

RESEARCH SEMINAR:

POSTWAR UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY:

NJIT-Rutgers, Newark: Fall 2008

Graduate Course: History 568

Time: Wednesdays, 5:00-7:40

Location: Conklin 324

Instructor: Prof. Neil Maher
Federated Department of History NJIT-Rutgers University, Newark

Office Hours:
Wednesdays, 2:00-4:00, Cullimore 325 (NJIT campus)
And by appointment

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This seminar is designed to introduce graduate students to the practice of historical research and writing. Most of the course will be devoted to in-class discussion of students' new research, and the writing up of that research into an essay 25-30 pages in length.

The seminar will be divided into two parts. During the first few weeks of the semester, we will familiarize ourselves with several different methodologies undertaken by environmental historians, and also examine various techniques and strategies that historians from all fields use to locate and organize their source materials. During the second half of the semester, students will share their writing with one another in an effort to improve drafts before submitting a final paper. Prior knowledge of the field of environmental history is not necessary.

In order to create a shared context for what will no doubt be a wide variety of research topics, I strongly encourage students in this class to choose an environmental history topic from the post-World War II era (If you have your heart set on a topic from another period, please see me and we'll discuss). I view this seminar as a workshop, where we are all engaged with our independent projects but share common concerns with historical methodology, historiography, and understanding the larger historical context (i.e. "the big picture") of postwar US history. Our most important objective for this seminar is to develop students' skills as researchers and writers to prepare them for writing master's thesis or master's essay. Some of the questions we will examine together include: How do we define and refine original research topics?; How do we find sources and archives, and how do we navigate them effectively?; How do we read and interpret evidence?; How do we write and revise?; How do we situate our own research within the larger questions and problems of our fields of study?

REQUIREMENTS:

Over the course of the semester students will be sharing their work as it progresses, reading each other's proposals, outlines, and rough drafts, and trading strategies of research and writing. They are expected not only to work hard on their own papers, but also to be supportive yet critical readers of their classmates' work. Students' own skills of analysis and writing always improve as they critique the work of others. Giving detailed criticism to peers is likewise good practice for helping students become better history teachers and professional historians.

Readings:

Because this is a research seminar, the assigned reading for this course will be minimal. I have assigned three books, one article, and an online reading on historical research and writing. We will be discussing these in class during the first few weeks of the course. There will also be a few articles assigned as well to introduce you all to the field of environmental history.

Please purchase the books for the class; all are in cheaper paperback editions. These books are now available at NJ Books, which is located at the corner of University and Bleeker streets (the books are not for sale at the Rutgers University bookstore). Copies of the assigned articles are available online via the Dana reserve desk website (search for my last name, and then look for the Stewart article), and will also be posted on our Blackboard webpage.

Final Paper:

As mentioned above, the final product of this research seminar will be an essay 25-30 pages in length. In order to help you complete this project, there will be several assignments throughout the semester that will guide you towards the completion of this final paper.

Research Proposal:

The semester goes by very quickly. Students, therefore, should begin work immediately on a "Proposal for Research" (2-3 pages). This proposal should include the following:

1. Topic description
2. Discussion of historic problem or question that research will answer
3. A list of accessible primary source materials for this topic
4. A list of the most relevant secondary literature to provide historic context for this topic

Such a proposal is due on the Friday of the third week of the semester (February 6th). You will submit these proposals on-line to our "Blackboard" website. Students must meet with me before this proposal is submitted, for approval of their paper topics.

Final Paper Outline:

To help organize and conceptualize your final paper, you will also be asked to submit a detailed outline of your project. The outline should include a brief paragraph explaining your argument. The outline is due online on Sunday, March 22nd by 12:00 noon.

Final Paper Rough Draft:

The last weeks of the course will be devoted to discussion of paper drafts (you should think of this part of the course as a paper-writing workshop). Students will provide copies of their papers to everyone in the seminar several days before we meet to discuss them. Here your “Suggestions for the Author” (see below) are particularly important, as they will guide revision for your classmates. You should mark up each draft as you read it, and return it to the author with your comments (and give me a copy as well). Each student will have a great deal of feedback from which to craft a final version of the paper.

Final Draft:

Your final drafts will be due one week after our last class meeting, on May 6th by 10:00 A.M.

******Note on “Suggestions for the Author”:***

Throughout the semester you will be asked write what I’m calling “Suggestions to the Author” in an effort to critique the work of members of the seminar. You will be asked to make these “Suggestions” for each of the assignments listed above (proposals, outlines, and rough drafts). When you do this you should prepare at least one page of written “Suggestions to the Author,” in addition to giving feedback on writing style and content directly on the assignment (proposal, outline, rough draft). You should indicate what both works well and what needs improvement. Please make two copies of your written critiques – one for the author and one for me – and bring them to class.

HisTEM CONCENTRATION:

While in this M.A. program you must choose a major and minor field of study. The concentration in the History of Technology, Environment and Medicine/Health is unique in its integration of three relatively new historical sub-disciplines. The rapid growth of these three fields in recent years reflects greater awareness among professional historians and the general public of the significance of broader issues concerning technology, the environment, medicine, and health in contemporary life. As these issues loom larger in the consciousness of society, so does the need to learn more about their historical origins, causes, and patterns of development. The major field in the History of Technology, Environment and Medicine/Health has been specially constructed to meet this growing need. Major: 18 credits (6 classes); Minor: 6 credits (only two classes).

GRADING:

Your performance in the seminar will be evaluated on the basis of your own paper, your work as a critic, and your overall participation in class.

Attendance and Participation:	50%
Written Assignments (including proposals, outline, and finally paper):	50%

Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, eds., *The Craft of Research*, 3rd Edition, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008)
- Martha C. Howell and Walter Prevenier, eds, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001)
- William Cronon, *Learning to Do Historical Research* (website address: <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/index.htm>)
- Theodore Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History* (Oxford University Press, 2002)
- Mart Stewart, "Environmental History: Profile of a Developing Field," *The History Teacher* 31 (May 1998): 350-368.

WEEKLY ASSIGNMENTS:

PART I: INTRODUCTION

WEEK 1: WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY? (January 21)

Discussion:

Course structure, logistics, calendar.

Required Reading: In Class

New York Times, Front Page, January 21, 2008

WEEK 2: HISTORY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY (January 28)

Meeting:

We will be visiting two archives during this class meeting, which begins one hour early than usual, at 4:00 pm.

4:00 – New Jersey Historical Society, 52 Park Pl, Newark, NJ 07102 (973) 596-8500). I will be leaving our classroom at 3:45 sharp, and will walk down to the Historical Society. You can walk with me, or make it to the Historical Society on your own. For directions see the Historical Society website www.jerseyhistory.org

5:30 – Newark Public Library, 5 Washington Street, P.O. Box 630, Newark, NJ 07102 (973) 733-7784. We will walk together from the New Jersey Historical Society to the Newark Public Library, where we will have a one-hour presentation concerning the Library's resources.

Discussion:

After our presentation at the Newark Public Library, we will reconvene to discuss the two reading assignments for the week. Make sure you read these assignments.

Required Reading:

Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History*.
(entire)

Mart Stewart, "Environmental History: Profile of a Developing Field,"
The History Teacher 31 (May 1998): 350-368.

PART II: EXPLORING HISTORICAL RESEARCH

WEEK 3: HISTORICAL ARCHIVES & ONLINE RESOURCES (February 4)

Discussion:

We will be meeting in Rutgers-Newark's Dana Library with reference librarian Ka-Neng Au. We will have a one-hour presentation concerning the resources, both physically in the library and online, that will help you conduct your research. It is very important that you complete the required reading for this week (see below), since it speaks directly to the presentation we'll be having at the library.

After the presentation we will reconvene in our classroom to discuss the reading for this week.

Required Reading:

Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, eds., *The Craft of Research*, 3rd Edition, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2008)

Due in Class:

Archive Report (2-3 pages). This report should be based on one set of primary source materials located at either the New Jersey Historical Society or the Newark Public Library, and should include the following:
1. a one-paragraph description of the collection you have chosen to explore; 2. a one-paragraph description of one source from your collection that you have chosen to "read"; 3. a 1-2 page deep "reading" of that source material as it relates to a research topic in post-World War II U.S. environmental history. (NOTE: You will have to revisit one of these archives to complete this assignment).

Assignment Due This Sunday, February 8th at 12:00 Noon:

Submit your research proposal (2-3 pages) to our online "Blackboard" website.

WEEK 4: DISCUSSION OF PAPER PROPOSALS (February 11)

Discussion:

One another's research proposals.

Required Reading:

You will read each other's research proposals (which you can download online from our "Blackboard" website on Sunday afternoon).

Due in Class:

Bring to class 2 copies of a 2-3 page "Suggestions for the Author" for each of the research proposals of your classmates. Make sure you put your name and the author's name on each critique.

WEEK 5: RESEARCHING YOUR PAPER (February 18)

Discussion:

We will discuss various strategies for finding source materials, organizing those materials, and taking notes from those materials.

Required Reading:

William Cronon, *Learning to Do Historical Research* (website address: <http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/index.htm>) (you must read every page of this website)

Due in Class:

Three-page critique of William Cronon's website. Specifically, I want you to identify the most helpful/useful characteristic about the website. And also, what you feel could improve the website and its content even more.

WEEK 6: USING SECONDARY SOURCES (February 25)

Discussion:

No class meeting this week.

Required Reading:

For your bibliography you should definitely take a look at the American Society for Environmental History research website at: <http://www.foresthistory.org/Research/databases.html>

Due online on Day of Class: (submit to "Blackboard")

An **analytical annotated bibliography** with at least 5 secondary sources listed. For each source you should write a paragraph that explains, in very specific detail, how this source will add to your research plan. This

bibliography should NOT be a mere description of your 5 source materials. (assignment details to follow)

WEEK 7: “READING” PRIMARY SOURCES (March 4)

Discussion:

We will discuss both the Howell and Prevenier book, as well as the primary sources that each of you have brought into class. Be prepared to discuss how your primary material relates to the Howell and Prevenier book.

Required Reading:

Martha C. Howell and Walter Prevenier, eds, *From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001)

Due in Class:

An **annotated primary source list** with at least 5 primary sources. As with your annotated bibliography for your secondary materials, for each of your primary sources you should write one paragraph that explains, in very specific detail, how this source will add to your research plan. (assignment details to follow).

Due this Sunday, March 8th:

It’s been a month since you wrote your proposal and by now you should be deep into research. Post on our Blackboard site a one-paragraph preliminary **argument statement** for your paper that you will share with the class and then turn in to me. (assignment details to follow).

WEEK 8: OUTLINING YOUR PAPER (March 11)

Discussion:

We will discuss various strategies for outlining your papers.

Required Reading:

None. Continue research reading on your own.

Due in Class:

Bring to class your “Suggestions to the Author” for one another’s one-paragraph argument statement (which you each submitted on Blackboard last Sunday, March 8th). In this “suggestion,” you should include a critique of what you feel is the most important issue in your classmates’ arguments. (see assignment details).

WEEK 9: SPRING BREAK (March 18)

Required Reading:

None – continue researching on your own

Assignment Due Sunday, March 22nd (submit to “Blackboard”)

By 12:00 noon submit your paper outline online (instructions for outline format will have been given during our last class on March 11). With your outline you must also submit a revised statement of your paper’s overall argument, and an annotated bibliography of primary and secondary sources.

WEEK 10: DISCUSSION OF PAPER OUTLINES (March 25)

Discussion:

One another’s paper outlines

Required Reading:

One another’s paper outlines (posted last Sunday, online).

WEEK 11: WRITING HISTORY (April 1)

Discussion:

Strunk and White is the “bible” of good writing style, so you need to read this very carefully. We are going to go through the major points covered in it one by one.

Required Reading:

Strunk and White, *Elements of Style*

WEEK 12: WRITING AND REVISING A ROUGH DRAFT (April 8)

Required Reading:

None, keep writing!

Due: No more than a three-page introduction to your paper. Come to class having already written it, so you will have moved into the writing stage by the time we meet. Come prepared to discuss the myriad issues involved in historical writing (such as working from notes, introductions and conclusions, strategies of argumentation, topic sentences, use of evidence including quotations, voice, authorial self-positioning, etc). Also think ahead to the challenge of revising a draft. Bring me a copy of this first draft of your introduction.

PART III: CRITIQUING HISTORICAL WRITING

WEEK 13: DISCUSSION OF ROUGH DRAFTS (April 15)

WEEK 14: DISCUSSION OF ROUGH DRAFTS (April 22)

WEEK 15: DISCUSSION OF ROUGH DRAFTS (April 29)

- Note on Discussion of Rough Drafts: Drafts will have to be submitted several days before our meeting to discuss them, to give class members time to read and critique. We will arrange this schedule.