

## **U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY, 1945 — PRESENT**

Undergraduate History Major Reading Senior Seminar: HIST 489  
NJIT-Rutgers, Newark: Fall 2012  
Time: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00 - 2:25  
Location: 307 Cullimore Hall

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

**Office Hours:** 325 Cullimore Hall  
Tuesdays, 2:30-4:30 p.m.  
Thursdays, 2:30-4:30 p.m.  
And by appointment

**Contact:** E-mail: [maher@njit.edu](mailto:maher@njit.edu)  
Office: 973-596-6348  
Cell: 646-325-3704 (not before 9:00 a.m. or after 11:00 p.m.)

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This class serves two purposes. First, it is an upper-level history seminar on the environmental history of the United States from World War II to the present. Second, the class will also prepare students for the spring semester, when they will research and write their history major capstone papers. While we will spend the first half of the fall semester familiarizing ourselves with the history of this period — its major events, historical actors, and important themes — during the second half we will instead learn how historians “do” history — how they identify a research topic, locate source materials for that research topic, and conduct historical research. By the end of the fall semester, all students in the class will have identified their own paper topic, located source materials for the topic, and produced a detailed “research proposal” that lays out clearly their plans for the spring semester, when they will go out and conduct research and write their senior capstone papers.

The environmental history of the United States from 1945 to the present is not only about the rise of environmentalism in the 1960s. While environmental historians are interested in that political movement, they also explore a much broader range of historical questions related to the interrelationship between humans and the natural world during the postwar period. How did economic preparations for World War II deplete natural resources on the home front? Why did millions of Americans in the 1950s flee cities and flock instead to leafy, green suburbs? In what ways did the various liberal movements of the 1960s — for civil rights, women’s equality, and countercultural lifestyles espoused by hippies — help spark the anti-environmental backlash of the 1980s under President Ronald Reagan. And how, in the past ten years, has the Internet completely transformed our relationship to the natural world? For the next two semesters, as environmental historians-in-training, you will explore these historical topics and many more.

## **COURSE GOALS:**

There are three major goals for this course.

1. Students will understand the major historical actors, events, and issues that define the environmental history of the United States during the post-World War II period.
2. Students will locate and analyze both primary and secondary source materials relevant to the history of the postwar United States for their final historical research projects.
3. Students will use those primary and secondary sources to formulate, plan, and write a full-length historical research paper.

## **COURSE AIDS:**

To excel in this course, you are expected to be able to locate and use web and library resources effectively and to cite them correctly. NJIT Librarian Davida Scharf is an expert researcher, and works specifically with the Federated History Department and its students. She has prepared online research guides that you can locate at: <http://researchguides.njit.edu/history>. Ms. Scharf is also available during her office hours or by appointment. To contact her, see, <http://researchguides.njit.edu/scharf>. Please take advantage of her expertise. Library Research Guides are also available to the Rutgers information resources. See <http://libguides.rutgers.edu/>

## **REQUIREMENTS:**

**Attendance and Class Participation:** This is one of the most important components of your final grade. Because this is a small, seminar-style course, class participation should involve active listening and engagement — more than simply showing up, and more than sheer volume of oral output. It is essential that reading be done on time (each day before we meet) and that everyone come to class ready to raise questions and participate actively. Absence from class means you won't be able to participate, and doing so will therefore hurt your grade. If you do miss a class meeting, you are responsible for finding out what was missed and making up any assignments. Attendance will be taken during each class session.

**Reading Assignments:** Reading assignments will average approximately one hundred pages per week, and will consist of three types of materials. First, we will read a textbook on the United States from World War II to the present in order to familiarize ourselves with the key people, events, and themes of this specific historical period. Second, we will supplement this reading with essays that analyze in more detail specific examples of the environmental history of this time period. Finally, near the end of the semester, we will be reading a third book that will explain how historians “do” history —

this book will help you find a research topic, locate sources materials for that research topic, organize your research, and also help you outline and write your final papers. You must purchase all three books, which are currently on sale at the NJIT bookstore. Online links to the articles assigned during the semester can be found on our course Moodle webpage.

**Writing Assignments:** Because this is a Senior Capstone Seminar, this class will be a writing-intensive course. Throughout the semester you will be asked to undertake several different types of writing assignments, each of which will help prepare you for writing your final research paper during the spring semester. In each of the assignments described below, you will be graded on both your ideas and your writing.

**1. On-Line Reader's Responses:**

Before each of our class meetings you will post a "reader's response" to the assigned reading material in a Moodle online "Forum." These "responses" can be in a variety of forms -- a few sentences, a full paragraph, several questions you had about the reading -- but should demonstrate a critical understanding of the author's major arguments, and refrain from simply retelling the reading or speculating about things the authors have not addressed or included. Questions of comparison between that week's readings and earlier readings or our class discussions are especially welcome. Keep in mind that the goal is to facilitate high-level discussion and speculation. These posts by you in our Moodle "Forum" for each class meeting will not be individually graded, but will be considered as an overall part of your participation grade for the class (so they very much count). Late posting will not be accepted, and missing postings will bring your discussion grade down.

**2. Analytical Reading Essay**

During the first half of the semester you will write a short 2-page essay about one of the assigned articles written by environmental historian Mark Fiege. This essay will not simply retell the article, but will rather critique it in ways that allow you to make your own argument about Fiege's history. This will be your first formal writing assignment of the semester, and will be graded on both your ideas AND your writing style.

**3. Research Paper Proposal**

This will be the final writing assignment of the semester, and will outline for your classmates and me the research topic you will be pursuing during the spring semester. There are several components to your "Research Paper Proposal," including:

- *Overall Project Description* (including a preliminary paper title and a description of the historical questions and issues you will be examining in your research paper).

- *Description of Primary Sources* (this will include both primary and secondary sources).
- *Annotated Bibliography of Secondary Sources* (this will include a short description of your secondary source materials, and how each one will help you with various parts of your final paper).
- *Research Plan* (this will be a detailed schedule for when you will conduct your research over the spring semester).

To help prepare for this final writing assignment, during the second half of the semester you will submit drafts of each of these components of the “Research Paper Proposal.” More detailed directions for each of these writing assignments will be distributed during the semester.

**GRADING:**

In-Class Participation:	25%
On-Line Reader’s Responses	25%
Final Research Paper Proposal	50%

Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading.

**REQUIRED TEXTS:**

Paul Boyer, *Promises to Keep: The United States Since World War II* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005). Third Edition  
 Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams, *The Craft of Research* (University of Chicago Press, 2008). Third Edition.  
 Historical Essays (available for download on our Moodle course webpage).

**\*EXTREMELY IMPORTANT:** Please remember to bring the assigned reading for each class meeting with you to class every day. In other words, bring to class whatever we’re reading for that day. We will constantly refer to these readings during in-class discussions.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE:**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **WEEK 1: HISTORY vs. ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY**

September 4: **Where is Environmental History?**

Required Reading:

None

In-Class Discussion: Front page of the *New York Times*

September 6: **Environmental History — An Example**

Required Reading:

William Cronon, “Kennecot Journey: Paths Out of Town,” (pages 28-51 and footnotes).

Assignment:

Reader’s response on Cronon (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE class)

### **PART I: THE ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY OF POSTWAR AMERICA**

#### **WEEK 2: THE IMPACT OF WAR**

September 11: **The History of WWII**

Required Reading:

Paul Boyer, *Promises to Keep*, chapters 1, 3 (pages 1-32 and 65-93).

NOTE: You do NOT have to read chapter 2 (pages 35-63).

Assignment:

Reader’s response on Boyer (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE class).

September 13: **An Environmental History of WWII**

Required Reading:

Mark Fiege, “Atomic Sublime: Toward a Natural History of the Bomb,” (pages 281-317 and footnotes).

Assignment:

Reader’s response on Fiege (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE class).

### **WEEK 3: HOMEWARD BOUND**

September 18: **The History of the 1950s**

Required Reading:

Paul Boyer, *Promises to Keep*, chapters 4-6 (pages 97-183).

Assignment:

Reader's response on Boyer (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE this class).

September 20: **An Environmental History of the 1950s**

Required Reading:

Theodore Steinberg, "Moveable Feast," (pages 173-186 and footnotes)

Theodore Steinberg, "The Secret History of Meat," (pages 187-202 and footnotes).

Assignment:

Reader's response on Steinberg (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE class).

### **WEEK 4: FIGHTING INEQUALITY**

September 25: **The History of Civil Rights**

Required Reading:

Paul Boyer, *Promises to Keep*, chapters 7-8 (pages 185-239).

Assignment:

Reader's response on Boyer (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE this class).

September 27: **An Environmental History of Civil Rights**

Required Reading:

Mark Fiege, "The Road to Brown v. Board: An Environmental History of the Color Line," (pages 318-357 and footnotes).

Assignment:

**First Paper:** On Mark Fiege's "The Road to Brown v. Board: An Environmental History of the Color Line" (due in class).

## **WEEK 5: COUNTERCULTURES**

October 2: **The History of the 1960s**

Required Reading:

Paul Boyer, *Promises to Keep*, chapters 9-11 (pages 241-320).

Assignment:

Reader's response on Boyer (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE this class).

October 4: **An Environmental History of the 1960s**

Required Reading:

Theodore Steinberg, "America in Black and Green," (pages 203-224 and footnotes).

Theodore Steinberg, "Throwaway Society," (pages 225-239 and footnotes).

Assignment:

Reader's response on Steinberg (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE class).

## **WEEK 6: GREEN POLITICS**

October 9: **The History of the 1970s**

Required Reading:

Paul Boyer, *Promises to Keep*, chapters 12-13 (pages 322-382).

Assignment:

Reader's response on Boyer (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE this class).

October 11: **An Environmental History of the 1970s**

Required Reading:

Mark Fiege, "It's A Gas: The United States and the Oil Shock of 1973-1974," (pages 358-402 and footnotes).

Assignment:

Reader's response on Fiege (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE this class).

## WEEK 7: THE RISE OF THE RIGHT

October 16: **The History of 1980s Conservatism**

Required Reading:

Paul Boyer, *Promises to Keep*, chapters 14-15 (pages 384-476).

Assignment:

Reader's response on Boyer (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE this class).

October 18: **An Environmental History of the 1980s**

Required Reading:

Theodore Steinberg, "Shades of Green," (pages 240-268 and footnotes)

Theodore Steinberg, "In Corporations We Trust," (pages 269-295 and footnotes).

Assignment:

Reader's response on Steinberg (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE class).

## PART III: DOING HISTORY

### WEEK 8: FINDING A TOPIC

October 23: **Coming up with a Research Topic**

Required Reading:

Booth, *Craft of Research*, pages 1-66.

Assignment:

Reader's response on Booth, pages 1-66 (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE this class).

October 25: **Asking Historical Questions**

Required Reading:

Each others "Paper Topic Description" Draft

Assignments:

1. Overall Project Description draft (to be explained)
2. Written comments on each of your classmates proposals

(NOTE: both due on Moodle Wednesday, Oct 24 by 5:00 p.m.).

## WEEK 9: PRIMARY SOURCES

October 30: **Class Trip to Dana Library (scheduled✓)**

Required Reading:

Booth, *Craft of Research*, pages 68-103.

Assignment:

Reader's Report on Booth, pages 68-103 (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE this class).

November 1: **Primary Sources Workshop**

Required Reading:

Each other's "Primary Source Assessment."

Assignment:

1. Description of Primary Sources (to be explained)
2. Written comments on each of your classmates' primary source essay.

(NOTE: Your Description due on Moodle Wed, Oct 31 by 5:00 p.m.).

Your comments on your classmates Description due Thurs, Nov 1, by 12:00 noon)

## WEEK 10: SECONDARY SOURCES

November 6: **Class Trip to the New Jersey Historical Society (scheduled✓)**

Required Reading:

Booth, *Craft of Research*, 105-150.

Assignment:

Reader's Report on Booth, pages 105-150 (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE this class).

November 8: **Secondary Source Workshop**

Required Reading:

Each others "Annotated Bibliography."

Assignment:

1. Annotated Bibliography (to be explained)
2. Written comments on each of your classmates' Annotated Bibliographies.

(NOTE: Both due on Moodle Wednesday, Nov. 7 by 5:00 p.m.).

## **WEEK 11: USING AND CITING SOURCES**

November 13: **Class Trip to NJIT's Van Houton Library (scheduled✓)**

Contact: Davida Scharff

Required Reading:

To be determined – something on citing historical material

Assignment: on-line reader's response due before this class.

November 15: **What, When, and How to Footnote**

Required Reading:

Re-read both the article and every footnote in William Cronon, "Kennecot Journey: Paths Out of Town," pps. 28-51 AND pps. 276-281.

Assignment:

To be determined

## **WEEK 12: MAKING AN HISTORICAL ARGUMENT**

November 20: **Class Trip to Newark Public Library (scheduled✓)**

Contact: **George Hawley ghawley@npl.org**

Required Reading:

Booth, *Craft of Research*, 152-169.

Assignment:

Reader's Report on Booth, pages 152-169 (due on Moodle 1 hour BEFORE this class).

November 22: **Thanksgiving**

Required Reading:

None — conduct your own research

## **WEEK 13: PLANNING YOUR PROJECT**

November 27: **Class Trip to Dana Library (REscheduled✓)**

Required Reading:

Booth, *Craft of Research*, 171-179 and 273-277.

Each other's "Research Plans"

Assignment:

Your “Research Plan”

**NOTE:** Due on Moodle at 5:00 p.m. the day BEFORE class

November 29: **Scheduling Your Research**

Required Reading:

None – conduct your own research

Assignment:

Three questions regarding your “Paper Proposal,” which is due next week.

**NOTE:** Bring these questions with you to class.

## **WEEK 14: PAPER WORKSHOP I**

December 4: **Discuss Fellow Student Paper Proposals**

Required Reading:

The “Paper Proposals” of your classmates

Assignment:

Comments on the “Paper Proposals” of your classmates

**NOTE:** Due on Moodle at 5:00 p.m. the day BEFORE class

December 6: **Discuss Fellow Student Paper Proposals**

Required Reading:

The “Paper Proposals” of your classmates

Assignment:

Comments on the “Paper Proposals” of your classmates.

**NOTE:** Due on Moodle at 5:00 p.m. the day BEFORE class

## **WEEK 15: PAPER WORKSHOP II**

December 11: **Discuss Fellow Student Paper Proposals**

Required Reading:

The “Paper Proposals” of your classmates

Assignment:

Comments on the “Paper Proposals” of your classmates

**NOTE:** Due on Moodle at 5:00 p.m. the day BEFORE class

