



## **Environmental and Resource Studies Program**

### **ERST-CAST-HIST 467H - Environmental History**

Fall session, 2007/2008

**Professor:** Stephen Bocking  
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**Office hours:** Monday 1 – 3 p.m.  
Thursday 11 – 1 p.m.  
and by appointment, or just drop in

**Secretary:** Deb Mills, ESB B202, 748-1011 x7199

**Course time & location:** Tuesday 12:00 – 1:50 p.m. CC A1

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#### **Description of the course**

Humans have been thinking about, and using, the environment for a long time. This course is about the history of our relationship with the environment. This encompasses such topics as the development of our scientific understanding of the natural environment, the history of concerns about human impacts on the environment, and efforts to address these concerns through environmental policies, or through other means. We will see, among other things, how concern about pollution, or about deforestation (for example) is not a recent phenomenon. An underlying theme is that our relationship with the environment is about both how we have changed it over time, and how it, in turn, has influenced us: our economy, our society, and our ideas about our place in the world.

One objective of this course is to provide opportunities to actually do history: to read original materials, such as first-hand accounts of environmental problems, and to practice interpreting these materials in the light of information provided by other historians. We'll also go outside, to look at, and think about, changes in the environment, and how we understand these changes.

Environmental history is full of fascinating stories. It is also an essential part of understanding our world today. By studying this history, we will be able to better understand current environmental issues and controversies. Science, politics, and the environment itself are all historical entities: their current shapes and forms can't be understood without understanding where they came from.

This course will meet every week for two hours. As this is a senior level course, I won't run it as a formal lecture. There will be much opportunity for you to participate in each class. I also

encourage you to meet individually with me whenever you would like. I am often in my office, and whenever I am, please drop in. I welcome your questions or problems or conversation.

### **Course Assignments**

There are five short class papers, two class assignments, a book review essay, and a final exam. The short class papers are to be based on the readings for one class, and should be approximately 500 words. They are due at the beginning of the relevant class, and at least two must be done before reading week. The class assignments are opportunities to examine in more detail two of the specific topics discussed in the course, using both primary and secondary materials. The book review essay is an opportunity for a detailed discussion of a specific book of environmental history. More information about this essay, including a list of books, will be available early in the term. The final exam will include all material from the course, including the readings.

### **Grading Scheme**

Class papers	<b>(due during term, at least two before reading week)</b>	5 x 5%	25%
Assignments	<b>(due during term)</b>	2 x 12%	24%
Book review essay	<b>(due November 6 &amp; December 4)</b>		16%
Final exam	<b>(December exam period)</b>		35%

### **Quality of Written Work**

The ability to write clear, well organized, grammatical and properly documented academic essays is essential. I encourage students to take advantage of the opportunities for assistance that are provided by the Academic Skills Centre. It would also be an excellent idea to consult the Academic Skills Centre's publications that discuss essay preparation.

I also encourage you to consult with me on your writing. I am extremely willing to review preliminary drafts and works-in-progress, in order to help you to express your ideas and research results clearly. Consultation with me on your written work, and a serious effort to use the advice that I can give you, will almost certainly result in a higher mark. This is the purpose of handing in your first draft of the book review essay on November 6.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offense and carries penalties varying from failure in an assignment to suspension from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University's Academic Dishonesty Policy which is printed in the University Calendar.

### **Access to Instruction**

It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and/or health consideration and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in this course, the student should contact the Disability Services Office (BL Suite 109,

748-1281, [disabilityservices@trentu.ca](mailto:disabilityservices@trentu.ca)) as soon as possible. Complete text can be found under Access to Instruction in the Academic Calendar.

### **Required texts**

Required readings are available in a coursepack, and in a text: David Freeland Duke, ed., Canadian Environmental History (2006). Both texts are available in the Trent Bookstore. A few readings will also be available online. I will expect students to have done the readings for each class, as they will be the basis for much of the discussion, as well as the six short class papers and the two class assignments. Knowledge of these readings will also be essential in writing the final exam.

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## **Course Schedule**

### **Section I: Introduction to the course, and to environmental history**

**September 11:** Syllabus, grading, class mechanics, questions

**September 18:** Doing and using environmental history

#### **Readings**

Donald Worster, "Doing Environmental History," in: Canadian Environmental History, pp. 9-24.

William Cronon, "The Uses of Environmental History," in: Canadian Environmental History, pp. 25-41.

Stephen Bocking, "Environmentalism" in: P. Bowler, ed., The Cambridge History of Science, (Cambridge University Press, in press).

Douglas Weiner, "A Death-Defying Attempt to Articulate a Coherent Definition of Environmental History," in: Canadian Environmental History, pp. 71-85.

### **Section II: Environmental attitudes and issues in the 19th and early 20th centuries.**

**September 25:** The environment and the formation of Canada.

#### **Readings**

Ramsay Cook, "Making a Garden Out of Wilderness," in: Canadian Environmental History, pp. 155-172.

Suzanne Zeller, Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation, (University of Toronto Press, 1987), pp. 3-9, 269-274.

Stephen Bocking, "The Background to Biodiversity: A Brief History of Canadians and Their Living Environment," in S. Bocking, ed., Biodiversity in Canada: Ecology, Ideas, and Actions, (Broadview Press, 2000).

Colin Coates, "Like 'The Thames towards Putney': The Appropriation of Landscape in Lower Canada," in: Canadian Environmental History, pp. 223-237.

**October 2: Resource exploitation and degradation, and the origins of natural resources conservation and management in Canada.**

**Readings**

- Neil S. Forkey, "The Road from Bobcaygeon: Lumber and Colonization, 1850s-1870s," in: Shaping the Upper Canadian Frontier: Environment, Society, and Culture in the Trent Valley, (University of Calgary Press, 2003), pp. 75-96.
- Janet Foster, "Parks, Resources, and the Role of Wildlife" in: Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed., (University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 16-54.
- John Sandlos, "Where the Scientists Roam: Ecology, Management and Bison in Northern Canada," in: Canadian Environmental History, pp. 333-359.
- R. Peter Gillis, "Rivers of Sawdust: The Battle over Industrial Pollution in Canada, 1865-1903," in: Canadian Environmental History, pp. 265-283.

**Section III: Field study in environmental history**

**October 9: Environmental history in the field: Trent Nature Reserves**

**Readings**

- Oliver Rackham, "Rural Detection," in: The Illustrated History of the Countryside, (Phoenix Illustrated, 1997), pp. 8-15.
- Sally Hermansen & Graeme Wynn, "Reflections on the Nature of an Urban Bog," Urban History Review, 34(1), 2005: 9-27 [available online].
- Stephen Bocking, "Nature's Stories? Pursuing Science in Environmental History," Reader in Canadian Environmental History (forthcoming) [available online].

**October 16: Environmental history: studying the records**

**Readings**

- Michael Edmonds, "The Pleasures and Pitfalls of Written Records" in: D. Egan & E. A. Howell, eds., The Historical Ecology Handbook: A Restorationist's Guide to Reference Ecosystems, (Island Press, 2001), pp. 73-99.

<< Reading Week >>

**Section IV: Coming to terms with diverse environments**

**October 30: The urban and industrial environment**

**Readings**

- Stephen Bocking, "The Nature of Cities: Perspectives in Canadian Urban Environmental History," Urban History Review, 2005, 34(1): 3-8 [available online].
- Joel Tarr, "The Search for the Ultimate Sink: Urban Air, Land, and Water Pollution in Historical Perspective," in: The Search for the Ultimate Sink: Urban Pollution in Historical Perspective, (University of Akron Press, 1996), pp. 7-35.
- Joel Tarr, "The Horse--Polluter of the City," in: The Search for the Ultimate Sink: Urban Pollution in Historical Perspective, (University of Akron Press, 1996), pp. 323-333.
- Arn Keeling, "Sink or Swim: Water Pollution and Environmental Politics in Vancouver, 1889-1975," BC Studies, No. 142/143, Summer/Autumn 2004, 69-101.
- Ken Cruikshank & Nancy B. Bouchier, "Blighted Areas and Obnoxious Industries: Constructing Environmental Inequality on an Industrial Waterfront, Hamilton, Ontario, 1890-1960," in: Canadian Environmental History, pp. 285-306.

**November 6: The history of ecology: the emergence of new ways of understanding nature and ecosystems**

**Readings**

Stephen Bocking, "Understanding the early history of ecology," (unpublished paper, 1997), with excerpts from Charles Darwin, The Origin of Species, (1859) and Stephen Forbes, "The Lake as a Microcosm" (1887).

Stephen Bocking, "Visions of Nature and Society: A History of the Ecosystem Concept," Alternatives, 1994, 20(3): 12-18.

**November 13:** no class

**Section V: The background of contemporary environmental politics**

**November 20: Evolving science, policy, and values: predators and nature**

**Readings**

Alan MacEachern, "Rationality and Rationalization in Canadian National Parks Predator Policy," in Consuming Canada: Readings in Environmental History, ed. Chad Gaffield & Pam Gaffield, (Copp Clark, 1995), pp. 197-212.

Thomas Dunlap, "The Public and Ecology, 1945-1968," in: Saving America's Wildlife: Ecology and the American Mind, 1850-1990, (Princeton University Press, 1988), pp. 98-110.

Alan MacEachern, "Changing Ecologies: Preservation in Four National Parks, 1935-1965," in: Canadian Environmental History, pp. 361-386.

**November 27: The origins of environmental concern: how does the environment become a political issue?**

**Readings**

Donald Worster, "Healing the Planet," in Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). pp. 342-387.

Samuel Hays, "Three Decades of Environmental Politics: The Historical Context," in: Explorations in Environmental History, (University of Pittsburgh, 1998), pp. 334-378.

H. V. Nelles, "How Did Calgary Get Its River Parks?" Urban History Review, 34(1), 2005: 28-45 [available online].

Stephen Bocking, Ecologists and Environmental Politics: A History of Contemporary Ecology, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 1-10, 179-205.

Jennifer Read, "'Let Us Heed the Voice of Youth': Laundry Detergents, Phosphates, and the Emergence of the Environmental Movement in Ontario," in: Canadian Environmental History, pp. 313-332.

**December 4: Gender and environmental history**

**Readings**

Carolyn Merchant, "The Mechanization of Nature: Managing Farms and Forests," and "Nature, Mother and Industry," in: Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England, (University of North Carolina Press, 1989), pp. 198-260.

Carolyn Merchant, "Eve: Nature and Narrative," in: Canadian Environmental History, pp. 43-69.

Robert Gottlieb, "Gender and Place: Women and Environmentalism," in: Forcing the Spring: The Transformation of the American Environmental Movement, (Island Press, 1993), pp. 207-234.

**Final exam: during exam period**