



Panorama of Yosemite Valley from Artist Point (1906)

THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT

HIS 100-02; Fall 2017
Mon, Wed, & Fri, 11:00-11:50; ARH 120

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Fall Office Hours:
Tue: 10-11, 3-4:30;
& by appointment

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 resources became one of the defining features of the progressive era. It also shaped the way subsequent generations of Americans in the twentieth century interacted with nature and the way the modern state regulated the use of natural resources. 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. Whose voices and experiences should historians prioritize when writing the history of conservation?

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 counts towards their participation grade. Students can only use this option 3 times over the course of the semester.

Class Participation (20% 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 20% 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.

Informal Writing & Research Assignments (7.5% of Total Grade)

Throughout the semester, there will be a series of short, informal writing/research assignments that encourage students to engage more fully with the material and issues. Typically, there will be one such assignment every other week. Examples include writing a short interpretive response to a document, researching the background of a particular author of historical figure that appears prominently in the readings, exploring a database to find a historical source that connects to the day’s reading, or writing a short response to an issue we debated during class discussion. Think of this as an adjunct to class participation, but with more concrete/focused exercises.

Film Analysis (10% of Total Grade), due Sept 8

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.

Document Analysis (5% of Total Grade), due Sept 18

This short assignment (2 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.

Two Short Essays (each 15% of Total Grade), Oct 2 & Nov 6

Each of these short essay assignments will require you to analyze a particular question or issue *across* multiple readings, comparing how different historians have constructed their narratives or interpretations of the conservation movement. The essay prompts, and further guidelines, will be posted on blackboard at least 10 days before the assignment is due.

Annotated Bibliography Project (22.5% 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 Fall 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 Fall break. The final draft of the project will be due Thursday, December 14th at 9pm.

In-class Presentation (5% of Total Grade)

The last week of class, along with our course exam slot (**Wednesday, December 13th 9am-noon**), will be dedicated to student presentations of their final projects. These short presentations, along with student questions & feedback, 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). I count weekends as 1 day in terms of extensions. But please note that no final projects will be accepted after December 15th 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 Grade	Date	Percentage of Total
Film Analysis	Sept 8	10%
Document Analysis	Sept 18	5%
Short Essay #1	Oct 2	15%
Short Essay #2	Nov 6	15%
In-class Presentations	Dec 4-8, 13	5%
Final Bibliography	Dec 14	22.5%
Class Participation	***	20%
Informal Writing & Research Assignments	***	7.5%

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.

Week 1

Friday (Aug 25): **Introductions**

SECTION 1: Historical Methods and Issues

Week 2

Monday (Aug 28): **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.

Wednesday (Aug 30): **History and Sources**

Reading Due: Arnold, *History*, ch. 2-4.

Friday (Sept 1): **The Art of Interpretation**

Reading Due: Sam Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts* (excerpts).

“Special Message from the President Transmitting the Report of the National Conservation Commission,” (1909).

Week 3

Monday (Sept 4): **Reconstructing the Past**

Reading Due: Arnold, *History*, ch. 5

A Midwife’s Tale (American Experience Documentary Film)

<https://grinnell.kanopystreaming.com/video/american-experience-midwife-s-tale>

Wednesday (Sept 6): **Treating the Past as a Foreign Country**

Reading Due: Arnold, *History*, ch. 6.

Jennifer Price, “Missed Connections: The Passenger Pigeon Extinction,” in her *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America*.

Friday (Sept 8): **Objectivity & Truth**

Reading Due: Arnold, *History*, ch. 7

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

Film Analysis Due (6:00pm)

SECTION 2: Debating the Intellectual Origins & Legacy of Conservation

Week 4

Monday (Sept 11): **Conservation and the Story of American Democracy**

Reading Due: J. Leonard Bates, “Fulfilling American Democracy: The Conservation Movement, 1907 to 1921,” *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 44 (1957), 29-57.

Andrew Bruce, “The Conservation of Our Natural Resources,” *Penn Law Review* (December, 1909), excerpts.

Wednesday (Sept 13): **The Rhetoric of Progressive Conservation**

Reading Due: Pinchot, *The Fight for Conservation* (excerpts).

Friday (Sept 15): **Analyzing the Sources**

Reading Due: Primary Source Exercise (Library of Congress)
<https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/amrvhtml/conshome.html>

Week 5

Monday (Sept 18): **The Call of the Wild: The Legacy of Romanticism**

Reading Due: Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness & the American Mind* (excerpts).

Document Analysis Due (6:00pm)

Wednesday (Sept 20): **The Scientific Roots of Conservation**
 Reading Due: Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, ch. 1
 & 13;

Friday (Sept 22): **Managing Resources**
 Reading Due: Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency*, ch. 2 & 5.

Week 6

Monday (Sept 25): **The Technocratic Impulse**
 Reading Due: Hays, *The Gospel of Efficiency*, ch. 6-7.

Wednesday (Sept 27): **The Hunting Origins of Conservation**
 Reading Due: John F. Reiger, *American Sportsmen and the Origins of Conservation* (excerpts).

Friday (Sept 29): **Wildlife & Game**
 Reading Due: Reiger, *Sportsmen and Conservation* (excerpts).
 Periodical Exercise: *Recreation* (1900).

Week 7

Monday (Oct 2): **Burling Library Visit** (*no assigned reading*)
Short Essay #1 Due (6:00pm)

Section 3: Social, Cultural, & Environmental Perspectives

Wednesday (Oct 4): **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.
 Steinberg, “Conservation Reconsidered.”

Friday (Oct 6): **Drawing Lines in the Adirondacks**
 Reading Due: Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, ch. 2-3.

Week 8

Monday (Oct 9): **Fort Yellowstone: Policing the Parks**

Reading Due: Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, ch. 5.
The National Parks (Ken Burns Documentary Film).

Wednesday (Oct 11): **The Problem of Poaching**

Reading Due: Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, ch. 6.

Friday (Oct 13): **Culture Wars**

Reading Due: Adam Rome, "Nature Wars, Culture Wars: Immigration and Environmental Reform in the Progressive Era," *Environmental History* 13 (2008), 432-453.

Fall Break (October 16-22)

Week 9

Monday (Oct 23): **Conservation & Women's History**

Reading Due: Nancy Unger, "Nature's Housekeepers": Progressive-Era Women as Midwives to the Conservation Movement and Environmental Consciousness."

Wednesday (Oct 25): **Gender Analysis**

Reading Due: Jennifer Price, "When Women were Women, Men were Men, and Birds were Hats," in her *Flight Maps*.

Skim Adam Rome, "'Political Hermaphrodites': Gender and Environmental Reform in Progressive America," *Environmental History* 11 (2006): 440-463.

Friday (Oct 27): **Incorporating Race into the Story**

Reading Due: Jeff Romm, "The Coincidental Order of Environmental Justice."

Week 10

Monday (Oct 30): **Racial Anxieties and Eugenics**

Reading Due: Miles Powell, *Vanishing America: Species Extinction, Racial Peril, and the Origins of Conservation* (excerpts).
Charles Van Hise, *The Conservation of Natural Resources* (excerpts).

Wednesday (Nov 1): **Agriculture & Conservation**

Group A: Mark D. Hersey, *My Work Is That of Conservation: An Environmental Biography of George Washington Carver*, ch. 6.

Group B: Ben Minteer, "The Forgotten Contribution of Liberty Hyde Bailey."

Friday (Nov 3): **Environmental History Perspectives**

Reading Due: Nancy Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West*, 3-59.

Week 11

Monday (Nov 6): **The Worldview of Scientific Foresters**

Reading Due: Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares*, 86-130.

Short Essay #2 Due (6:00pm)

Wednesday (Nov 8): **Making Sense of Old-Growth**

Reading Due: Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares*, 130-83.

Friday (Nov 10): **Managing the Forest Community**

Reading Due: Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares*, 201-246.

Week 12

Monday (Nov 13): **Langston's Paradox**

Reading Due: Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares*, 260-306.

Section 4: Transnational Approaches

Tuesday (Nov 14): **Informal topic proposal for Bibliography Project (1pg) due by 6pm**

Wednesday (Nov 15): **Water & Empire**
 Reading Due: Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West*, ch.4.

Friday (Nov 17): **The International Context of Conservation**
 Reading Due: Ian Tyrrell, *Crisis of a Wasteful Nation: Empire and Conservation in Theodore Roosevelt's America*, 9-36.

Week 13

Monday (Nov 20): **Natural Resources and the Imperial Scramble**
 Reading Due: Tyrrell, *Crisis of a Wasteful Nation*, ch. 3-4.

Wednesday (Nov 22): **Global Focal Points**
 Group A: “Energy and Empire” (ch. 5)
 Group B: “Irrigation and the Inland Empire” (ch. 6)
 Group C: “Conservation, Scenery & Sustainability” (ch. 8)
 Group D: “National Vitality & Human Conservation” (ch. 9)

Thanksgiving Break (Nov 23-26)

Week 14

Monday (Nov 27): **Thinking Big: The Promise and Pitfalls of Global Conservation**
 Reading Due: Tyrrell, *Crisis of a Wasteful Nation*, ch. 11-12.

Wednesday (Nov 29): **Assessing the Legacy of Conservation**
 Reading Due: Tyrrell, *Crisis of a Wasteful Nation*, epilogue.
3 Sample Annotations Due (6:00pm)

Friday (Dec 1): **The Global Legacy of Parks & Preserves**
 Reading Due: Bernhard Gissibl, Sabine Höhler, Patrick Kupper, eds., *Civilizing Nature: National Parks in Global Historical Perspective* (excerpts)

Week 15

The class sessions for week 15, along with the final exam time-slot (Wednesday, December 13th, 9am-noon), will be used for presentations of the annotated bibliography project.

Final Annotated Bibliographies Due by 9pm, Thursday, December 14th