

History-1240-002: *Environmental History Survey*

Department of History & Geography, Clemson University, Fall 2021

M/W/F 9:05 - 9:55am, Hardin Hall 232

Course Modality: Traditional (in-person). The class is scheduled to meet in person during the semester on the days and times indicated above. Stay tuned to *university announcements* in addition to *Canvas course announcements* for possible schedule adjustments, including university closings due to inclement weather, power outages, etc. The student handbook states: "If the professor or a substitute does not arrive within 10 minutes of the scheduled starting time of the class, students may leave."

Instructor: James B. Jeffries, Ph.D.

Office: 030 Hardin Hall

Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 10:00am -12:00pm; or by app't

--Unless an in-person meeting is requested in advance, meetings will take place over Zoom.

--Email your professor before or during office hours to set up and/or launch meeting.

E-mail: jjeffri@clemson.edu

Department Phone: 864-656-3153

Course Description:

Introduction to environmental history, in the United States and globally, with emphasis on changing attitudes toward the environment and the interaction between science and public policy.

Learning Outcomes:

Students will:

- Describe and explain the role and place of nature in U.S. history.
- Identify and explain significant interactions between technology and society in U.S. history.
- Articulate arguments effectively in writing

Course Overview:



“...environmental history is about the role and place of nature in human life.”

--Donald Worster

This course provides students with an introduction to the environmental history of the United States in a global context. The course explores the human interaction with the natural world over time, which highlights significant roles played by ecological, social-economic, and ideological factors. Thus, students will examine how natural environments have conditioned important economic and technological developments in U.S. history, which have, in turn, altered these environments in ways that have profoundly impacted subsequent historical developments. Beyond the economic and technological factors, the course will also examine significant political, cultural, and intellectual developments that have led to different ways of understanding (and impacting) the environment.

Value Statement:

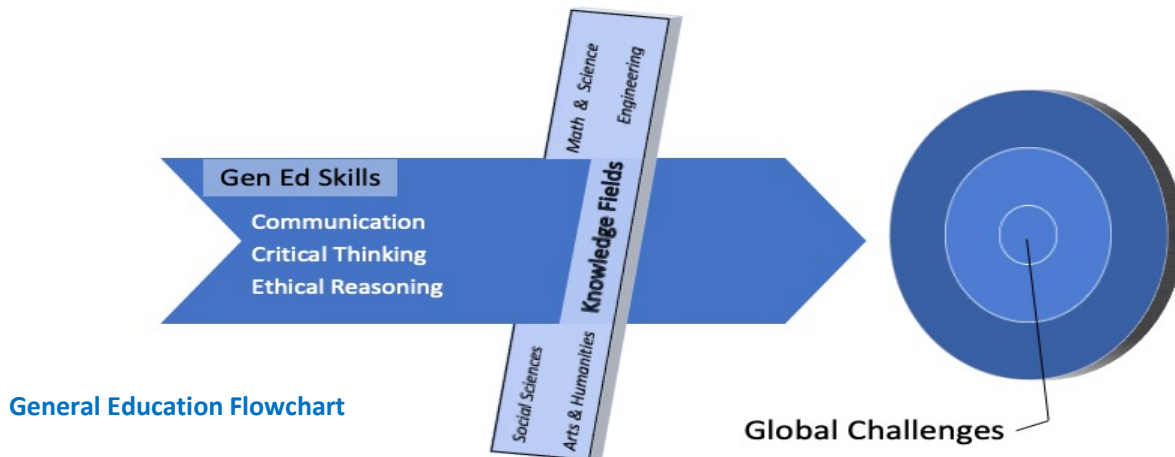
“The fundamentals of a college education... are that which leads to the capacity for argumentation, and, therefore, to responsible judgments. *Baccalaureate education is argument about interpretations.*”

--Jonathan Z. Smith

“...if we’ve educated our students effectively, they move into the world as questioning, informed, thoughtful agents of positive change.”

--Paul Hanstedt

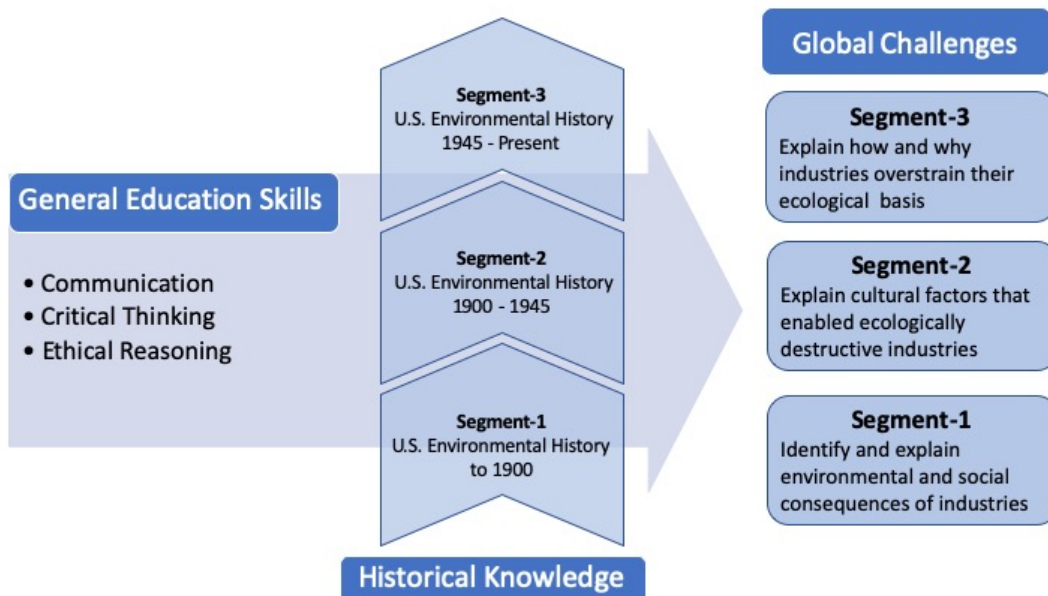
In support of the undergraduate teaching mission of the Department of History & Geography at Clemson University, this course is designed to advance in students the critical skills necessary for developing and interpreting **historical knowledge**. The aim of historical inquiry at the college level, however, is not limited to disclosing *what happened* in the human past. Rather, it seeks explanations for *why these things happened* and, moreover, *why it matters*. This requires studying the influence of relevant structures or forces (political ideologies, economic structures, social organization, natural environments, and/or contingencies) on key events that express/define change over broad sweeps of time in particular human contexts. In such explanations of causality, historians shed light on issues and predicaments of past worlds that resonate with today’s. Indeed, we are drawn to histories that speak to our circumstance in this way. In other words, what makes a historical inquiry interesting is what guided it in the first place: its relevance to us. History matters when it enables us to imagine what it was like to be there and through this process of juxtaposition illuminates congruities and incongruities between past worlds and our own from which we derive unique insights. Whether we realize it or not, our understanding of our world is largely shaped by the histories we absorb.



These questions of historical causality and relevance, however, defy cut and dried answers, which opens the door for mischief—that is, for misleading assertions that distort our current circumstances. For this reason, it is paramount that students develop, in Jonathan Z. Smith words, “the capacity for argumentation, and, therefore, to responsible judgments.” Thus, education in history entails the development of **general education proficiencies** (what historians call, “historical skills”) in *communication*, *critical thinking*, and *ethical reasoning* to deliver persuasive arguments about past—arguments that speak to the intrinsic challenges of our time, if not the human condition and, in so doing, contributes to students’ maturation, in Paul Hanstedt’s words, “as questioning, informed, **thoughtful agents of positive change**.”



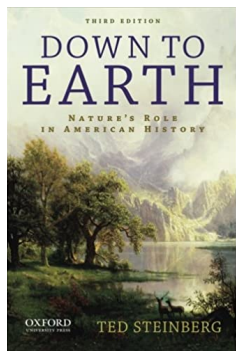
During their successful advancement in this course, students will develop their knowledge about the role of nature in U.S. history. This will require students to break down this relationship (between people and their environment over time) into three mutually-interacting/impacting parts: ecology, social-economic systems, and ideas. The guiding purpose of the course is to advance students' critical perspectives on global challenges bearing upon the intersecting issues of *environmental sustainability* and *social equity*. This will be achieved by developing historical/gen ed. skills of *communication*, *critical thinking* and *ethical reasoning* to explain the economic, cultural, and political conditions that enable the unfettered development of ever-larger industrial business operations on a global stage. As depicted in this flowchart below, this will be developed in three chronologically arranged segments of the course:



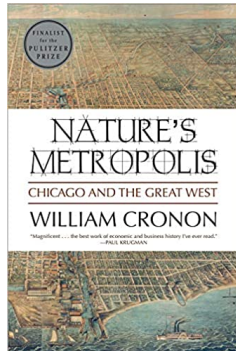
Required Materials: (available at University Bookstore)

At the minimum, students are required to purchase two textbooks (Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis*; Mar, *Environmentalism*), two Blue Books, and iClicker (option: remote or subscription).

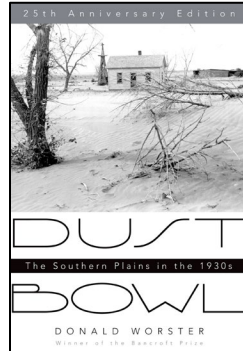
--Course Books:



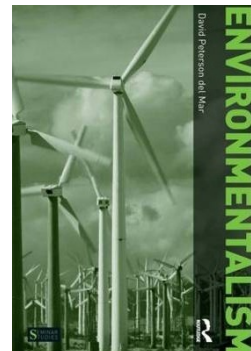
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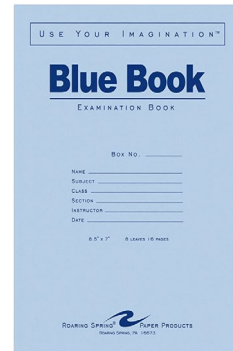
Required Purchase



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Required Purchase



Required Purchase x2

- Steinberg, Ted. *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History*. 3rd ed., Free E-copy. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012: <https://libraries.clemson.edu/> [Optional print versions: 3rd or 4th edition]
- Cronon, William. *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*. New York: Norton, 1992.
- Worster, Donald. *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*. 2nd ed., Free E-copy. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004: <https://libraries.clemson.edu/> [Optional print versions: 1st or 2nd edition]
- Mar, David Peterson del. *Environmentalism*. 2nd ed. New York: Routledge, 2011.
- Two large Blue Books (must be: 8.5" x 11"; 8-leaves/6-pages)
 - In anticipation of the exams, each student will need to purchase two blank booklets, known as Blue Books (8.5" x 11"), and turn the blank copies in early in the term—consult schedule for final deadline. A late-penalty of 0.5% x weekdays (for *each* missing blue book) will be applied to the corresponding exam. *Write your name (& "HIST-1240")* prominently on the covers before turning them in to the instructor before or after any class. Only Blue Books with names on the covers will count. Turn them in as soon as possible.

Assignments:

This course requires students to attend class, take careful notes, complete in-class quizzes, read portions of four books and a few short articles, and write two papers and two essay exams. This breaks down into three assignment categories:

1. **ATTENDANCE/QUIZZES (15% of final grade):** *beginning this week*, students are required to complete assigned reading, and prepare to discuss it *prior* to the given class period.

Quizzes: *During each regular class period*, while in attendance, students will use their iClicker devices to take a short quiz on Canvas. Each quiz is worth 10 points, typically 5.5 points for attendance and 4.5 points distributed across 3 multiple-choice questions on that day's assigned reading. Please note that your three lowest class scores will be automatically removed from your grade calculation. Unless an exception is granted in advance by the professor, **students must be in attendance when taking a quiz.** Attempting to earn points while not in attendance (i.e., cheating) will result in a severe penalty (see sections below: Classroom Rule of Conduct; Academic Integrity).

Assigned Seats: The seat that you choose to occupy on the 2nd Wednesday of the semester will be your assigned seat for the rest of the term. If you miss this class period, you will need to talk to the professor right before the next class you attend to ascertain seat opening options.

Attendance policy: Keep in mind that your three lowest scores will be dropped from the tabulation. Generally speaking, there will be no opportunities to recover participation points for missed classes. However, *if you have a documented legitimate excuse, you may request to take a make-up quiz during the professor's office hours.* You must use the Student Notification of Absences form in Canvas (click the "help" menu at the bottom-left). This applies to COVID-19 situations [please do not come to class if you are feeling sick or if you have come into close contact].

2. **TWO SHORT PAPERS [35% of final grade (17.5% per paper)]:** Students will write two short papers on environmental history—at least 5 pages, ~1200 words; typed, double-spaced. See Canvas Schedule for the exact deadlines. Late papers will be penalized 10% (one grade) for each calendar-day late. Assignment/submission details will be provided in a forthcoming assignment-sheet that will be posted on Canvas.
3. **TWO EXAMS [50% of final grade (midterm-15%; final-35%)]:** There will be two essay exams written on Blue Books.

Grading:

Students must complete (and score at least 40% on) the two assigned papers and the three exams in order to pass the course. This course adheres to the university grading guidelines:

A = 90 to 100%; B = 80 to <90%; C = 70 to <80%; D = 60 to <70%; F = 0 to <60%

Assignments in this course are divided into the following general categories, which carry the indicated weight in your final grade calculations:

<i>Attendance/Quizzes</i>	15 points
<i>Two Papers</i>	35 points
<i>Two Exams</i>	50 points
<i>Total points</i>	100 points

You are treated as a professional in the course. Accordingly, the grading is strict, but fair. Reading the directions and grading criteria provided for each assignment is the key to understanding how you will be graded. Following those directions is the key to doing well.

University Policies and Student Support:

See Canvas Course Syllabus—Part 2

Schedule of Classes:

See Canvas Course Schedule

[END OF SYLLABUS]