Environment and Resource Science/Studies Program

ERST-CAST-HIST 4670H - Environmental History

Fall session, 2011

Professor:       Stephen Bocking
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Office hours:    Monday 11 – 1 p.m.
                 Wednesday 12 – 2 p.m.
                 and by appointment, or just drop in

Teaching assistant:  Heather Duncan, Heatherduncan@trentu.ca

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

Course time & location: Monday 9:00 – 10:50 a.m. Location: GCS 108

Description of the course

Humans have been thinking about, and using, the environment for a long time. This course is about the history of this relationship with the environment. This encompasses such topics as the development of our scientific understanding of the environment, the history of concerns about human impacts on the environment, and efforts to address these concerns through environmental policies. We will see, among other things, how concerns about pollution and deforestation (for example) are 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. Environmental history has other practical uses: for example, it can be essential in designing strategies for restoring damaged landscapes to something closer to their original form. More generally, the environment itself is an historical entity: its current shape and form can't be understood without understanding what it was like in the past.
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.

This course makes substantial use of myLearningSystem to distribute course information (including this syllabus, information about assignments, and various research materials) and to submit written work.

Course Assignments

The course assignments are designed to give you practice in thinking about, and doing, environmental history. More information about each will be provided early in the term.

- By midnight of the day of each 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, as well as a statement of what you consider an essential “take-home” idea from the class. By the end of the term you should have submitted 8 of these. Each will be assigned either a C (65%), B (75%), or A (90%) mark, or returned with suggestions on how it might be improved.
- The book review is an opportunity to read a recent environmental history book, and write a review.
- The in-depth assignment is an opportunity to examine in more detail one 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

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Short papers (due during term; at least 3 before reading week)</td>
<td>8 x 3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Book review (due October 21)</td>
<td>13%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local environmental history project (due November 21)</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-depth assignment (due December 9)</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Final exam (December exam period)</td>
<td>32%</td>
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Late submission of work

Short papers must be handed in by midnight of the day of the class; no extensions are possible. Late submission of the book review, local environmental history project, or in-depth assignment will be penalized with 3% deducted each day after the deadline. A revised deadline for written material may be negotiated with the course instructor until 3 days before the deadline.

Quality of Written Work

The ability to write clear, well organized, grammatical and properly documented academic papers 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](http://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 (Blackburn Hall, Suite 132, 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* (Canadian Scholars’ Press, 2006). Both texts are available in the Trent Bookstore. Some readings are also 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 assignment. Knowledge of these readings will also be essential in writing the final exam.

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**Course Schedule**

**September 12:** Syllabus, grading, class mechanics, questions – introducing environmental history

**September 19:** Doing and using environmental history

**Readings**


**September 26:** The environment and the formation of Canada

**Readings**


**October 3:** Environmental history in the field: Trent Nature Reserves [field trip]

Readings

**October 10:** Thanksgiving [no class]

**October 17:** Environmental history: studying the records [MaDGIC Unit / Archives visit]

Readings

<< Reading Week >>

**October 31:** Resource exploitation and degradation, and the origins of natural resources conservation and management in Canada

Readings

**November 7:** The urban and industrial environment

Readings


November 14: Science & the environment: new ways of understanding nature and ecosystems

Readings


November 21: Evolving science, policy, and values: predators and nature

Readings


November 28: The origins of environmental concern: how does the environment become a political issue?

Readings


December 5: Gender and environmental history

Readings


Final exam: during exam period