History 291 Politics of the American Environment: Conquest to Climate Change

Course Description:

This course surveys how Americans perceived, developed, and governed the country's natural and ecological resources from its beginning to the present. Beginning with an examination of settler-indigenous relations, the first part of the course examines the processes of colonial conquest, slavery, territorial expansion, the development of constitutional structures, and the formation of the first legal and administrative frameworks for land and water. Moving into the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it explores the environmental and political challenges posed by industrial pollution, unhealthy workplaces, and urban growth, and covers the reasons for the establishment of the first national parks and forests. The twentieth century witnessed the maturation of federal mechanisms for the full utilization and conservation of rivers, agricultural and range land, fisheries, and forests, as well as the birth of a lusty environmental movement, informed by ecological science, that challenged such developmental assumptions and reoriented federal pollution policy in the 1960s and 1970s. In the final stretch, the course covers the key political and policy developments of this modern "environmental era," the new entry points for lawsuits and citizen advocacy, as well as debates over wilderness, pesticides, endangered species, energy, food and farm activism, toxic inequality and environmental justice, and the profoundly partisan divisions provoked by climate change.

Hub Outcomes:

History 291 fulfills the following Hub units: Social Inquiry I and The Individual in Community. The learning outcomes for these Hub areas are:

- Students will identify and apply major concepts used in the social sciences to explain individual and collective human behavior including, for example, the workings of social groups, institutions, networks, and the role of the individual in them.
- Students will analyze at least one of the dimensions of experience--historical, racial, socio-economic, political, gender, linguistic, religious, or cultural--that inform their own worldviews and beliefs as well as those of other individuals and societies.
- Students will participate respectfully in different communities such as campus, citywide, national, and international groups, and recognize and reflect on the issues relevant to those communities.

You will meet these outcomes by:
• Analyzing how the mechanisms of environmental governance evolved alongside the historical development of American political and social institutions at local, state, and national levels—topics include legislative, executive, and judicial authority; constitutional change and interpretation; the law and politics of administration; interest groups and non-governmental actors; and the shifting political influence of the resource and environmental sciences.

• Understanding how debates over resource distribution and environmental hazards have shaped American politics and government from the country's start to its present, and how the rewards and risks of environmental management have fallen unequally along lines of socio-economic class, race, and gender. Students will grasp how the political frameworks, institutional arrangements, legal strategies, and cultural assumptions of the past have shaped present problems, structured present choices, and formed their own environmental values. They will know at which points in history Americans have addressed declining resources and environmental deterioration, and why not every problem has provoked a policy response.

• Conducting a semester-long "Environmental Presence Project," in which students will select a contemporary environmental issue—from the Boston area, or from another American location (preferably their own home town or region, if they are from the U.S., but this is not required). This "issue" can include any conflict or initiative, involve any campus or institution or neighborhood, and involve any natural or built environment. In stacked stages, students will describe the issue; evaluate media and internet coverage; identify participant and stakeholder positions; make a local site visit in person or a remote site visit with internet tools; conduct personal or phone interviews with selected participants; compare the controversy's relationship to past environmental beliefs and politics; suggest how future historians would analyze the issue; and reflect on their own presence as an individual observer of contemporary debates—an observer with a developing set of historical skills and a set of personal environmental values. All materials and assignments will be collated, presented, and assessed with a Digication e-Portfolio, which will allow the assembly of documents, images, and video (where relevant).

**Required Books:**


The assigned books are available at the BU Barnes & Noble. Students will find the additional assigned readings, lecture outlines, and assignments posted to Blackboard Learn.
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<tr>
<th>Course Requirement</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>% Final Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class Participation</td>
<td>Every class meeting</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Quizzes</td>
<td>Every class reading assigned</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-Home Midterm Exam</td>
<td>Mon Oct 28</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental Presence Project (EPP)</td>
<td>Proposal Sept 27</td>
<td>30% (components graded separately and averaged together; improvement taken into account)</td>
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<td>Summary Oct 18</td>
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<td>Site Report Nov 1</td>
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<td>Interview Report Nov 20</td>
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<td>Reflections Essay Dec 6</td>
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<td>Class Presentations Dec 9, 11</td>
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<td>Final Project Dec 13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-Home Final Exam</td>
<td>Wed Dec 17</td>
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Please note: Students must receive a passing grade (C- or above) on each course component to receive a passing grade in the course.

**Late Assignments:**
Please contact me well in advance of an assignment’s due date if you think that you will have difficulty meeting a particular deadline. All papers and assignments submitted late without my permission will automatically be marked down 1/3 a letter grade per day.

**Attendance:**
Class attendance is required. Please notify me in advance (if possible) if you know that you will need to be absent from class. After two unexcused absences, I will begin deducting 1/3 of a letter grade from your final grade for every missed class. Any more than 6 absences (excused or unexcused) will result in a failing grade for the course.

**Participation and Reading Quizzes:**
Each class meeting will combine lecture with some class discussion. There will be many opportunities to participate, from reacting to images and primary source excerpts during a lecture, to discussing assigned readings with the entire class or within a small group. I will learn everyone's names within the first week of class, and record the level of each student's participation after each class.

If a portion of reading has been assigned for a particular day, there will be a short reading quiz of one or two questions at the start of class. These questions will not be difficult if you have completed the assigned reading for that day. Regular quizzes keep you up to date on the reading, which creates a more informed classroom experience for everyone.

Some class meetings (usually Fridays but not always) are set aside for a prolonged discussion of the week's assigned book, excerpts, or articles. You must be prepared for discussion periods: you must have read and thought about the assigned material; you should also think about questions you want to ask and observations you’d like to make. On class days marked "DISCUSSION" in the syllabus, bring the assigned book/reading to have available for reference; you may print out the readings or you may use a computer or device for this purpose only. Reading quizzes will be given every day reading is assigned, including days marked as "DISCUSSION."

**Plagiarism Policy/ Academic Integrity:**
In order to become critical thinkers and writers, you must complete all stages of your work yourself: taking the words of others, or presenting the ideas of others as your own, not only prohibits you from
learning, but also violates the CAS Academic Conduct Code: https://www.bu.edu/academics/policies/academic-conduct-code/
This Code applies to all class assignments, from all the components of the Environmental Presence Project to your midterm and final exams. The minimum penalty for such offenses is to fail the assignment; the more common penalty is to fail the course. Please contact me if you have any questions about plagiarism. We will review proper citation techniques throughout the semester.

Class Decorum:
No computers, tablets, or phones are allowed. Kindly turn off and put away your devices before we begin. Please take lecture notes with pen and paper. Drinks are allowed, but please do not bring food.

Disability:
If you are a student requiring accommodations for a disability, please let me know as soon as possible. The Office of Disability Services can assist you and may be contacted at 617-353-3658.

Communication:
I will communicate with the class using email. Please check your BU email account regularly.

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Lecture Schedule and Reading Assignments:
The reading assignments should be completed on the day they are listed. Readings marked with an asterisk (*) are available on Blackboard Learn.

Sept 4  Course Introductions
Sept 6  Ecological Imperialism
       READ: *Changes in the Land*, Preface and chapters 1 & 2

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Sept 9  Colonial Encounters
       READ: *Changes in the Land*, chapters 3 & 4
Sept 11 Slavery
       READ: *Changes in the Land*, chapters 5 & 6
Sept 13 DISCUSSION/ BRING CHANGES IN THE LAND TO CLASS
       READ: *Changes in the Land*, chapters 7 & 8
Guidelines for the EPP Proposal Distributed in Class

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Sept 16 Revolution and Constitution
       READ: *Taming Manhattan*, Introduction and chapters 1 & 2
Sept 18 Continental Expansion
       READ: *Taming Manhattan*, chapters 3 & 4
Sept 20 DISCUSSION/ BRING TAMING MANHATTAN TO CLASS
       READ: *Taming Manhattan*, chapter 5 and Epilogue

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Sept 23 Early Industry
       READ: *Karl Jacoby*, Excerpt #1 from *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation*
Sept 25  Protectionist Sentiment

Sept 27  DISCUSSION/ BRING JUST JACOBY TO CLASS
READ: Killing for Coal, Introduction and chapter 1
EPP Proposal Due in Class

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Sept 30  Mining the West
READ: Killing for Coal, chapters 2-4

Oct 2  Closing Frontier
READ: Killing for Coal, chapters 5 & 6

Oct 4  DISCUSSION/ BRING KILLING FOR COAL TO CLASS
READ: Killing for Coal, chapter 7 and Epilogue
Guidelines for the EPP Summary Assignment Distributed in Class

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Oct 7  Conservation and Preservation
READ: * Theodore Roosevelt, “Address” (1908)
* Gifford Pinchot, excerpt from The Fight for Conservation (1910)
* John Muir, “Hetch Hetchy Valley” (1912)

Oct 9  Governing Nature, Nurturing Government
READ: * Brian Balogh, “Scientific Forestry and the Roots of the Modern American State”

Oct 11  NO CLASS: Work on EPP

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Oct 14  NO CLASS/ Columbus Day

Oct 15  MONDAY SCHEDULE
Watering the West
NO READING: Work on EPP

Oct 16  Small-Group Discussions of EPP
NO READING: Work on EPP

Oct 18  Cleaning Up the City
EPP Summary Due in Class
Take-Home Midterm Distributed in Class

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Oct 21  Progressives and Pollution
READ: * Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner, Excerpt #1 from Deceit and Denial: The Deadly Politics of Industrial Pollution

Guidelines for the EPP Site Report and Interview Report Distributed in Class

Oct 23  Hazards of the Job
READ: * Alice Hamilton, brief bio, and excerpt from Exploring the Dangerous Trades (1943)
Oct 25  **DISCUSSION/BRING THIS WEEK'S READINGS TO CLASS**  
READ: *Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner, Excerpt #2 from Deceit and Denial: The Deadly Politics of Industrial Pollution*  

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Oct 28  The New Deal  
READ: *Sarah Phillips, This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal, Introduction and chapter 3*

**Take-Home Midterm Due in Class**

Oct 30  Dust Bowl/ *The Plow That Broke the Plains*  
NO READING: Work on EPP

Nov 1  Dust Bowl cont. and World War II/ no reading needed in class  
READ: *Doom Towns, Introduction and chapters 1 & 2 of "The Graphic History"; be sure to refer to the "Cast of Characters" (xxxix-xlii) when needed*

**EPP Site Report Due in Class**

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Nov 4  From Conservation to Environment  
READ: *Doom Towns, chapters 3-5 of "The Graphic History"*

Nov 6  Pesticides and Politics  
READ: *Doom Towns, chapters 6 & 7 of "The Graphic History"*

Nov 8  **DISCUSSION/BRING DOOM TOWNS TO CLASS**  
READ: *Doom Towns, chapters 8 & 9 of "The Graphic History"*

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Nov 11  Environmental Movements Take Shape  
READ: *Environmental Inequalities, Preface and chapters 1-3*

Nov 13  Nationalizing Environmental Policy  
READ: *Environmental Inequalities, chapters 4 & 5*

**Guidelines for the EPP Reflections Essay Distributed in Class**

Nov 15  **DISCUSSION/BRING ENVIRONMENTAL INEQUALITIES TO CLASS**  
READ: *Environmental Inequalities, chapters 6 & 7 and Epilogue*

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Nov 18  NEPA and Citizen Suits  
READ: *The Republican Reversal, Introduction and chapter 1*

Nov 20  Population Politics  
READ: *The Republican Reversal, chapter 2*

**EPP Interview Report Due in Class**

Nov 22  Acting for Endangered Species  
READ: *The Republican Reversal, chapter 3*

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Nov 25  **DISCUSSION/BRING THE REPUBLICAN REVERSAL TO CLASS**  
READ: *The Republican Reversal, chapter 4 and Conclusion*

**Guidelines for EPP Class Presentations and Final Projects Distributed in Class**

[Nov 27 - Dec 1  THANKSGIVING RECESS]
Dec 2  Oil, Coal, and Energy Since the 1970s
   READ: Black Faces, White Spaces, Introduction and chapters 1-2
Dec 4  Toxic Inequalities and Environmental Justice
   READ: Black Faces, White Spaces, chapters 3 & 4
Dec 6  DISCUSSION/ BRING BLACK FACES WHITE SPACES TO CLASS
   READ: Black Faces, White Spaces, chapters 5 & 6 and Epilogue
   EPP Reflections Essay Due in Class

Dec 9  Class Presentations of EPP
Dec 11 Class Presentations of EPP
   Take-Home Final Distributed in Class

FRI Dec 13: EPP Final Project Due

WED Dec 17: Take-Home Final Due (under instructor's office door by 12 noon)