



Course Syllabus: American Environmental History
College of Humanities and Social Sciences
HIST 3853/5853
Fall 2025

Contact Information

Instructor: Dr. Whitney Snow

Office: OD 223

Office hours: Tuesdays (8:00-10:00 A.M.); Wednesdays (11:00 A.M.-noon);
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Course Description

This course will serve as an introduction to American Environmental History. Exploring the mutual influences of man and nature, it will cover issues ranging from deforestation and pollution to conservation and preservation. Some of the key foci are invasive species, wilderness, national parks, extinction, environmental racism, and eco-tourism.

Required Textbooks

- Dugatkin, Lee Alan. *Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose: Natural History in Early America*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Jacoby, Karl. *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2014.
- Merchant, Carolyn, ed. *Major Problems in American Environmental History*. Boston, MA: Wadsworth, 2012.
- Newman, Richard S. *Love Canal: A Toxic History from Colonial Times to the Present*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2020.
- Spence, Mark David. *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Steinberg, Ted. *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019.

Student Handbook

Refer to: [Student Handbook](#)

Academic Misconduct Policy & Procedures

Academic Dishonesty: Cheating, collusion, plagiarism, and the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), including Grammarly. While other professors may condone or even encourage the use of AI, it is NOT permitted in this class. Additional guidelines on procedures in these matters may be found in the Office of Student Conduct. [Office of Student Conduct](#)

Grading

Undergraduate students will write two book reviews and two movie assignments; lead class discussions one week of the semester; and complete two exams. Graduate students will write three book reviews and two movie assignments; lead class discussions one week of the semester; write a primary source-based term paper; and complete two exams.

Table 1: Grade Breakdown for Undergraduate Students

Assignments	Points
Book Reviews (2)	30%
Discussion Leadership	15%
Movie Assignments (2)	20%
Exams (2)	35%
Total Points	100%

Table 2: Grade Breakdown for Graduate Students

Assignments	Points
Book Reviews (3)	20%
Discussion Leadership	10%
Movie Assignments (2)	15%
Term Paper	30%
Exams (2)	25%
Total Points	100%

Exams

There will be two exams, a midterm and a final. Each exam will consist of six identification terms and one essay. Here are the instructions:

1. Log onto D2L.
2. Click on the 9-block square at the top of the page and find our class. Click on it.
3. Once you are on our classroom dashboard, click on "Assessments" near the top of the page.
4. Under the drop-down list, click on "Tests." You should see both exams.
5. Click on the arrow next to either "Midterm" or "Final" and upload your answers in either a word doc or PDF. Each identification term is worth 10 points while the essay is worth 40.
6. You must take each exam on the specified dates on the syllabus schedule. Each window opens at 6:30 A.M. and closes at 11:30 P.M.

Book Reviews

Undergraduate students will write a book review on Dugatkin's *Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose* and Jacoby's *Crimes Against Nature*. Graduate students will write a book review on Dugatkin's *Mr. Jefferson and the Giant Moose*, Jacoby's *Crimes Against Nature*, and Spence's *Dispossessing the Wilderness*. Here are the instructions:

1. Each book review must be typed, in 12-point font, Times New Roman, and double-spaced.
2. The margins should be 1 inch on the top and bottom and 1.25 inches on the left and right.
3. To submit each book review, once on our D2L classroom dashboard, click on "Assessments" and then "Assignments." You should see the book review dropboxes.
4. You must submit your book reviews by 11:30 P.M. on the due dates.

Movie Assignments

Each student is expected to write two 5-6-page film critiques. Please select from the list of pre-approved movies posted on D2L. Here are the instructions to submit your film critiques:

1. Once you are on our classroom dashboard, click on "Assessments" near the top of the page.
2. Under the drop-down list, click on "Assignments." You should see two dropboxes called Film Critique 1 and Film Critique 2.
3. On or by the due dates, which are shown on the syllabus schedule, click on the arrow next to the dropbox in question and upload your movie review in either a word doc or PDF.
4. Note, your film critiques must be at least 5 pages and no more than 6 pages. Each critique must be in 12-point font, Times New Roman and double-spaced. The margins should be 1 inch on the top and bottom and 1.25 inches on the left and right.

Term Paper

Graduate students are expected to write a 20-25-page term paper. Students are permitted to select their topic, per professor approval. A short list of expectations can be found below while more in-depth instructions can be found under "Content" on our D2L classroom dashboard.

1. You are expected to submit an abstract, rough draft, and final draft. Refer to the syllabus schedule for due dates.
2. Your term paper should be typed, double-spaced in 12-point font Times New Roman.
3. Your term paper should be based on both primary and secondary sources.
4. Your term paper must include a thesis (argument).
5. Use at least 15 books (preferably those published by university presses).
6. Use at least 4 book chapters or peer-reviewed journal articles.
7. Use the latest version of Chicago Manual of Style which is currently 18th edition.
8. Include a bibliography at the end of your paper. Be sure to separate primary and secondary sources in separate categories.

Extra Credit

Virtual extra credit options, usually Zoom talks by academics, can be found under "Content" on our D2L classroom dashboard. Click on "Extra Credit" to see the options. You may attend one or all. Note, Zoom informs the instructor what time you log into the meeting and what time you leave. To earn the extra credit, you must stay for the duration of the talk.

Make Up Work/Tests

Legitimate excuses are official university absences, illnesses, and/or close family deaths. Students must provide the necessary proof like university paperwork, doctor's excuses, or funeral remembrance cards. The acceptability of any other excuse will be at the discretion of the instructor. Such an excuse will result in a ten-point deduction for every day an assignment is late.

Important Dates

Deadline to file for December graduation: September 22

Deadline to file for May graduation: October 6

Last Day to drop with a grade of "W:" November 24

Refer to: [Drops, Withdrawals & Void](#)

Desire-to-Learn (D2L)

Extensive use of the MSU D2L program is a part of this course. Each student is expected to be familiar with this program as it provides a primary source of communication regarding assignments, examination materials, and general course information. You can log into [D2L](#) through the MSU Homepage. If you experience difficulties, please contact the technicians listed for the program or contact your instructor.

Attendance

For us to have a successful semester, your full participation is required.

Computer Requirements

Taking this class requires you to have access to a computer (with Internet access) to complete and upload your assignments. It is your responsibility to have (or have access to) a working computer in this class. ****Assignments and tests are due by the due date, and personal computer technical difficulties will not be considered a reason for the instructor to allow students extra time to submit assignments, tests, or discussion postings.*** Computers are available on campus in various areas of the buildings as well as the Academic Success Center. ****Your computer being down is not an excuse for missing a deadline!!***

Instructor Class Policies

- Be civil in any discussion interactions. Debate is healthy but, keep it respectful.
- Be mindful of deadlines.

Change of Schedule

A student dropping a course (but not withdrawing from the University) within the first 12 class days of a regular semester or the first four class days of a summer semester is eligible for a 100% refund of applicable tuition and fees. Dates are published in the Schedule of Classes each semester.

Refund and Repayment Policy

A student who withdraws or is administratively withdrawn from Midwestern State University (MSU) may be eligible to receive a refund for all or a portion of the tuition, fees and room/board charges that were paid to MSU for the semester. HOWEVER, if the student received financial aid (federal/state/institutional grants, loans and/or scholarships), all or a portion of the refund may be returned to the financial aid programs. As described below, two formulas (federal and state) exists in determining the amount of the refund. (Examples of each refund calculation will be made available upon request).

Services for Students with Disabilities

In accordance with Section 504 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Midwestern State University endeavors to make reasonable accommodations to ensure equal opportunity for qualified persons with disabilities to participate in all educational, social, and recreational programs and activities. After notification of acceptance, students requiring accommodations should make application for such assistance through Disability Support Services, located in the Clark Student Center, Room 168, (940) 397-4140. Current documentation of a disability will be required in order to provide appropriate services, and each request will be individually reviewed. For more details, please go to [Disability Support Services](#).

Grade Appeal Process

Students who wish to appeal a grade should consult the Midwestern State University [MSU Catalog](#)

***Notice:** Changes in the course syllabus, procedure, assignments, and schedule may be made at the discretion of the instructor.

Course Schedule

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 1 August 25 August 27 August 29	Syllabus overview Merchant, Chapter 1 Dugatkin, Chapters 1-2	

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 2 September 1 September 3 September 5	Labor Day Steinberg, Chapters 1-2; and Merchant, Chapter 2 Dugatkin, Chapters 3-4	
Week 3 September 8 September 10 September 12	Steinberg, Chapter 3 Merchant, Chapter 3 Dugatkin, Chapters 5-6	Movie Assignment #1 Due by September 12
Week 4 September 15 September 17 September 19	Steinberg, Chapter 4 Merchant, Chapter 4 Dugatkin, Chapters 7-8	Book Review #1 Due by September 19
Week 5 September 22 September 24 September 26	Steinberg, Chapter 5 Merchant, Chapter 5 Jacoby, Chapters 1-3	
Week 6 September 29 October 1 October 3	Steinberg, Chapter 6 Merchant, Chapter 6 Jacoby, Chapters 4-6	Movie Assignment #2 Due by October 3
Week 7 October 6 October 8 October 10	Steinberg, Chapter 7 Merchant, Chapter 7 Jacoby, Chapters 7-8	Book Review #2 Due by October 10
Week 8 October 13 October 15 October 17	Steinberg, Chapter 8 Merchant, Chapter 8 Spence, Chapters 1-2	Midterm on October 15
Week 9 October 20 October 22 October 24	Steinberg, Chapter 9 Merchant, Chapter 9 Spence, Chapters 3-4	
Week 10 October 27 October 29 October 31	Steinberg, Chapter 10 Merchant, Chapter 10 Spence, Chapters 5-6	

Week or Module	Activities/Assignments/Exams	Due Date
Week 11 November 3 November 5 November 7	Steinberg, Chapter 11 Merchant, Chapter 11 Spence, Chapters 7-8	Book Review #3 Due by November 7 (grad students only)
Week 12 November 10 November 12 November 14	Steinberg, Chapter 12 Merchant, Chapter 12 Newman, Chapters 1-3	
Week 13 November 17 November 19 November 21	Steinberg, Chapter 13 Merchant, Chapter 13 Newman, Chapters 4-6	Term Paper Due by November 21 (grad students only)
Week 14 November 24 November 26 November 28	Steinberg, Chapter 14 Thanksgiving Break Thanksgiving Break	
Week 15 December 1 December 3 December 5	Steinberg, Chapters 15-16 Merchant, Chapter 15 Newman, Chapters 7-9	
Finals Week	Final Exam	December 8