

FALL 2025

HISTORY OF THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE UNITED STATES

HIST 3920-001

Dr. Burd



CLEMSON
UNIVERSITY

HIST 3920-001

Fall 2025

Class Location: Hardin Hall 233

Meeting Times: MWF 10:10-11:00AM

Modality: This class meets in-person, in Hardin Hall 233, for every session.

Time to Wait: If for some reason I am not in the classroom at the designated start time, students must wait until 10:20AM until they are permitted to leave the room.

Dr. Burd

Office Number: Hardin Hall 014

Student Hours Policy: I am available to meet in the afternoons on Monday & Wednesday. If you would like to meet, please email me to schedule a time.

Office Phone Number: My office does not have a phone but if for some reason you need to reach me via phone, call the History Department: (864)656-3153.

Email: cburd@clemsun.edu

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 on weekdays.

Course Description: Examination of the historical development of the attitudes, institutions, laws, people, and consequences that have affected the environment of the United States from pre-Columbian days until the present. Emphasizes the interaction of human beings within and with the environment.

Course Overview: A telling of United States history through the lens of the environment offers insights into the actions and beliefs of its inhabitants. Over the course of the semester students will uncover how past residents valued, used, and transformed different aspects of the natural world. In doing so, students will leave the classroom with a new perspective to understand modern environmental, and land-use debates.

Prerequisites: There are no prerequisite courses for this HIST 3920-001.

Learning Objectives:

- Understand the intellectual premise of environmental history.
- Grapple with the ways in which past inhabitants have shaped North America over time.
- Explore how ideas of nature have changed throughout history.
- Write analytically on topics related to these objectives
- Discuss complex historical ideas with peers

Required Texts: We will be reading and discussing several primary sources, academic articles, and books throughout the semester. I will provide copies of academic articles and primary sources. The following books are required and available at the bookstore.

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*.

Catherine McNeur, *Taming Manhattan: Environmental Battles in the Antebellum City*

Sarah Mittlefehldt, *Tangled Roots: The Appalachian Trail and American Environmental Politics*

Assignments

Exams (2 exams = 40%): There will be two exams in this course. The Midterm and Final Exam (appropriately labeled in the course schedule) will be worth 100 points each. The midterm will only cover course content that we have discussed up until that point. The final exam, similarly, will deal with lectures and readings discussed after the midterm. The exams will be a combination of short writing prompts and an essay. The exams will cover materials discussed in lecture as well as the regular readings. Blue books will be required for these exams. I will provide more information as the exam dates approach.

Quizzes (25%): Throughout the semester, you will take quizzes. Individually, these are worth less than your exams and are meant to help you better understand the material. These will occur at the discretion of the professor and align with reading/discussion material.

Participation (35%): Because this class is a mixture of lecture, discussion, and in-class exercises, students must come ready to participate. Please be prepared to discuss assigned readings and share your insights, questions, and thoughts about them. You will be responsible for leading discussions throughout the semester as well. Discussion is not optional in this course—it is required. You have important insights and opinions and the entire class benefits from hearing them.

Grading

This course follows the Clemson University Grading scale:

A-Excellent indicates work of a very high character, the highest grade given.

B-Good indicates work that is definitely above average, though not of the highest quality.

C-Fair indicates work of average or medium character.

D-Pass indicates work below average and unsatisfactory, the lowest passing grade.

F-Failed indicates that the student knows so little of the subject that it must be repeated in order that credit can be received.

I-Incomplete indicates that a relatively small part of the semester's work remains undone. Grade I is not given a student who made a grade F on his/her daily work. The incomplete grade is calculated as an F in the student's grade-point average until the work is made up and a final grade is assigned. Instructors and students will resolve the Incomplete grade as soon as possible, but not to exceed thirty days from the first day of classes in the next scheduled session (excluding summer sessions and regardless of the student's enrollment status). Students will contact instructors in a timely manner so that instructors can provide a reasonable opportunity to complete remaining work. Normally, only one extension for each I may be granted, and this under unusual circumstances. The extension must be submitted by the instructor of the course and will indicate the time limit. (Students under this policy are prohibited from removing the I by repeating the course.) A letter grade of I converts to F unless the incomplete is removed within the time specified.

W-Withdraw indicates that the student withdrew from the course or was withdrawn by the instructor after the first two weeks of classwork and prior to the last five weeks of classes, not including the examination period. Proportionate time periods apply during summer and other shortened sessions. For financial aid purposes, enrollment is defined and satisfactory academic progress levels are established as of midnight on the last day to drop without a *W* grade. Withdrawal can negatively impact financial aid eligibility if a student does not complete a sufficient number of hours. Details are available at www.clemson.edu/finaid.

P-Pass or *NP*-No Pass indicate a student has either passed or not passed a course approved to be taken as Pass/No Pass only. Students are not permitted to optionally take a letter-graded course as Pass/No Pass.

I will work as quickly as possible to return grade materials to you. You can expect to have graded materials within 10 days of completion.

Discussion Etiquette

This classroom is committed to open, frank, and insightful dialogue. 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. Learners as well as faculty should be guided by common sense and basic etiquette. The following are good guidelines to follow:

- Never transmit, promote, or distribute content that is known to be illegal.
- Never share harassing, threatening, or embarrassing thoughts or comments. If you disagree with someone, respond to the subject, not the person. Conflicts of ideas are encouraged, while conflicts of feelings are discouraged.
- Never share comments that are harmful, abusive; racially or culturally insensitive, or religiously offensive, vulgar; sexually explicit, or otherwise potentially offensive.

Absence Policy & Late Work

Due dates for exams and primary source activities are clearly marked on the syllabus and in Canvas 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 within 24 hours with proper documentation. We will establish time for you to complete the missed activity or exam.

Academic Honesty and AI

As members of the Clemson University community, we have inherited Thomas Green Clemson's vision of this institution as a "high seminary of learning." Fundamental to this vision is a mutual commitment to truthfulness, honor, and responsibility, without which we cannot earn the trust and respect of others. Furthermore, we recognize that academic dishonesty detracts from the value of a Clemson degree. Therefore, we shall not tolerate lying, cheating, or stealing in any form. Plagiarism, which includes the intentional or unintentional copying of language, structure, or ideas of another and attributing the work to one's own efforts. Graded works generated by artificial intelligence or ghostwritten (either paid or free) are expressly forbidden. The use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools are not permitted for any work in this course, even with proper documentation and citation. I am interested in your ideas, interpretations, and voice. Therefore the use of AI tools directly conflicts with the goals of the course.

All infractions of academic dishonesty by undergraduates will be reported to Undergraduate Learning for resolution through that office.

Accessibility

Clemson University values the diversity of our student body as a strength and a critical component of our dynamic community. Students with disabilities or temporary injuries/conditions may require accommodations due to barriers in the structure of facilities. Students who experience a barrier to full access to this class should let the instructor know and are encouraged to request accommodations through SAS (Student Accessibility Services) as soon as possible.

To request accommodations through SAS, please see this link:

www.clemson.edu/academics/student-accessibility-services/how-to-register/requesting-accommodations.

You can also reach out to SAS with questions by calling 864-656-6848, email CUSAS@clemson.edu or visiting SAS at the ASC Suite 239. Contact the office for the most updated drop-in schedule if you would prefer not to schedule an appointment.

The Clemson University Title IX Statement Regarding Non-Discrimination

Clemson University is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy or related conditions (including pregnancy, childbirth, termination of pregnancy, lactation, recovery from the foregoing, or medical conditions related to the foregoing), national origin, age, disability, veteran's status, genetic information or protected activity in employment, educational programs and activities, admissions and financial aid. This includes a prohibition against sex discrimination (including sex-based harassment and sexual violence) as mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. This Title IX policy is located on the Access Compliance and Education website. Ms. Alesia Smith is the Clemson University Title IX Coordinator, and the Assistant Vice President of Equity Compliance. Her office is located at 223 Brackett Hall, 864-656-3181 and her email address is alesias@clemson.edu. Remember, email is not a fully secured method of communication and should not be used to discuss Title IX issues.

Clemson University aspires to create a diverse community that welcomes people of different races, cultures, ages, genders, sexual orientation, religions, socioeconomic levels, political perspectives, abilities, opinions, values and experiences.

Emergency Preparation

Emergency procedures have been posted in all buildings and on all elevators. All students and employees should be familiar with guidelines from Clemson University Public Safety. Clemson University is committed to providing a safe campus environment for students, faculty, staff, and visitors. As members of the community, we encourage you to take the following actions to be better prepared in case of an emergency:

1. Familiarize yourself with all possible exits, safer locations, and other key information on the emergency evacuation maps in this building, and those that you visit regularly.
2. Make a plan for how you would Run, Hide, and Fight in case of an active threat in this building, and those that you visit regularly. For example:
 - a. Run – what are all the possible exits in this building, and the routes to them?

- b. Hide – what are the potential hiding locations in this room and building that are out of sight of doors and windows, how do you lock the door(s), how would you barricade the door(s) and windows, where do you turn off the lights?
 - c. Fight – What tools are available in this room and building, should you have to fight?
3. Ensure you are signed up for emergency alerts. Alerts are only sent when there is a potential threat to safety, a major disruption to campus services, and once-monthly tests.
4. Download the Rave Guardian app to your phone.
(<https://www.clemson.edu/cusafety/cupd/rave-guardian/>)
5. Learn what you can do to prepare yourself for the hazards that affect our locations.
(<http://www.clemson.edu/cusafety/EmergencyManagement/>)

Course Outline

August 20 – Introductions and Expectations

August 22 – What is Environmental History?

August 25 – Environment and Indigenous America

Read: Cherokee Creation Story

August 27 – European Environments

Read: The Great Chain of Being from Didacus Valades, *Rhetorica Christiana* (1579)

August 29 – Early Colonial Environments

Read: Translated excerpts from Fray Domingo de Santo Tomás, *The Mines of Potosí: The Miserable Condition of the Indian Miners* (1550)

September 1 – NO CLASS

September 3 – Early Colonial Environments II

Read: Excerpts from John Smith, *A Map of Virginia, With a Description of the Country, the Commodities, People, Government and Religion* (1612)

September 5 – Discussion

Read: *Changes in the Land* (Preface-Chapter 4)

September 8 – Anglo-America

September 10 – Discussion

Read: *Changes in the Land* (Complete the Book)

September 12 – Anglo-America II

Read: Excerpts from Samuel Danforth, *A Brief Recognition of New-Englands Errand into the Wilderness* (1620)

September 15 – Colonial Contest

Excerpts from *Resolutions of the Ohio Company* (ca. 1749-1763)

September 17 – Environments and American Revolution

Read: Excerpts, J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782)

September 19 – The Market Revolution

Read: *An Act respecting navigable communications between the great western and northern lakes and the Atlantic Ocean* (1817)

September 22 – NO CLASS

September 24 – Nature & American Culture

September 26 – Nature & American Culture II

Read: Excerpts, Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (1854)

September 29 – The Cotton South

Read: Excerpts from Frederick Law Olmsted, *Journeys and Explorations in the Cotton Kingdom of America* (1861)

October 1 – Discussion

Read: *Taming Manhattan* (Introduction-Chapter 3)

October 3 – Discussion

Read: *Taming Manhattan* (Finish Book)

October 6 – Divergent Environments & The Civil War

Read: Excerpts from Joseph Jones, *Agricultural Resources of Georgia. Address Before the Cotton Planters Convention of Georgia at Macon* (1860)

October 8 – Midterm Exam

October 10 – Empire & Nature

Read: Excerpts from John Wesley Powell, *Report on the Lands of the Arid Region of the United States* (1878)

October 13 – NO CLASS

October 15 – Remaking Western Spaces

Read: Excerpts from the Dawes Act (1887)

October 17 – The Nature of the New South

October 20 – Gilded Age Environments

Read: Excerpts from Alice Hamilton, *Exploring the Dangerous Trades* (1947)

October 22 – Urban Environments

Read: Excerpts from *The Seventh Annual Report of the Department of Public Works to the City Council of the City of Chicago* (1883)

October 24 – Urban Environments II

Read: Excerpts from Daniel Burnham, *Plan of Chicago* (1908)

October 27 – Conservation Movement

Read: Excerpts from Gifford Pinchot, *The Fight for Conservation* (1910)

October 29 – Preservation Movement

Read: Excerpts from John Muir, *Our National Parks* (1901)

October 31 – Discussion

Read: William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” *Environmental History* 1, no. 1 (1996): 7-28.

November 3 – NO CLASS

November 5 – A New Deal for Nature

Watch: *The TVA at Work* (1935)

November 7 – Landscape in the Age of Affluence

Read: “Mayor and City Council of Baltimore v. Dawson, 1955”

November 10 – The Environmental Movement

Read: Excerpts from Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962)

November 12 – The Environmental Movement II

Read: Sen. Gaylord Nelson’s Earth Day Speech (1970)

November 14 – Discussion

Read: Sarah Mittlefehldt, *Tangled Roots* (Introduction – Chapter 3)

November 17 – Wilderness Movement

Watch: *Abbey’s Road* (1980)

November 19 – Discussion

Read: Sarah Mittlefehldt, *Tangled Roots* (Finish Book)

November 21 – Environmentalism and Popular Culture

Watch: Episode of *Captain Planet* (1990)

November 24 – NO CLASS

November 26 – NO CLASS

November 28 – NO CLASS

December 1 – Backlash and the Rise of Anti-Environmentalism

Read: Ladd Hamilton, “‘Sagebrush Rebellion?’ High Noon? Sez Who?,” *New York Times*, October 22, 1979.

Read: “‘Sagebrush Rebels’ are Reveling in Reagan,” *New York Times*, November 24, 1980.

December 3 – Deindustrialization & Globalization

Read: Excerpts from Bill Clinton's Opening Remarks at the Forest Conference (1993)

December 5 – American Environments Today

Read: H. Res. 109, "Recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal."

December 9: FINAL EXAM 3:30-5:30PM