for whatever reason, you miss an assignment or exam please reach out to me. I encourage you to practice safety and healthy choices rather than putting yourself and others at risk.

Technical Requirements and Skills

During this class you will be expected to use several digital and technical tools to access learning materials and complete assignments. You should feel comfortable in the following tasks:

- Using the learning management system
- Using email with attachments
- Creating and submitting files in commonly used word processing program formats
- Copying and pasting
- You will learn all the technology for the podcasting component of the class over the course of the semester.

Technical Support

If you need assistance with D2L, call D2L Support toll free at 1-877-325-7778. Support is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Email and Chat options are also available on the “My Home” page after logging into D2L. Other D2L resources including a D2L Orientation course for students are available in “My Home” page. If you are experiencing less than optimal D2L Brightspace performance, review the D2L Brightspace Performance Checklist to assess the issue.

For technical questions regarding other software, hardware, network issues, EIU NetID/password, or Panthermail, contact the ITS Helpdesk at 217-381-4357 during regular business hours or submit a help ticket at <https://techsupport.eiu.edu/>. If you have a question regarding course content, feel free to contact me.

Academic Integrity

Students are expected to maintain principles of academic integrity and conduct as defined in EIU’s Code of Conduct (<http://www.eiu.edu/judicial/studentconductcode.php>). Violations will be reported to the Office of Student Standards.

Academic Services Support

Booth Library offers a variety of access to resources including articles, encyclopedias, books, videos, and more. You can access those materials on their website or by using the “Booth Library Services” widget on the course homepage.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a documented disability in need of accommodations to fully participate in this class, please contact the Office of Student Disability Services (OSDS). All accommodations must be approved through OSDS. Please stop by McAfee Gym, Room 1210, email studentdisability@eiu.edu, or call 217-581-6583 to make an appointment.

Student Success Center

Students who are having difficulty achieving their academic goals are encouraged to contact the Student Success Center for assistance with time management, test taking, note taking, avoiding procrastination, setting goals, and other skills to support academic achievement. The Student

Success Center provides individualized consultations. To make an appointment, call (217) 581-6696, or go to McAfee Gym, Room 1301.

Discussion Etiquette

Eastern Illinois University (EIU) is committed to open, frank, and insightful dialogue in all of its courses. Diversity has many manifestations, including diversity of thought, opinion, and values. We encourage all learners to be respectful of that diversity and to refrain from inappropriate commentary. Should such inappropriate comments occur, the instructor will intervene.

Course Schedule

August 26 – Introductions and Course Overview

September 2 – What is Environmental History?

Read: Donald Worster, “Transformations of the Earth: Toward an Agroecological Perspective in History,” *The Journal of American History* 76, no. 4 (1990): 1087-1106.

Read: Paul S. Sutter, “The World with Us: The State of American Environmental History,” *The Journal of American History* 100, no. 1 (2013): 94-119.

Read: Lisa M. Brady, “Has Environmental History Lost It’s Way?,” *Process: A Blog for American History*, <http://www.processhistory.org/has-environmental-history-lost-its-way/>, December 15, 2015, accessed August 5, 2021.

September 9 – Colonial Environments

Read: Anderson, Virginia DeJohn. *Creatures of Empire: How Domestic Animals Transformed Early America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Assignment Due: Review Paper

September 16 – Early Americans & Nature

Read: Valencius, Conevery Bolton. *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land*. New York: Basic Books, 2004.

Assignment Due: Review Paper

September 23 – Urban Environments

Read: McNeur, Catherine. *Taming Manhattan: Environmental Battles in the Antebellum City*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2014.

Assignment Due: Review Paper

September 30 – Final Project Discussion

Read: Jim McGrath, “Podcasts and Public History,” National Council on Public History, <https://ncph.org/history-at-work/podcasts-and-public-history/>, September 11, 2019, accessed June 22, 2021.

Listen: *This American Life*, “The Feather Heist”
<https://www.thisamericanlife.org/654/the-feather-heist>

Listen: Radiolab, “Even the Worst Laid Plans?”
<https://www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/segments/91724-even-the-worst-laid-plans>

Listen: *99% Invisible*, “Atom in the Garden of Eden,”

<http://99percentinvisible.org/episode/atom-garden-eden/>

Assignment Due: Podcast Review Assignment

October 7 – Urban Environments

Read: Kiechle, Melanie A. *Smell Detectives: An Olfactory History of Nineteenth-Century Urban America*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017.

Assignment Due: Meet with Professor Burd to discuss research ideas.

Assignment Due: Review Paper

October 14 – Disaster History

Reading: Dylm, Joanna L. *Seismic City: An Environmental History of San Francisco's 1906 Earthquake*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017.

Assignment Due: Review Paper

October 21 – Technical Aspects of Podcasting

Assignment Due: Podcast Proposal & Annotated Bibliography

October 28 – Rural Environments

Read: Phillips, Sarah T. *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

Assignment Due: Meet with Professor Burd to discuss bibliography.

Assignment Due: Review Paper

November 4 – Finding Nature in Unusual Places

Read: Chiang, Connie Y. *Nature Behind Barbed Wire: An Environmental History of the Japanese American Incarceration*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Assignment Due: Review Paper

November 11 – PEER EDIT SCRIPTS

Assignment Due: Scripts for Podcast (bring 2 copies)

November 18 – Environment & Race

Read: Spears, Ellen Griffith. *Baptized in PCBs: Race, Pollution, and Justice in an All-American Town*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016.

Assignment Due: Review Paper

November 25 – NO CLASS THANKSGIVING BREAK

December 2 – LISTEN TO PODCAST DRAFTS AS A CLASS

December 9 – FINAL PODCASTS DUE & LAUNCH PARTY