



Panorama of Yosemite Valley from Artist Point (1906)

THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT

HIS 100-01; Spring 2017
Tue & Thur, 9:30-10:50am; Noyce 3821

Michael Guenther
Mears 315; 269-9816
guenthmb@grinnell.edu

Spring Office Hours:
Tue & Wed: 1:30-3:30pm
& by appointment

“Of all the questions which can come before this nation, short of the actual preservation of its existence in a great war, there is none which compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us.”

—Theodore Roosevelt, “The New Nationalism” 1910

Course Description

This class explores the nature and process of history by focusing on the century-long debate among scholars to understand the complex origins, character and impact of the conservation movement. Weaving together strands of scientific, political, moral and aesthetic thought, the movement to conserve the nation’s natural and human resources became one of the defining features of the progressive era, helping to shape the modern world of the twentieth century. But how does one write the history of a movement that included such a diverse array of actors, ideals, and causes? As we shall see, the banner of conservation encompassed everything from the national parks to eugenics, from fishing policy to recreational spaces in cities to the nature-study movement in America’s schools. And while textbooks tend to focus on the larger-than-life leaders of conservation—figures like Theodore Roosevelt or John Muir—the cast of characters involved in conservation was much more diverse, ranging from government engineers to federal troops, womens’ clubs to boy scouts, sports hunters to photographers. After an introductory unit on issues of evidence, interpretation, and narrative, we will explore how different waves of historians have developed strikingly different ways of understanding what the conservation movement really entailed, and what lessons we should learn from it. Through these debates, students will learn to evaluate critically how and why historians have come to such disparate conclusions, gaining an appreciation for the complexities of historical inquiry as well as the complexities of the past.

Required Texts

The first three required books are available for purchase at the Campus Bookstore, while the last two are available as free e-texts through the ACLS e-book program (which can be accessed through the Grinnell Library catalog).*

John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (New York & London: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Nancy Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 1995, 2015)

Ian Tyrell, *Crisis of the Wasteful Nation: Empire and Conservation in Theodore Roosevelt's America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015)

*Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency* (orig. publ. 1959, ACLS E-book)

*Karly Jacoby, *Crimes against nature squatters, poachers, thieves, and the hidden history of American conservation* (orig. publ. 2003, ACLS E-book)

Course Objectives

Students in this class will:

Learn how to

- read and critically analyze primary sources
- read and critically analyze secondary sources
- research, synthesize, and critically evaluate a body of historical literature

Engage with

- history as a craft and a discipline
- a diverse array of concepts, methods, and narratives for investigating and explaining the past

Develop

- Their skills of analytical, argumentative writing
- Their skills of oral communication, dialogue, and classroom citizenship

Course Requirements

Class Attendance

Please contact me if a medical or personal issue legitimately prevents you from attending class. Under these circumstances, I allow students to make up such absences by emailing me an informal response to the readings (1-2 pages) for that particular day, which I then count towards their participation grade. Students may do this 3 times over the course of the semester (although exceptions may be made for students facing special circumstances).

Class Participation (25% of Total Grade)

Given the nature of the course, it is crucial that students come to each class fully prepared to engage the readings/topics at hand. This involves not only completing the assigned readings prior to class,

but also taking the appropriate time to address the discussion questions, to organize your notes accordingly, and to *note specific examples and passages you want to highlight in class*.

While I like to let conversations evolve naturally, with students choosing to “jump in” at their own pace, I will also do a fair amount of calling on students to ensure that everyone is participating, and that the conversation is not confined to a narrow circle. Calling on students is also important in terms of allowing me to evaluate how everyone is processing the material, analyzing the issues, and engaging with the viewpoints of others.

Class participation accounts for 25% of your overall grade, and I take this evaluation seriously. I record a participation grade for each class session, and will make these available to you on a regular basis so that you can track how you are doing in this aspect of the course. The same applies to when we break up into small groups for either discussion or for in-class exercises. Feel free to come by my office hours or schedule an appointment early in the semester if you have questions or concerns about participation.

Film Analysis (10% of Total Grade), due Feb 6

This assignment involves a critical analysis of the documentary film, *A Midwife's Tale* (PBS, American Experience), in light of Arnold's discussions about the process of history. Further guidelines will be posted a week before the assignment is due on blackboard and discussed in class.

Two Exams (25% of Total Grade), Mar 9 & Apr 18

These two in-class exams will focus on analyzing key concepts, themes and debates from the prior course readings. Students will be allowed to prepare and use a limited amount of notes during the exam. Further guidelines will be posted on blackboard and discussed in class.

Document Analysis (10% of Total Grade), due Mar 3

This short assignment (3-4 pages) will focus on critically analyzing one of the primary sources relating to the ideology of conservation. Further guidelines will be posted on blackboard and discussed in class.

Annotated Bibliography Project (25% of Total Grade)

One of the key assignments for HIS 100—shared across all the units taught by faculty at Grinnell—is an annotated bibliography project. Students will choose a particular debate or theme in the history of conservation that they would like to explore in greater depth, and will be responsible for researching the “historiography” (i.e. the historical conversation or debate surrounding this issue). They will create a comprehensive bibliography of these works, in which each scholarly article or book is *annotated* with a short synopsis of the works' thesis, methodology, and importance. The bibliography will also have a 1-2 page introduction framing the central issue you have chosen to research. This project will begin in earnest after spring break, although students are encouraged to begin thinking about topics from the beginning. It will also be due in stages (with a project proposal and preliminary drafts of sections turned in over the second half of the semester. Guidelines (and due dates for these components) will be distributed before spring break. The final draft of the project will be due Friday, May 19th at noon.

In-class Presentation (5% of Total Grade)

The last week of class, along with the course exam slot, will be dedicated to student presentations of their final projects that will be graded.

Extensions & Late assignments

Late papers will receive a deduction of 1/3 of a letter grade per day (weekends excluded). Exceptions may be made for extraordinary medical or personal issues. Each student is also allowed **an extension of seven days** to turn in a written assignment late without incurring any penalty. *You should email me in advance so that I am aware that you plan to use your extension for a particular assignment.* You may use the entire week, or a particular number of days (reserving the remainder to use later in the semester). But please note that no final projects will be accepted after May 19th since the college requires that ALL coursework be submitted by the end of exam week (unless you are taking an incomplete in the class).

Grades

Assignment	Date	Percentage of Total Grade
Film Analysis	Feb 6	10%
Document Analysis	Mar 3	10%
Midterm Exam	Mar 9	12.5%
Second Exam	Apr 18	12.5%
In-class Presentations	Week 14 & 15	5%
Final Bibliography	May 19 th	25%
Class Participation	***	25%

COURSE SCHEDULE

- *Please bring a copy (either print or electronic) of the readings along with your notes to each class* so that we can have a focused and grounded discussion.
- When possible, please read the items for each day in the order listed on the syllabus.

Section 1: Historical Methods and Issues***Week 1***Tuesday (Jan. 24): **Telling Stories about the Past**

Reading Due: John Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction*, ch. 1.

Ben A. Minteer and Stephen J. Pyne, “Restoring the Narrative of American Environmentalism,” *Restoration Ecology* 21 (2013), 6-11.

Thursday (Jan. 26): **Narrative & Meaning**

Reading Due: Arnold, *History*, ch. 2-3.

William Cronon, “A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative,” *Journal of American History* 78 (1992), 1347-1376.

Thursday (Feb. 16): **Analyzing the Sources**
 Reading Due: Theodore Roosevelt, “Special Message of the President Transmitting the Report of the National Conservation Commission.”
 J.W. Powell, “Institutions for the Arid Lands.”
 Pinchot, *The Fight for Conservation* (excerpts)

Week 5

Tuesday (Feb. 21): **The Call of the Wild: The Legacy of Romanticism**
 Reading Due: Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness & the American Mind* (excerpts).
 Document exercise

Thursday (Feb. 23): **The Scientific Roots of Conservation**
 Reading Due: Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, ch. 1 & 13; skim chapters 2-3.

Week 6

Tuesday (Feb. 28): **The Technocratic Impulse**
 Reading Due: Hays, *The Gospel of Efficiency*, ch. 5-7.
 Online Document Exercise

Thursday (Mar. 2): **Library Session**
We will meet in Burling Library (there is no assigned reading)

Friday (Mar. 3): Document Analysis Due (5:30)

Week 7

Tuesday (Mar. 7): **Thinking like a Hunter**
 Reading Due: John F. Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation* (excerpts)

Thursday (Mar. 9): **Midterm Exam**

Section 3: Social, Cultural, & Environmental Perspectives

Week 8

Tuesday (Mar. 14): **The History of Conservation “from below”**
 Reading Due: Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation*, 1-7, 48-78, 81-98.
 Steinberg, “Conservation Reconsidered.”

Thursday (Mar. 16): **The Dark Side of Conservation?**
 Reading Due: Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, 99-148.

Spring Break (March 20-March 31)

Week 9

Tuesday (Apr 4): **Analyzing Gender**
 Reading Due: Nancy Unger, "Nature's Housekeepers": Progressive-Era Women as Midwives to the Conservation Movement and Environmental Consciousness."
 Jennifer Price, "When Women were Women, Men were Men, and Birds were Hats."

Thursday (Apr 6): **Incorporating Race into the Story**
 Group A: Miles Powell, *Vanishing America: Species Extinction, Racial Peril, and the Origins of Conservation*, ch.3.
 Group B: Jeff Romm, "The Coincidental Order of Environmental Justice."
 Group C: Mark D. Hersey, *My Work Is That of Conservation: An Environmental Biography of George Washington Carver* (excerpts).

Week 10

Tuesday (Apr 11): **Environmental History Perspectives**
 Reading Due: Nancy Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West*, 3-59, 86, 104-156.

Thursday (Apr 13): **Wrestling with Nature's Complexity**
 Group A: Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares*, 163-183, 201-248, 260-95.

Week 11

Tuesday (Apr 18): **Second Exam**

Section 4: Transnational Approaches

Thursday (Apr 20): **The International Campaign for Conservation**
 Reading Due: Ian Tyrrell, *Crisis of a Wasteful Nation: Empire and Conservation in Theodore Roosevelt's America*, ch. 1-2.

Week 12

Tuesday (Apr 25): **Natural Resources and the Imperial Scramble**
 Reading Due: Tyrrell, *Crisis of a Wasteful Nation*, ch. 3-4.
 Group A: "Energy and Empire" (ch. 5)
 Group B: "Irrigation and the Inland Empire" (ch. 6)
 Group C: "Problem of the Soils" (ch. 7)
 Group D: "National Vitality & Human Conservation" (ch. 9)

Thursday (Apr 27): **The Rise & Falter of a Global Movement**
 Reading Due: Tyrrell, *Crisis of a Wasteful Nation*, 207-62.

Week 13

Tuesday (May 2): **The Transnational History of Parks**
 Reading Due: Bernhard Gissibl, Sabine Höhler, Patrick Kupper, eds., *Civilizing Nature: National Parks in Global Historical Perspective* (excerpts)

Thursday (May 4): **New Deal Conservation at Home & Abroad**
 Reading Due: Sarah Phillips, *This Land, This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal* (excerpts).
 G. V. Jacks and R. O. Whyte, *The Rape of the Earth: A World Survey of Soil Erosion* (excerpts).
 David Anderson, "Depression, Dust Bowl, Demography, and Drought: The Colonial State and Soil Conservation in East Africa during the 1930s," *African Affairs* 83 (1984), 321-43 (*Skim*).

Week 14

The class sessions for week 14, along with the final exam time-slot (Thur, May 18th, 9am-noon), will be used for presentations of the annotated bibliography project.

Friday (May 19): Final Annotated Bibliographies Due at Noon