Seminar description: This graduate seminar will explore major issues and themes in environmental history, focusing principally on the United States from the end of the nineteenth century to the present. Among the themes we will examine: how humans have interacted with the natural world in recent history, how natural resources have shaped the lives of individuals in distinct regions, how changing conceptions of nature have influenced patterns of social and political behavior, and how humans have attempted to modify and control the natural landscapes—along with how these alterations affected human societies as well as the natural world. We will also consider new insights into environmental history that have come from closely related disciplines (including geography, urban history, and environmental studies), and investigate the historical relationship between changing scientific knowledge and resulting environmental practices and policies.

Seminar requirements: Seminar members will complete all assigned readings indicated in the syllabus, and regularly attend seminar meetings. All students must be familiar with the weekly readings to facilitate discussions. Individual seminar members will lead discussions on selected additional readings. In the final weeks of our seminar, each seminar member will present the key issues and questions from his or her research project.

The principle focus of this seminar will be a major research paper, roughly 20-25 pages in length [double-spaced, in 12 point font or equivalent] that addresses a major topic in 20th century environmental history, broadly defined, determined in consultation with the instructor. Those who wish to write a new thesis chapter for this seminar, or to explore a potential thesis topic, are welcome (indeed encouraged) to do so. Additional short writing assignments may be undertaken as well. An overview of the proposed research paper (key questions and issues to be addressed, as well as a comprehensive list of sources) will be due on Week 3. In addition, seminar members will undertake a careful critique of a fellow seminar participant’s draft at the end of the quarter.

Learning Objectives: graduate students in this seminar will gain familiarity with leading new interpretations in the field of environmental history; in addition, they will gain practice in applying new methodological, historiographic, and interpretive skills to their own research and writing.

Required Texts [all paperback; available through online booksellers]

**Recommended.**


**On reserve:**

Additional weekly readings, including excerpts from longer readings, will be placed online through Blackboard [ER]. Those marked by an asterisk (*) are part of our weekly seminar reading; also listed on the syllabus are additional resources for our weekly themes. We may elect to have individual seminar members raise issues from these readings in our seminar discussions.

Assigned reading may shift slightly following seminar discussions.

**Meeting schedule:**

**Week 1: 10 January**  
**INTRODUCTION: DEFINING, DEBATING, AND WRITING ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY**

**Week 2: 17 January**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY: GLOBAL CONTEXTS, THEN AND NOW**

*Reading:* McNeill [all]

**Additional resources:**

George Perkins Marsh, *The Earth as Modified by Human Action; A Last Revision of "Man and Nature"* (New York: Scribners, 1885).
*History of Marine Animal Populations [HMAP] [handout to be provided]*

**Week 3:  24 Jan.  THE CONTROL OF NATURE**

*Reading:* Krech [all]

**Additional resources:**


**Week 4:  31 Jan.  RECONSTRUCTING HISTORICAL LANDSCAPES: HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES**

*Reading:* Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis* [all]

**Additional resources:**


**Week 5:  7 Feb.  HISTORIES OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

*Reading:* Fiege, *Irrigated Eden* [all]

**Additional resources:**

**Week 6: 14 Feb. ECOLOGICAL CHANGE: GEOGRAPHICAL, ECOLOGICAL, AND HEALTH PERSPECTIVES**

*Reading:* Worster, *The Dust Bowl* [all]

*Additional Resources:*

Gregg Mitman, Michelle Murphy, and Christopher Sellers, eds., *Landscapes of Exposure: Knowledge and Illness in Modern Environments. Osiris* 19 (2004).

**Week 7: 21 Feb.**  
**ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY IN POPULAR CULTURE**

*Reading:* Price, *Flight Maps* [all]

*Additional resources:*


**Week 8: 28 Feb.**  
**CHALLENGES OF URBAN AND SUBURBAN LANDSCAPES**

*Reading:* Rome, *Bulldozer and the Countryside* [all]

*Additional resources:*


* Christine Rosen and Joel Tarr, "The Importance of an Urban Environmental Perspective in Environmental History," *Journal of Urban History* 20(1993/94), 299-310. [ER]


Joel A Tarr, “Urban History and Environmental History in the United States: Complementary and Overlapping Fields,” in Christoph Bernhardt (ed.): *Environmental Problems in European Cities of the 19th and 20th Century* (New York /Muenchen/ Berlin: Waxmann, Muenster,
2001), online at http://www.hnet.org/~environ/historiography/usurban.htm

Week 9: 6 March§ TRANSFORMED ENVIRONMENTS: THE EXPERIENCE OF THE US WEST
§ seminar-led DISCUSSION

Reading: White, The Organic Machine [all]

Additional resources:

Katrina E. Barber, Death of Celilo Falls (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005).

Week 10: 13 March§ ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY: ASSESSMENTS AND CRITIQUES
§ [discussion over beverages at ASEH, Boise]

Reading: Steinberg, Down to Earth [all]

Additional resources:

* Douglas R. Weiner, “A Death-Defying Attempt to Articulate a Coherent Definition of Environmental History,” Environmental History 10, 3 (2005): 404-420. [ER]

Research paper due on Thursday, 20 March, at midnight [submit as file attachment to DOELR@GEO.OREGONSTATE.EDU].