



Draft syllabus for Environmental History *spring 2026*

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Weekly Schedule: Wednesdays 6-10 pm (remote)

Course Equivalencies:

- 4 credits - Environmental History (Graduate-Level/MES Elective)
- 4 credits - (Undergraduate-Level, if space is available with signature)

This remote program will probe the complex and shifting relationships between the environment and humanity with an emphasis on the rise of capitalism to the present. Case studies of cash crops and specific regions including the Pacific Northwest and Midwest will help ground our studies. Some of the subjects we will consider include: the larger environmental ramifications of colonization; the impact of genocide, land dispossession, and privatization; the influence of various cultural attitudes towards nature; the effects of capitalism and racialized expropriation on ecological and agricultural systems. We will also explore contemporary environmental issues in a historical context.

During our studies, we will explore the following theme questions. What is environmental history and how is it different from history? If we take seriously the notion that nature has “agency,” how does that change our study of the past? How can social and cultural history inform our understanding of relations between people and nature? How do social, political, economic, and intellectual trends influence how people think about the natural world and our relationship to it? In what ways are contemporary attitudes about nature shaped by history, both real and imagined? To aid our inquiries, we will cultivate our visual literacy by learning to “read” historic maps, paintings, drawings, and photographs. There will be weekly readings and written assignments. Students are expected to have computer and internet access to utilize the multiple modes of online learning.

Discussion Texts:

- Fraser, Nancy. 2023. *Cannibal Capitalism*. Verso. (165 pages + endnotes)
- Bowcutt, Frederica. 2015. *The Tanoak Tree: An Environmental History of a Pacific Coast Hardwood*. University of Washington Press. Available as an eBook on Evergreen Library website. (150 pages + endnotes)
- Russell, Edmund. 2011. *Evolutionary History: Uniting History and Biology and Understanding Life on Earth*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 103-133 (posted on Canvas)
- Stoll, Mark. 2023, *Profit: An Environmental History*. Polity. (257 pages + endnotes; skimming 55 pages)
- Holleman, Hannah. 2018, *Dust Bowls of Empire: Imperialism, Environmental Politics, and the Injustice of “Green” Capitalism*. Yale University Press. (163 pages + endnotes)
- Optional: excerpts from Demos, T.J. 2020. *Beyond the World’s End: Arts of Living at the Crossing*. Duke University Press pp. 1-21, 43-67, and 163-193. (posted on Canvas)
- Optional: Duggan, *Mean Girl: Ayn Rand and the Culture of Greed*. University of California Press. (90 pages + endnotes)
- Optional: Dean, *Capital’s Grave: Neofeudalism and the New Class Struggle*. Verso. (152 pages + endnotes)

week	reading
1	Fraser, <i>Cannibal Capitalism</i> , pp. xiii-74.
2	Fraser, <i>Cannibal Capitalism</i> , pp. 75-165
3	Bowcutt, <i>The Tanoak Tree: An Environmental History of a Pacific Coast Hardwood</i>
4	Russell, <i>Evolutionary History</i> , pp. 103-133
5	Stoll, <i>Profit: An Environmental History</i> , pp. 56-140 (skim pages 1-55)
6	Stoll, <i>Profit: An Environmental History</i> , pp. 141-257
7	Holleman, <i>Dust Bowls of Empire</i> , pp. 1-95
8	Holleman, <i>Dust Bowls of Empire</i> , pp. 96-163 + Optional: Demos, <i>Beyond the World's End</i> , pp. 1-21, 43-67, and 163-193.
9	Optional: Duggan, <i>Mean Girl: Ayn Rand and the Culture of Greed</i>
10	Optional: Dean, <i>Capital's Grave: Neofeudalism and the New Class Struggle</i>

Weekly assignments are due on Thursday and responses to your peer's posts are due by Sunday (instructions and rubrics provided in Canvas).

Program Goals:

This program will give you the analytical tools to understand contemporary environmental challenges in a historical context, e.g. soil loss and climate change. You will come to a better understanding of the complex and shifting relationship between the environment and humans. You will learn to use case studies of plants and specific regions to consider the effects of capitalism and racialized expropriation on ecological and agricultural systems.

Theme Questions:

In the course of our studies, we will explore the following theme questions:

- What is environmental history and how is it different from history?
- If we take seriously the notion that nature has “agency”, how does that change our study of the past?
- How can the history of capitalism inform our understanding of relations between people and nature?
- How do social, political and cultural trends influence how people think about nature and the relationship between people and nature?
- In what ways are contemporary attitudes about nature shaped by history, both real and imagined?

Learning Outcomes:

After successfully completing this program, students will be able to:

- demonstrate an ability to think in an interdisciplinary way about various environments in a historical context,
- use case studies to illustrate how science, colonialism, capitalism, and the state have contributed to ecological changes and shifting land use patterns in the U.S. and beyond,
- explain how plants and other organisms as well as abiotic environmental factors have acted as agents in the history of the U.S.,
- use an interdisciplinary analytical approach to link a wide range of topics covered by the field of environmental history, including plantation economics, scientific agriculture, consumption, and environmental movements (e.g. conservation), and
- interpret primary historical sources, including maps, photographs, and illustrations.

Week 1 * INTRODUCTIONS *

Seminar Reading: Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism*, pp. xiii-74

DUE: Tues, complete Getting to Know You Survey and Post Introducing Yourself (in Canvas) + Read and Respond to Community Agreement

DUE: Thurs, respond to three of your peers' Introduce Yourself posts + make two annotations on Fraser reading assignment in Hypothes.is

DUE: Sun, two responses to peers' annotations on Fraser reading assignment using Hypothes.is

Weds, April 1

6-7:15 pm Orientation

7:45-9 pm Workshop: Introduction to Group Annotation & Hypothes.is with Leah Cover

9:15-10 pm Discussion: Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism*, pp. xiii-74

Week 2 * CAPITALISM & THE ENVIRONMENT *

Seminar Reading: Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism*, pp. 75-165

Optional Reading: Collard & Dempsey, "A Parasite Not a Cannibal? How the State and Capital Protect Accumulation Amid Devastation"

DUE: Thurs, Canvas post on seminar reading

DUE: Sun, respond to three of your peers' posts on Canvas

Weds, April 8

6-7:30 pm Discussion: Fraser, *Cannibal Capitalism*, pp. 75-165

8-10 pm Small-Group Work: *Cannibal Capitalism* Worksheet

Week 3 * PACIFIC NORTHWEST FOREST ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY *

Required Reading: Bowcutt, *The Tanoak Tree: An Environmental History of a Pacific Coast Hardwood* (available as an eBook for free from the Evergreen Library; if you do buy a copy, proceeds go to support Indigenous efforts to revitalize tanoak groves for acorn production)

DUE: Thurs, three annotations on images and three on text in Bowcutt using Hypothes.is

DUE: Sun, two responses to peers' annotations on text in Bowcutt using Hypothes.is

Weds, April 15

6-7:30 pm Lecture: [Environmental History of Tanoak](#)

8-9 pm Workshop: Group Annotation of Images in Tanoak book using Hypothes.is with Leah Cover

9:15-10 pm Discussion: Bowcutt, *The Tanoak Tree*

Week 4 * NATURE & THE RISE OF INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM *

Seminar Reading: Russell, *Evolutionary History: Uniting History and Biology and Understanding Life on Earth*, pp. 103-133 (Chap. 9 “Evolution of the Industrial Revolution”) + Carver, “[A New and Prolific Variety of Cotton](#)”

Skim: Stoll, *Profit: An Environmental History*, pp. 1-56

DUE: Thurs, two Hypothes.is Annotations on Russell

DUE: Sun, responses to two of your peers’ Hypothes.is annotations

Weds, April 22

6-7:30 pm

Lecture: Cotton-A Fiber Plant’s Global Entanglements

8-9 pm

Workshop: Group Annotation of Cotton Images using Hypothes.is

9:15-10 pm

Discussion: Russell, *Evolutionary History*, pp. 103-133

Week 5 * INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM *

Lecture and Workshop Prep: Explore the Plant Narratives here <https://lab.plant-humanities.org/>

Seminar Reading: Stoll, *Profit: An Environmental History*, pp. 56-140

DUE: Thurs, two annotations on Cotton Images in Hypothes.is

Weds, April 29

6-7:30 pm

Guest Lecture & Workshop: Plant Humanities Lab with Dr. Emile Levesque-Jalbert, Post-doctoral Fellow, Plant Humanities Initiative, Dumbarton Oaks

8-10 pm

Discussion: Stoll, *Profit: An Environmental History*, pp. 1-140

Week 6 * CONSUMER CAPITALISM & THE ENVIRONMENT *

Seminar Reading: Stoll, *Profit: An Environmental History*, pp. 141-257

DUE: Thurs, Post on Stoll, *Profit: An Environmental History*

DUE: Sun, responses to three of your peers’ posts

Weds, May 6

6-7:30 pm

Lecture & Hypothes.is Workshop: Cotton Consumer Culture

8-10 pm

Discussion: Stoll, *Profit: An Environmental History*, pp. 141-257

Week 7 *HISTORICAL ACCOUNTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL CATASTROPHE*

Seminar Readings: Holleman, *Dust Bowls of Empire*, pp. 1-95

DUE: Sun, narrative analysis assignment linking historic Dust Bowl images to Holleman

Weds, May 13
6-7:30 pm Discussion: Holleman, *Dust Bowls of Empire*, pp. 1-95
8-10 pm Workshop: Narrative Analysis of Dust Bowl Media with Kate Cunningham

Week 8 * ENVIRONMENTAL MEDIA & “GREEN” CAPITALISM *

Seminar Reading: Holleman, *Dust Bowls of Empire*, pp. 96-163

pick your adventure

1. Workshop Reading for Media Makers: Demos, *Beyond the World’s End*, pp. 1-21, 43-67, and 163-193
2. Reading: Duggan, *Mean Girl: Ayn Rand and the Culture of Greed*
3. Reading: Dean, *Capital’s Grave: Neofeudalism and the New Class Struggle*

DUE: Thurs, Post on Holleman, *Dust Bowls of Empire*

DUE: Sun, responses to three of your peers’ posts

Weds, May 20
6-7:30 pm Discussion: Holleman, *Dust Bowls of Empire*, pp. 96-163 (*everyone attends*)
8-10 pm Remote Small Group Meetings on Duggan’s *Mean Girl* or Dean’s *Capital’s Grave* - come having read the book & ready to work with Hypothes.is
OR Sat, May 23
1-5 pm **In Person** Workshop: Media Makers with Kate Cunningham, TBA

Week 9 * STUDENT PRESENTATIONS *

Optional Reading: Duggan, *Mean Girl: Ayn Rand and the Culture of Greed*

Weds, May 27
6-7:30 pm Student Presentations: Media Makers
8-10 pm Student-Led Close Reading of Key Sections in Duggan, *Mean Girl*

Week 10 * STUDENT PRESENTATIONS & WRAPPING UP *

Optional Reading: Dean, *Capital’s Grave: Neofeudalism and the New Class Struggle*

DUE: Thurs, self-evaluation

Weds, June 3
6-8 pm Student-Led Close Reading of Key Sections in Dean, *Capital’s Grave*
8:30-10 pm Wrapping Up

EVALUATION MEETING: June 9-11 Individual Conferences with Faculty – schedule using Canvas scheduler

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ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING:

To achieve the learning outcomes, students will be engaged in multiple learning activities over the quarter. They will

- write three short essay style discussion posts in response to a set of prompts
- respond to three posts by peers for each discussion on assigned texts
- annotate multiple reading assignments using Hypothes.is and respond to peers' annotations
- annotate tanoak and cotton images using Hypothes.is and respond to peers' annotations
- give a presentation or lead a workshop on their group assignment

The assignments and point breakdown are listed below. Assignment rubrics used for grading are provided in Canvas. Grades will be posted in the Canvas grade sheet within a week of the due date.

Assignment	Points	Due Date
'Introduce Yourself' Post	required	Tues, March 31 @ 11:59 pm
Respond to Three of your Peer's 'Introduce Yourself' Post	required	Thurs, April 2 @ 11:59 pm
Two annotations on Fraser in Hypothes.is	2	Thurs, April 2 @ 11:59 pm
Two responses to peers' annotations on Fraser using Hypothes.is	2	Sun, April 5 @ 11:59 pm
Fraser Canvas Post	12	Thurs, April 9 @ 11:59 pm
Fraser Canvas Post Peer Responses (three)	6	Sun, April 12 @ 11:59 pm
Annotations on Text and Images in Bowcutt using Hypothes.is	6	Thurs, April 16 @ 11:59 pm
Two responses to peers' annotations on Bowcutt using Hypothes.is	2	Sun, April 19 @ 11:59 pm
Two annotations on Russell in Hypothes.is	2	Thurs, April 23 @ 11:59 pm
Two responses to peer annotations on Russell in Hypothes.is	2	Sun, April 26 @ 11:59 pm
Two annotations on Cotton Images using Hypothes.is	2	Thurs, April 30 @ 11:59 pm
Stoll Canvas Post	12	Thurs, May 7 @ 11:59 pm
Stoll Canvas Post Peer Responses (three)	6	Sun, May 10 @ 11:59 pm
Narrative analysis assignment linking historic images to Hollerman	2	Thurs, May 14 @ 11:59 pm
Hollerman Canvas Post	12	Thurs, May 21 @ 11:59 pm
Hollerman Canvas Post Peer Responses (three)	6	Sun, May 24 @ 11:59 pm
Student Presentation	6	May 27 or June 3 by 5 pm
Class Participation and Attendance	20	
Self-evaluation	required	Thurs, June 3 @ 11:59 pm
TOTAL	100	

Prior to completing these assignments, review the rubrics provided on Canvas that will be used for assessment. If you do not receive a satisfactory grade, discuss your options with your instructor. Please communicate as soon as possible if you're having difficulties completing the work on time or confused by a grade. Late work without an extension or beyond the extension will not be accepted.

Regarding the Canvas discussion assignments, your original post is worth 12 points. You'll also need to reply to at least three of your colleague's post. Replies are worth up to 6 points for Fraser, Stoll, and Hollerman. You'll need to complete both parts. Remember to respond to the discussion prompts provided and substantively reply to peers' posts per the directions and by the time indicated.

PARTICIPATION POLICIES:

Our work will be conducted remotely with both synchronous (live) and asynchronous activities. Students are expected to have computer and internet access to utilize the multiple modes of online learning (Zoom, Canvas, and Hypothes.is).

Class participation is a required component of the program. Everyone is expected to read the reading assignment prior to engaging in discussions on- and off-line. Attendance at synchronous sessions is expected. However, if due to a medical or personal emergency, you must miss a synchronous session, be advised that lectures and workshops will be recorded. However, seminars will not be recorded. If you are absent from more than two days of synchronous class-time, please contact the instructor to discuss ways to catch-up on what you missed. Excess absences may result in a loss of credit.

To foster and maintain a positive learning community, please follow these rules to online etiquette: [netiquette guidelines](#). Regarding rule #11, you can refer to me as Dr. Bowcutt, but I prefer Frederica. Go here for more information on [college-wide policies](#) including [Evergreen's Social Contract](#).

PLAGIARISM:

In academic communities, plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are serious offenses that can result in expulsion. Please review our community agreement and this statement on [Academic Dishonesty](#) from Evergreen's Master of Public Administration. If you have any questions or concerns, please email your instructor.

USE OF GENERATIVE AI:

This program emphasizes critical thinking and expository writing, which can be mimicked by generative AI (such as CoPilot and ChatGPT). The vitality of a learning community relies on academic honesty and the integrity of intellectual work. The use of generative AI in this course can undermine your learning, limit opportunities for intellectual growth, and impact your performance. Generative AI also can interfere with a fair and accurate assessment of your work. Therefore, all work submitted in this program must be your own. Students should not receive any assistance from any person or entity that writes or completes work for them. Use of AI as a replacement for your own thinking or writing is an academic integrity violation. *Note:* This block of text was modified from <https://teaching.ucr.edu/ai-classroom#understand-ai-potential>

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES:

Evergreen is committed to providing a reliable online course system to all users. However, in the event of any unexpected server outage or any unusual technical difficulty, which prevents students from completing a time sensitive activity, the instructor will provide an appropriate accommodation based on the situation. Students should immediately report any problems to the instructor and also contact the [Help Desk](#). Go here first for [Tips for Students on Using Canvas](#) and other resources for [Technology Help](#).

LEARNER SUPPORT:

Numerous forms of support are available to students at Evergreen. Websites with more information on the available resources are linked on our Canvas program website under the [Campus Resources](#) module, including [Access Services for Students with Disabilities](#), the [Evergreen Library](#), [MES Handbook](#), [MES Website](#), [Student Wellness Services](#), and [The Writing Center](#). You can also reach out to your instructor via email to request assistance or referrals to the appropriate office on campus or to make an individual appointment. That said, do be respectful of their time by first trying to find your own answer using the resources provided.

Various Campus Resources in a convenient list format.

- [Academic and Career Advising](#)
- [Academic honesty](#)
- [Access Services for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Alcohol/drug use](#)
- [All Official College Policies](#)
- [Assistive Technology \(AT\) Lab](#)(available to all students, staff, faculty)
- [Code of student rights and responsibilities](#)
- [COVID-19](#)
- [Conflict Resolution](#)
- [Counseling Services](#)
- [Evergreen's Social Contract](#)
- [First Peoples Multicultural, Trans, and Queer Support Services](#)
- [Free Speech Guide](#)
- [Library](#)
- [Media Loan](#)
- [Non-discrimination policy](#)
- [QuaSR: Quantitative & Symbolic Reasoning Center](#)
- [Sexual Misconduct reporting and resources](#)
- [Student Activities](#)
- [Student Employment](#)
- [Student Wellness Services](#)
- [The Writing Center](#)