

HIUS 154: WESTERN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY
FALL 2010 – TUES/THURS 2:00PM-3:20PM
CENTER HALL 216

KRYSTAL TRIBBETT

OFFICE HOURS: TUES 3:30-4:30PM, THURS 3:30-4:30PM

HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES BUILDING (HSS) 6051

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Course Description:

In this course we will discuss the environment and history of the American West. Environmental history is always about the human interaction with the natural world; it is the study of the interaction between culture and nature. The relationship between humans and nature is not unidirectional. There is a feedback loop. We will look at both the human impact on the environment and the environment's impact upon history. We change nature, but nature can also change us, our ideas, our polices, our economy, etc.

Objectives:

1. We will ask how various human activities have historically depended on and interacted with the natural world: how have natural phenomena and resources shaped patterns of human life in the American West?
2. We consider how have the human inhabitants of the West perceived and attached meanings to the world around them, and how those attitudes shaped their cultural?
3. We will ask how human attitudes and activities have worked together to reshape the American landscape: how have people altered the world around them, and what have been the consequences of those alterations for natural and human communities alike?

Course Books:

For each week, you will be expected to complete the required reading.

Stegner, Wallace. *American West as Living Space*. University of Michigan Press, 1988.

Worster, Donald. *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*. Oxford University Press, 2004.

Fradkin, Philip. *A River No More: The Colorado River and the West*. University of California Press, 1996.

Hevly, Bruce and John Findlay (eds.), *The Atomic West*, University of Washington Press, 2000.

Davis, Mike. *Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster*. Vintage Books, 1999.

Grades will be based on the following:

20% Essay/Think Piece 1

25% Midterm
20% Essay/Think Piece 2
35% Final

Think Pieces

Throughout the course, we will learn about how the relationship between man and nature has shaped the past and future of our society. I would like to give you the opportunity to reflect on the how the past has shaped the present by having you write two think pieces.

A think piece is a critical analysis of a current event and how it has been shaped by the past. For your assignment you will have to choose a current article or editorial about an environmental issue from a respectable newspaper, magazine, or journal. You will write a paper considering the historical roots of the issue in the article. Your essay can:

- 1) Discuss the historical background to the environmental issues in the article and discusses any parallel events in history;
- 2) Identify and analyze the authors' assumptions about history and the environment;
- 3) Consider how a more historical perspective could (or could not) help us think about those environmental issues today.

More details about think pieces will follow later in the quarter.

This first essay is due 10/21 and the second is due 11/30. Each essay should be 3-4 double-spaced pages.

Extra Credit:

There are two ways to obtain extra credit in this course. The first is to write a film review. The second is to present your finding from your think piece.

Film Review: During this course we will watch a variety of films to accompany lecture and reading material. In order to obtain extra credit write a 2 page (double spaced) critical review of the film. I am not interested in a simple summary, but rather a consideration of questions like the following: How does the film portray the period and/or event? How does the film's portrayal compare to what we have learned from lectures and readings? What is left out of the film that should have been included? What has the film added to your understanding of the period it covers? To address questions like these, you will need to briefly summarize the narrative of the film and consider your own thoughts on the film. **Film reviews are due a week after the film is shown.**

Think Piece Presentation: Think pieces are an excellent opportunity for you to consider how the past has influenced the future. Perhaps in the process of researching and writing your think piece found an interesting current event that you would like to share with your peers. To receive extra credit give a 5-6 minute class presentation based on your essay. Things to include in your presentation are: a brief summary of the current event, how it relates to our course lectures and/or readings, your thoughts on the connection, and a question or two for the class. I will be more than happy to help you with your presentation should you choose this option for extra credit.

Course Policies:

Attendance: Students are expected to attend lecture and complete the assigned readings each week. Some of the material in the lectures may not be covered in the readings and vice versa. Material from lectures, readings and films may show up on exams, and so students should obtain notes for any missed classes and keep up with assigned reading.

Turning in Assignments: Each assignment must be turned in on the day it is due in order to receive full credit. Late work will be counted 8 points off every day late, including Saturdays and Sundays—no exceptions apart from serious emergencies.

E-mail: When emailing me, please be sure to: (1) include “HIUS 154” in the subject line and (2) sign your name at the end of the email. If you have any questions that require a long answer, please come by my office during office hours instead.

Grading: A(90-100), B(80-89), C(70-79), D(60-69), F (below 60). Plus and minus grades for scores within two points of the next letter grade.

Week 0: Introduction

Lectures:

9/23: What is environmental history and why does it matter?

Recommended Readings:

Worster, Donald. “Nature and the Disorder of History”. *Environmental History Review*. 18(2): pp. 1-15, Summer 1994. Available on Jstor: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3984790>.

Week 1: Discovering the West

Lectures:

9/28: What is the American West?

9/30: Introduction to the Great Plains

Required Reading:

1) Stegner, Wallace, *American West as Living Space*, entire.

2) Worster, *Dust Bowl*, introduction, Part 1, and Part 2

Week 2: The Dust Bowl

Lectures:

10/5: Dust Bowl or The Dirty 30s Continued: The issue of forced agriculture.

10/7: Film: Black Blizzard

Required Reading:

- 1) Worster, *Dust Bowl*, Part 3 and Part 4

Week 3: Water and the West - Part 1

Lectures:

- 10/12: Dust Bowl and The New Deal
- 10/14: Water and the West: Irrigating Eden /Case Study: The Colorado River

Required Reading:

- 1) Worster, *Dust Bowl*, Part 5 and Epilogue
- 2) Fradkin, *A River No More*, chapters 1-3

Week 4: Water and the West - Part 2

Lectures:

- 10/19: Fishing and the Pacific Northwest: The Columbia River
Begin Film: *Cadillac Desert*
- 10/21: Film: *Cadillac Desert*
Mid-term Review

Required Reading:

- Fradkin, *A River No More*, chapters 4-7

**** THINK PIECE #1 DUE IN CLASS ****

Required Reading:

- 1) McEvoy, Arthur F. "Toward an Interactive Theory of Nature and Culture: Ecology, Production, and Cognition in the California Fishing Industry," in *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*, ed. Donald Worster (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988): 211-229. ([On reserve in the Geisel Library.](#))
- 2) Nehlsen, Willa et al. "Pacific salmon at the crossroads: stocks at risk from California, Oregon, Idaho, and Washington." *Fisheries* 16(2): 4-21. Mar/Apr 1991.
http://www.krisweb.com/biblio/gen_afs_nehlsenetal_1991.pdf

Week 5:

Lectures:

- 10/26: **In Class Midterm**
- 10/9: National Parks

Required Reading:
TBA

Week 6: The Atomic West Part 1

Lectures:

- 11/2: "Empty" Space
- 11/4: Effects that Last

Required Reading:

- 1) Hevly and Finlay, *The Atomic West*, Introduction and Part I
- 2) Hevly and Finlay, *The Atomic West*, Part II

Week 7: The Atomic West Part 2

Lectures:

- 11/9: Guest Lecturer - TBA
- 11/11: No Class – Veterans' Day

Required Reading:

Hevly and Finlay, *The Atomic West*, Part III

Week 8: The Built World – Part 1

Lectures:

- 10/28: The Control of Nature / Urbanization
- 10/30: Earthquakes, Fires, and Floods

Required Reading:

- 1) John McPhee, "Los Angeles against the Mountains," in *The Control of Nature*, (1989).
([On reserve in the Geisel Library.](#))
- 2) Davis, *Ecology of Fear*, Chapters 1-3

Week 9: The Built World – Part 2

Lectures:

- 11/23: Environmental Injustice and the City
- 11/6: Film: *Who Killed the Electric Car*

Required Reading:

1) Davis, *Ecology of Fear*, Chapters 4-7

2) Pulido, Laura. "Rethinking Environmental Racism: White Privilege and Urban Development in Southern California." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 90(1):12-40, Mar. 2000.

Week 10: Where do we go from here?

Lectures:

11/30: TBA

**** THINK PIECE #2 DUE IN CLASS ****

12/2: Final Review

Week 11:

Thursday, Dec. 9 FINAL EXAM 3:00-5:59PM, Location TBA