

**ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES 250: INTERPRETING THE AMERICAN
ENVIRONMENT
Spring 2008**

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“We stand now where two roads diverge. But unlike the roads in Robert Frost’s familiar poem, they are not equally fair. The road we have been traveling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road, the one less traveled by, offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that assures the preservation of the earth” - Rachel Carson, Biologist & Writer

If you’re not an activist, you’re not paying your rent for living on this planet...you’re either one of two categories. You’re an activist or a parasite. Which one are you?” – Julia “Judy” Bonds, Goldman Environmental Prize Winner (2003), and Environmental Activist

Course Description

This course will examine environmental issues from an interdisciplinary, cultural studies perspective. Using historical, literary, philosophical, film and other critical texts, we will survey responses to and interpretations of the American landscape. This course explores such topics as wilderness ideologies, urban development, expansion, deep ecology, environmental justice, energy, consumption and foodways among others. While our primary focus is on the American environment, we will, of course, make links to the larger, global environment. Throughout our examination of pertinent environmental issues we will consistently explore how human differences based on gender, race, class and nation are connected to the non-human world.

Course Texts

Books

Goodell, Jeff. Big Coal: The Dirty Secret Behind America’s Energy Future. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007.

Kline, Benjamin. First Along the River: A Brief History of the U.S. Environmental Movement. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

Krakauer, John. Into the Wild. New York: Anchor Books, 1996.

Merchant, Carolyn. Reinventing Eden: The Fate of Nature in Western Culture. New York: Routledge, 2004.

Shiva, Vandana. Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply. Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000.

Films

Grizzly Man. 2005. Werner Herzog.

Black Diamonds: Mountaintop Removal and the Fight for Coalfield Justice. 2006. Catherine Pancake.

When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts. 2006. Spike Lee.

Articles (on e-reserve)

"A Hideous & Desolate Landscape" William Bradford.

"Potential of the New English Canaan" Thomas Morton.

"Thomas Jefferson Extols the Agrarian Ideal."

"Frederick Jackson Explains the History of the Frontier, 1893,"

"Where I lived and What For" Henry David Thoreau

"Nature," Ralph Waldo Emerson

"Theodore Roosevelt Publicizes Conservation"

"George Knapp Opposes Conservation"

"Gifford Pinchot Recalls the Origins of the Conservation Movement"

"John Muir Advocates Wilderness Preservation"

"Chief Luther Standing Bear Give an Indian View of Wilderness"

"A Woman Reformer Advocates Civic Cleanliness"

"Jane Adams Works to Control Garbage"

"A Black Migrant Experiences the Urban Environment"

"Industrial Pollution & Reform"

"Wasteland: A Journey Through the American Cloaca" Fredrick Kaufman

"The Obligation to Endure" Rachel Carson

"Land-Use Ethics and Economic Self-Interest" Aldo Leopold

"Polemic: Industrial Tourism & The National Parks" Edward Abbey

"The Population Bomb" Paul Erlich

"Putting the Earth First" Dave Foreman

"The Eco-Fringe," Joni Seager

"Earth First! in Northern California: An Interview with Judi Bari" Douglas Bevington

"The Limits of Environmentalism Without Class: Lessons from the Ancient Forest Struggle in the Pacific Northwest" John Bellamy Foster

"The Origins of the Environmental Justice Movement," Eileen Maura McGurty

"Environmental Justice From the Grassroots: Reflections on History, Gender, and Expertise" Giovanna DiChiro

"Producing 'Roundup Ready' Communities? Human Genome Research and Environmental Justice Policy" Giovanna DiChiro

"Toxic Bodies? ACT UP's Disruption of the Heteronormative Landscape of Nation"

Beth Berila

"The Trouble We're In," Patrick Hoosay

“Dubai’s the Limit,” Nick Tosches

Course Requirements

1. *Exams* – This course has 2 exams: a Mid-Term Exam covering all class material from the beginning to mid-point of the term, and a Final Exam covering all material from the mid-point of the semester until the end of the term. The Mid-Term will be administered in class on March 13th. The Final Exam will be scheduled during finals week. Each exam is worth 100 points. Make-up exams will only be administered under extraordinary circumstances. They will differ from the exam given in class in terms of questions and degree of difficulty.
2. *Quizzes* – To ensure good reading habits, regular attendance, and to facilitate our class discussions, you can expect 10, unannounced quizzes (each worth 10 points) based on assigned readings. These quizzes will be given at the beginning of each class. You cannot make up quizzes if you are absent, or late for class. However, I will give an extra quiz during the term and drop your lowest quiz grade at the end of the course. Quizzes will total 100 point for the term.
3. *Ecological Footprint Essay* – On February 19th you will submit a 4-6 page essay based on personal resource consumption data collected for one week. Over the course of a week, note personal trends in your consumption of electricity, water, paper, plastic, oil, gas and food. After you have gathered the information, write an essay discussing the size of your ecological footprint. What resources do you tend to consume the most? What areas could you be more cognizant of, or make personal changes in? What surprised you most about the data you collected? This essay is worth 100 points. *Late work is strongly discouraged.* If you submit your assignment late, you can expect a 5 point deduction for each additional class day the essay is overdue.
4. *Space & Place Essay* – During final exam week, you will submit an 8-10 page researched essay on a specific place that is important to you. Specific choices (i.e. a neighborhood in NYC as opposed to NYC in general) are more likely to produce effective, informative essays. This essay should draw on personal observation, materials read in class, and research material gathered outside of the class. This essay is worth 100 points. *Late work is strongly discouraged.* You will receive a 5 point deduction for each additional day the essay is overdue.

Grading Scale

500-485: A+	349-335: D+
484-470: A	334-320: D
469-450: A-	319-300: D-
	299 & below: F
449-435: B+	
434-420: B	
419-400: B-	

399-385: C+
384-370: C 369-350: C-

Class Schedule

WEEK 1

Jan 22 – Introduction to the Course

Jan 24 – FATR Ch 1 & 2; “A Hideous & Desolate Landscape,” Bradford (reserve), “Potential of the New English Canaan,” Morton (reserve); “Thomas Jefferson Extols the Agrarian Ideal,” (reserve)

WEEK 2

Jan 29 – FATR Ch 3 & 4; “Frederick Jackson Explains the History of the Frontier, 1893.” (reserve); “Where I lived and What For,” Thoreau (reserve); “Nature,” Emerson (reserve)

Jan 31 – Reinventing Eden Part I

WEEK 3

Feb 5 – Reinventing Eden Part II

Feb 7 – Reinventing Eden Part III

WEEK 4

Feb 12- FATR Ch 5; “Theodore Roosevelt Publicizes Conservation” (reserve); “George Knapp Opposes Conservation” (reserve); “Gifford Pinchot Recalls the Origins of the Conservation Movement” (reserve); “John Muir Advocates Wilderness Preservation, (reserve); “Chief Luther Standing Bear Give an Indian View of Wilderness” (reserve)

Feb 14 – “A Woman Reformer Advocates Civic Cleanliness” (reserve); “Jane Adams Works to Control Garbage” (reserve); “A Black Migrant Experiences the Urban Environment” (reserve); “Industrial Pollution & Reform” (reserve); “Wasteland: A Journey Through the American Cloaca” (reserve)

WEEK 5

Feb 19- ***Ecological Footprint Essay Due; View Grizzly Man

Feb 21- View & Discuss Grizzly Man

WEEK 6

Feb 26- FATR Ch 6; “The Obligation to Endure,” Carson (reserve); “Land-Use Ethics and Economic Self-Interest,” Leopold (reserve); “Polemic: Industrial Tourism & The National Parks (reserve);

Feb 28- FATR Ch 7; “The Population Bomb,” Ehrlich (reserve); “Putting the Earth First,” Foreman (reserve)

WEEK 7

March 4- FATR Ch 8; “The Eco-Fringe,” Seager (reserve); “Earth First! in Northern California: An Interview with Judi Bari,” Bevington (reserve); “The Limits of Environmentalism Without Class: Lessons from the Ancient Forest Struggle in the Pacific Northwest,” Foster (reserve).

March 6- Into the Wild Ch 1-7

WEEK 8

March 11- Into The Wild Ch 8-17

March 13- Mid-Term Exam

WEEK 9 Spring Break!

WEEK 10 Spring Break!

WEEK 11

April 1 – FATR, Ch 9 & 10; “The Origins of the Environmental Justice Movement,” McGurty; “Environmental Justice From the Grassroots: Reflections on History, Gender, and Expertise,” DiChiro (reserve)

April 3- “Producing ‘Roundup Ready’ Communities? Human Genome Research and Environmental Justice Policy” DiChiro (reserve); “Toxic Bodies? ACT UP’s Disruption of the Heteronormative Landscape of Nation” Berila (reserve)

WEEK 12

April 8- View When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts

April 10- View When The Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts

WEEK 13

April 15- Big Coal: The Dirty Secret Behind America’s Energy Future Parts I & II

April 17- - Big Coal: The Dirty Secret Behind America’s Energy Future Part III

WEEK 14

April 22- View Black Diamonds: Mountaintop Removal & The Fight for Coalfield Justice

April 24- View Black Diamonds: Mountaintop Removal & The Fight for Coalfield Justice

WEEK 15

April 29- FATR Ch 11; “The Trouble We’re In,” Hoosay (reserve)

May 1- “Dubai’s the Limit,” Tosches (reserve)

WEEK 16

May 6- Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply Ch 1-4

May 8- Stolen Harvest: The Hijacking of the Global Food Supply Ch 5-7

WEEK 17

Final Exam (Time & Date, TBA)

Environmental Space & Place Essay Due