

America by Nature

AMH 3931-1979

MAT 107

Dr. Jack E. Davis

273-3398/Ofc: Keene-Flint 235

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Course web-site information: <http://users.clas.ufl.edu/davisjac/>

Monday: 12:50-3:50

Ofc Hours: M, W, F: 11:30-12:30

Course Description:

In this course students will read a selection of works--academic and popular--illustrating how land, water, wildlife, and climate were driving elements in shaping the course of U.S. history, from European settlement to the present. Writing assignments will ask students to engage with principal themes encountered in the readings and to evaluate the idea of environmental determinism.

The course also emphasizes sharpening skills--reading comprehension, research, and writing--that will serve you in college and your professional life after. To that end, you will be required to read several books in this course and undertake several short research and writing assignments, capped by a slightly longer book review. Your work will be shared with and scrutinized by not only the professor but the entire class. And you will be required in turn to scrutinize the work of your classmates. Generally, we will use the first two hours of the class to discuss books and assignments. The last hour will serve for individual meetings with me in my office. We will do the latter by a rotation established in class at the beginning of the semester.

Class participation:

10% of the course grade

* Participation is based on your attendance and participation in all class assignments, including discussing assigned readings and evaluating writing assignments.

Course Assignments:

(see assignment descriptions at the end of the syllabus; **each assignment--except the Writing Mechanics Exercise--is worth 15% of the course grade**) Late papers will not be accepted.

Why Recognize Nature as a Historical Agent paper

Writing Mechanics Exercise

Who was George Perkins Marsh Paper

Identification essays 1

Identification essays 2

Natural of Unnatural Disaster Paper

Book Review

Course Grading Scale (see the UF grading scale at the end of syllabus):

A+ =97-100

A =94-96

A- =90-93

B+ =87-89

B =84-86

B- =80-83

C+ =77-79

C =74-76

C- =70-73

D =65-69

Assignments not completed earn a 0

Plagiarized assignment (see plagiarism section below) earn a 0

Assignments not turned in before or by stated due date will not be accepted. All assignments must be made available in hard copy. Emailed assignments cannot be accepted.

Class participation is based on attendance and discussion participation. You are allowed one

unexcused absence without penalty. Each additional absence will result in .5% deduction from the 10% class-participation requirement. Religious holidays, UF athletic travel conflicts, and written explanations from a certified health professional are eligible for an excused absence when cleared with the professor. See UF attendance policy at <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>.

Required Books:

Mark Fiege, *The Republic of Nature: An Environmental History of the United States* (University of Washington Press, 2013).

Mark Kurlansky, *The Big Oyster: New York on the Half Shell* (Random House, 2007).

Christopher Morris, *The Big Muddy: An Environmental History of the Mississippi and Its People from Hernando de Soto to Hurricane Katrina* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures with Nature in Modern America* (Basic Books, 2000).

Janisse Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* (Milkweed Editions, 2000).

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Jan 12

Class Introduction

Reading for class discussion: Introduction, Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth* (on reserve Library West)

Week 2: Jan 19 (Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday)

Week 3: Jan 26:

Why Recognize Nature as a Historical Agent Paper due

Writing Mechanics Exercise due

Week 4: Feb 2

Reading for class discussion: Fiege, introduction, chapter 1 and 2

Week 5: Feb 9

Who was George Perkins Marsh paper due

Week 6: Feb 16

Reading for Class Discussion: Fiege, chapter 3, 4, 5

Week 7: Feb 23

Identification Essays 1 due

Week 8: March 2 (Spring Break)

Week 9: March 9

Reading for Class Discussion: Kurlansky, *The Big Oyster*

Week 10: March 16

Identification Essays 2 due

Week 11: March 23

Reading for Class Discussion: Price, *Flight Maps*

Week 12: March 30

Natural or Unnatural Disaster Paper due

Week 13: April 6

Reading for Class Discussion: Fiege, chapters 6, 7, 9

Week 14: April 13

Reading for Class Discussion: Fiege, chapter 8; Ray, *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*

Week 15: April 20

Book Review due

Writing Assignment Descriptions

All assignments must draw from reliable primary-source and secondary-source materials. Do not consult Internet sites that are compiled by amateurs or fan clubs, including Wikipedia. Your best bet is to stick to Internet databases (such as Proquest or Jstor) from which you can access primary sources or scholarly materials. Documents on Google books and newspaper on-line are also fine. For hard-copy sources, use original documents or published works. **Restrict yourself to the page-length limit noted for each assignment.** All papers should be double spaced, computer generated, using default margin and header and footer setting, and 12-point font. Comply with the rules outlined in the Writing Mechanics Exercise. Noncompliance will result in a lower grade for your assignment. Cite all your sources using the Chicago Manual of Style rules.

Why Recognize Nature as a Historical Agent Paper Write a one-page paper addressing this question. The introductions of the Steinberg and Fiege readings should be valuable sources here, but you may consult others.

Writing Mechanics Exercise Find the link to the WME on my web site, print it out, and answer the twenty questions. The assignment will not receive a grade itself. The assignment instead should be used as a guide for writing your papers. Violating the rules outlined on the WME will earn a penalty on your writing assignments. Failure to complete the WME will result in an automatic 5-point deduction from each assignment (save the first) completed before turning

in the WME.

George Perkins Marsh Paper: Write a one-page biography of George Perkins Marsh. Define who he was, why he is historically significant, and how his work fits into our understanding of nature's agency in American history. Do not use Wikipedia or on-line (and off-line) encyclopedias as your sources.

Identification Essays 1 Define the individual terms writing **no more than three sentences** for each. (Be careful to avoid run-on sentences. Look up the definition if you don't know exactly the definition of a run-on sentence.) Link the term to nature's historical agency and identify the larger historical significance. Cite your sources, and ensure they are reliable sources. Wikipedia is not reliable.

1. anthropocentrism and nature
2. sedentary hunter-gathers
3. Columbian Exchange
4. yellow fever and the mosquito
5. Little Ice Age

Identification Essays 2 Define the individual terms writing **no more than three sentences** for each. (Be careful to avoid run-on sentences. Look up the definition if you don't know exactly the definition of a run-on sentence.) Link the term to nature's historical agency and identify the larger historical significance. Cite your sources, and ensure they are reliable sources. Wikipedia is not reliable.

1. guano and American agriculture
2. Chief Seattle's statement
3. Thomas Moran
4. salt domes in the southern U.S.
5. The Colorado River

Natural of Unnatural Disaster Write a one-page paper giving examples of how hurricanes or storms have influenced historical events and why in modern times the term "natural disaster" might be misleading.

Book Review Write a 700-word book review of Christopher Morris, *The Big Muddy: An Environmental History of the Mississippi and Its People from Hernando de Soto to Hurricane Katrina*. Your Review should summarize the contents of the book, and identify the types of sources the author consulted, the central argument presented, and the book's strengths and weaknesses.

Plagiarism/Honesty:

Keep in mind that your written assignments must represent original work. You cannot copy the work of anyone else or text from the Internet. Do not cobble together paragraphs or passages of separate texts and then try to claim that you have done original and legitimate work. You must write with your own ideas and in your own words. If you copy the words of someone else without putting those words in quotation marks, you are plagiarizing. Plagiarism is theft, and it is academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is grounds for an automatic failing grade in the course, a grade that is final and that cannot be made up. Please, if you have any questions about how you are citing or using sources, come to me for the answers.

Classroom Assistance:

Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office {<http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drp/>}. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide that documentation to the instructor when requesting accommodation.

For general counseling and mental health services provided by the university: 392-1575,

<http://www.counseling.ufl.edu/cwc/Default.aspx>

UF Grading Scale

Please note UF's new grading scale with the addition of minuses.
<https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/grades.aspx>

A = 4.0

A- = 3.67

B+ = 3.33

B = 3.0

B- = 2.67

C+ = 2.33

C = 2.0

C- = 1.67

D+ = 1.33

D = 1.0

D- = 0.67

E = 0.0

E1 = 0.0 Stopped attending or participating prior to end of class

I (incomplete) = 0.0

