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

The course assignments are designed to give you practice in thinking about, and doing, environmental history. They are generally closely tied to the specific topics covered each week.
- Before each week’s class you need to submit to the MyLearningSystem assignment dropbox a short paper about the readings for that week, identifying what you consider to be at least three of their most significant points. By the end of the term you should have submitted 9 of these. They will be assigned either a B (75%) or an A (90%) mark, or returned with a suggestion for closer attention to one or more of the readings.
- The two in-depth assignments are opportunities to examine in more detail two of the specific topics discussed in the course, using both primary and secondary materials.
- The local environmental history project is an opportunity to combine study of several kinds of historical evidence, both text and field-based.
- The final exam will include all material from the course, including the readings.

Grading Scheme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Weighting</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short papers (due during term)</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth assignments (due October 23 &amp; December 11)</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local environmental history project (due November 24)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam (December exam period)</td>
<td>32%</td>
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</tbody>
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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 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.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from a 0 grade on an assignment to expulsion from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University’s Academic Integrity Policy. You have a responsibility to educate yourself – unfamiliarity with the policy is not an excuse. You are strongly encouraged to visit Trent’s Academic Integrity website to learn more: www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity.
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) 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. Another book, also available in the bookstore, Method & Meaning in Canadian Environmental History (2008), is recommended. 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 short papers and the in-depth assignments. Knowledge of these readings will also be essential in writing the final exam.

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Course Schedule

September 15: Syllabus, grading, class mechanics, questions – introducing environmental history

September 22: Doing and using environmental history

Readings

September 29: The environment and the formation of Canada.

Readings
October 6:    Environmental history in the field: Trent Nature Reserves

Readings
Stephen Bocking, “Nature’s Stories? Pursuing Science in Environmental History,” Reader in Canadian Environmental History (forthcoming) [available online].

October 13:    Resource exploitation and degradation, and the origins of natural resources conservation and management in Canada.

Readings

October 20:    Environmental history: studying the records

Readings

<< Reading Week >>

November 3:    no class

November 10:    The urban and industrial environment

Readings
November 17: The history of ecology: the emergence of new ways of understanding nature and ecosystems

Readings

November 24: Evolving science, policy, and values: predators and nature

Readings

December 1: The origins of environmental concern: how does the environment become a political issue?

Readings

December 8: Gender and environmental history

Readings

Final exam: during exam period