

HIST 3160--Environmental History of the U.S. South

Fall Term 2007

LeConte 101, MWF, 1:25-2:15

Prof. Bert Way

Office: LeConte 126

Office Hours: MW 2:30-3:30, and by appointment

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Course Description

This course seeks to explore the entire scope of southern history from an environmental perspective, as well as environmental history from a regional perspective. Environmental historians assume that in order to understand the past we must also understand how people have interacted with the natural world – how they have shaped the nature around them and how they have been shaped by it. We are also interested in ideas about nature, in how our understandings of the natural world have affected our relationships with it. Environmental history takes as a central premise that nature, too, has a history, one profoundly shaped by human beings, and that the record of the human past is incomplete without some account of the role the physical world has played in human events. This course will take a particular interest in the idea of landscape as a hybrid of nature and culture, the place in which human beings interact with nature to shape their physical surroundings.

Within these broad themes of environmental history, we will focus on the U.S. South. Southern history is usually taught in terms of politics, economics, race, class, gender, etc., and this class will address all of those topics. Yet, we will do so through the lens of environmental history. Native American land use, colonial settlement, slavery, civil war, sharecropping, industrial development, and suburbanization are only a few of the topics we will discuss with an eye on the changing relationships between people and their environment.

Required Texts

Timothy Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside*

John Barry, *Rising Tide*

Janisse Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*

Other Readings available through E-Reserves

Course Requirements

Readings and Participation

You will have weekly reading assignments in this course, and we will typically discuss them on Fridays. It is essential that you come to class each discussion day prepared to

engage the readings with thoughtful comments and questions. Be ready to present, articulate, and defend your ideas, as well as listen to and comment on the ideas of others. The success of this class depends on your willingness to discuss the readings! Your grade for participation will be determined by my overall sense of your preparation for discussion, and your active participation in the conversation. If you feel uncomfortable speaking up, see me for strategies on becoming more involved.

Writing Assignments

You will write three **4-5 page** essays on the books we read for the class. Your essays will be based on a question or theme found in the readings, which we will decide on as a group during discussion. **Late papers will be penalized a letter grade for every day beyond the due date.** We will further discuss what I expect from these essays as the time approaches. Until then, here are websites for two useful writing guides you can explore online:

<http://academic.bowdoin.edu/WritingGuides/>

<http://www.hamilton.edu/academics/resource/wc/WritingGoodHistoryPaper.pdf>

Landscape Analysis

Go out and find a good spot from which to observe a landscape that interests you. It can be anywhere you like—on campus, in town, along a river, a city or state park, a national forest, your grandmother's farm—anything that you consider a landscape. Take a notebook and write down everything you see in this landscape, whatever your vantage point. What do you see in terms of objects, boundaries, patterns, natural features? After spending a little time with it, find at least one primary source document about your chosen landscape. It may be a photograph, a newspaper article, a map, correspondence—any primary document that refers to that particular piece of land. The only requirement is that it has something to do with your circumscribed landscape of choice. In **two or three informal pages**, write about the differences between what that document tells you about the landscape and what you see there today. And remember, this is meant to be fun, not laborious. Your landscape will most likely be local, but feel free to choose something farther afield—just remember that you must find the historical documentation. (Also be careful to respect private property. This is the South, after all.)

Exams

You will have **one Midterm Exam** and **one comprehensive Final Exam**. The questions will be taken from lectures and the shorter readings. If for some reason you cannot attend on the designated date of the exam, let me know significantly ahead of time, and we will make other arrangements.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory, and I will take role every day. Since exam questions will come directly from the lectures and readings, and our in-class discussions will enhance your understanding of the readings, it should go without saying that showing up every day will significantly improve your ability to do well in this class. Each absence over **three** will result in **five points** subtracted from your final grade.

Withdrawing from the Course

Students withdrawing from the course after Drop/Add will receive a “W” if you do so prior to the due date of Essay #1 (September 12). After that point, a student withdrawing will receive a “W” only if you leave the course before the midpoint withdrawal deadline with a passing grade. If you are not passing at the point of withdrawal, or if you withdraw after the midpoint, you will receive a “WF.”

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

All students are responsible for maintaining the highest standards of honesty and integrity in every phase of their academic careers. You are responsible for informing yourselves about UGA’s policy as outlined in *A Culture of Honesty: Policies and Procedures*, available at: <http://www.uga.edu/~ovpi/honesty/ah.pdf>. Please read it if you haven’t already.

Contacting Me

I will hold regular office hours Mondays and Wednesdays from 2:30 to 3:30 PM. If these hours do not work for you, just let me know and we can make an appointment for another time. I will also be in my office most Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, so feel free to stop by. Also, feel free to contact me via email, but keep in mind that I sometimes do not check email at night or over the weekends.

Grading

Midterm: 15%

Final: 20%

Essay #1: 15%

Essay #2: 15%

Essay #3: 15%

Landscape Analysis: 10%

Class Participation: 10%

***Note:** This syllabus is a general plan for the course. It may be necessary to make some changes, which I will announce in class.

Class Schedule

Week 1

Fri. 8/17: Introduction—What is Environmental History?

Week 2

Mon. 8/20: Environment—A Central Theme in Southern History?

Wed. 8/22: The Southeastern Indians

Fri. 8/24: Discussion: Mart Stewart, "If John Muir Had Been an Agrarian: American Environmental History West and South." (E-RESERVE)

Week 3

Mon. 8/27: Ecological Imperialism/The Columbian Exchange

Wed. 8/29: European and African Settlement: Landscapes of Profit and Servitude

Fri. 8/31: Book Discussion: Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside*, pgs. ix-103.

Week 4

Mon. 9/3: LABOR DAY—NO CLASS

Wed. 9/5: Thomas Jefferson and the Agrarian Ideal

Fri. 9/7: Book Discussion: Silver, *A New Face on the Countryside*, pgs. 104-198.

Week 5

Mon. 9/10: Soil and Society in the early 19th Century South

Wed. 9/12: The Plantation Environment: Land and Labor

**First Essay Due in Class*

Fri. 9/14: Discussion: Judith Carney, "Landscapes of Technology Transfer." *Technology and Culture* 37,1 (January 1996): 5-35. (E-RESERVES)

Week 6

Mon. 9/17: The Plantation Environment: The Myth of the Southern Soil Miner

Wed. 9/19: Where There are Mountains: Southern Appalachia

Fri. 9/21: Discussion: Harry Watson, "'The Common Rights of Mankind': Subsistence, Shad, and Commerce in the Early Republican South," *JAH* 83, 1 (June 1996): 13-43. (E-RESERVES)

Week7

Mon. 9/24: Amongst the Pines—Antebellum Life on the Coastal Plain

Wed. 9/26: Toward an Environmental History of the Civil War

Fri. 9/28: Discussion: Mariola Espinosa, "The Threat from Havana: Southern Public Health, Yellow Fever, and the U.S. Intervention in the Cuban Struggle for Independence, 1878-1898," *Journal of Southern History* (August 2006). (E-RESERVES)

Week 8

Mon. 10/1: Midterm Review

Wed. 10/3: **MIDTERM EXAM**

Fri. 10/5: Negotiating a New Postwar Landscape

Week 9

Mon. 10/8: Public Health in the Jim Crow Urban South

Wed. 10/10: Southern Nature Appreciation

Fri. 10/12: Book Discussion: John Barry, *Rising Tide*, pgs. 13-209

--*Midpoint Withdrawal Deadline*

Week 10

Mon. 10/15: Breaking the Land: Of Soils and Sharecropping

Wed. 10/17: Clearing the Land: Industrial Timbering and the Problem of Cutover Lands

Fri. 10/19: Book Discussion: Barry, *Rising Tide*, pgs. 213-426.

Week 11

Mon. 10/22: Conservation, Southern Style: Tourism, Health, and Hunting

Wed. 10/24: Burned to be Wild: The Southern Fire Debate

**Second Essay Due*

Fri. 10/26: FALL BREAK—NO CLASS

Week 12

Mon. 10/29: Malaria Through the Years

Wed. 10/31: New Deal Conservation

Fri. 11/2: NO CLASS

Week 13

Mon. 11/5: Rural Industrialization: Agriculture, Pulp and Paper

Wed. 11/7: Environmental Justice and Civil Rights

Fri. 11/9: Discussion: Jack Temple Kirby, "Retro Frontiersmen." [E-RESERVES]

**Landscape Analysis Due*

Week 14

Mon. 11/12: Ecosystems Ecology: A Southern Science?

Wed. 11/14: The Chemical Countryside: Crops, Cows, and *Solenopsis Invicta*

Fri. 11/16: Book Discussion: Janisse Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, pgs. 3-140.

Week 15

Mon. 11/19: Discussion: Janisse Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*, pgs. 141-273.

Wed. 11/21: THANKSGIVING—NO CLASS

Fri. 11/23: THANKSGIVING—NO CLASS

Week 16

Mon. 11/26: The Sunbelt South

Wed. 11/28: Industrializing Animals: From Butter and Eggs to Biotechnology

****Third Essay Due***

Fri. 11/30: Discussion: John McPhee, "An Island," from *Encounters with the Archdruid*
(E-RESERVES)

Week 17

Mon. 12/3: The New New South: From Natural Resource to Real Estate

Tu. 12/4: Hurricane Katrina

Wed. 12/5: Course Review

Friday, December 14, 12:00-3:00: FINAL EXAM