

History of Sustainability, Fall 2017
AMH 2631-2E60

Prof. Jack E. Davis

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Rm: K-F 111

T: 10:40-1:55-2:45, Trs: 1:55-3:50

Ofc Hours: T, 11:40-1:40/Trs, 12:40-1:40

Ofc phone: 273-3398

Summary

This course is offered to help satisfy a core requirement in the Sustainability Studies major. The course, however, is open to all students.

Sustainability is not a new concept. Historically, it has existed under different names: conservation, scientific management, efficiency, wise use, natural resource management, land ethic. It has been driven by economic, ethical, social, and political incentives. It has been shaped by religious or spiritual beliefs, public and corporate policy, by science and scientific trends, economic conditions, and, most importantly, by nature itself.

The proposed course will offer a survey of sustainability that deals with these principles and covers the full sweep of American history. It will begin not with an examination of EuroAmerican beliefs and practices but with native ones. The so-called seventh-generation concept did not originate with a modern-day cleaning product or as an ecological concept but with the cultural beliefs of traditional peoples. Students will explore the origins of the concept and its clash with EuroAmerican priorities in colonial America. Semantical differences are important to understanding that clash. In place of animist beliefs of natives, EuroAmericans imposed the label of “natural resources” on nature, creating a predetermined prism through which Americans still view nature and reinforcing their tendency to set themselves apart and above the natural world.

Students will also look at evolving imperatives in American society—local, regional, and global—that forced many Americans to rethink their relationship with the natural world. Tobacco planters in colonial and antebellum Virginia, for example, desperately searched for ways to sustain their fast-depleting soil to stanch population loss to fresh lands on the western frontier and further South. Settlement in territorial Florida was to a large extent a product of this challenge unmet and solutions ignored. Another theme of the course will be cataclysmic events (economic depression and so-called natural disasters, for example) and major events in American history (industrialization and urbanization; technological and scientific developments; the rise of the consumer republic, for example) that inspired calls for and innovation in sustainable practices. A review of different practices and the personalities behind them will constitute an important component of the course. Finally, the course will conclude with an analysis of sustainability today as a product of multiple historical antecedents.

As a principal goal, the course will provide students with an understanding of the past that helps them make more informed decisions about the present and future. As in any upper-level history course, students will be required to read a range of assigned texts and undertake

research and writing projects (using archival and Internet sources, primary and secondary) that will enhance cognitive and communication skills.

Course Objectives:

- X Expanding one's knowledge of sustainability and its place in the larger American experience.
- X Introducing the student to scholarship in the history of sustainability.
- X Promoting critical thinking about social and environmental ethics.
- X Advancing the student's experience in the reading, researching, and writing tasks of the historian.
Improving the student's cognitive and communication skills.

Course Requirements:

- Class participation* 40%
- Take-home essays (2x20%) 40%
- Research essay, "Clamelot" 20%
- Writing-mechanics exercise (factored into writing assignments)

**The History of Sustainability will not resemble a traditional lecture course. Lecturing will be kept to a minimum. Instead, you the students will carry the discussion of the course. Each class, I will call the names of students randomly to answer questions based upon the reading(s) for the assigned day or week. Each student will receive a grade based on her/his response to the question. If you are unprepared or have not completed the reading and cannot answer the question, you will receive a zero for your effort. If you are not present when your name is called, you will receive a zero for your performance that day. Remember, class participation counts for 40% of your course grade.*

(Please see last section of syllabus for a description of other course requirements.)

Course Grading Scale (see UF grading scale at 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.

Only course grades of C or better will satisfy Gordon Rule, general education, and college basic distribution credit.

Required Books:

Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (Yale University Press, most recent edition). Additional readings are on reserve in Library West or available on-line.

Weekly Schedule

The Historical Problem

Week I: Aug 22 & 24

Introduction to the Course

Defining Sustainability: What Does it Mean from a Humanities Perspective?

Donald Worster, *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination*, chap 12.

Robert Goodland, "The Concept of Environmental Sustainability," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 26 (1995): 1-24 (in Jstor).

Week II: Aug 29 & 31

Where Humans Fit

William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, 69-90.

Comparing Native and EuroAmerican Perspectives: Economy, Society, and Natural Endowments

David Suzuki and Peter Knudtson, *Wisdom of the Elders: Sacred Native Stories of Nature*, chap 1, 1-22.

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, chaps 3-5.

Week III: Sept 5 & 7

Comparing Native and EuroAmerican Perspectives, cont.

From Infinite to Finite or Not

Nash, *Wilderness and the American Minds*, chap 2 and 3.

The New Republic

Week IV: Sept 12 & 14

Forgotten Roots of American Sustainability

George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature: Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action*, chap 3, 128-329 (E-book).

Week V: Sept 19 & 21

Writing Mechanics Exercise Due

Forgotten Roots, cont.

Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, chaps 4 and 5.

National Identity

Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, prologue and chap 1.

Week VI: Sept 26 & 28

Hidden Connections

Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures With nature in Modern America*, chap 1

Prologue to a New Gospel

Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, chaps 6 & 7.

Week VII: Oct 3 (no class) & 5 (yes class)

Biophilia

Donald Worster, *A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir*, prologue.

The Science of Efficiency

Week VIII: Oct 10 & 12

Take-Home Essay 1 Due

Resource Sustainability During the Progressive Era and Great Depression

Woods and Water

Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, chaps 8-10.

Week IX: Oct 17 & 19

The Urban Model

Cyrenus Wheeler, "Sewers: Ancient and Modern," (Cayuga County Hist. Soc., 1887): 7-29, 42+

Available online at: http://www.sewerhistory.org/articles/design/1887_abs01/article.pdf

Week X: Oct 24 & 26

Greenspace

Anne Whiston Spira, "Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted," *Uncommon Ground*, 91-113.

Wildlife

Jared Orsi, "From Horicon to Hamburgers and Back Again: Ecology, Ideology, and Wildfowl

Management, 1917-1935,” *Environmental History Review* 18 (Winter 1994): 19-40.

Week XI: Oct 31 & Nov 2

Sustaining Agriculture in the Wake of Ruin

Worster, *The Wealth of Nature*, chap 6.

Kevin Roose, “Sheep Lawn Mowers, and Other Go-Getters,” *New York Times*, November 2, 2011(Google the title to find on-line).

Special Note: ***Class field trip to Seahorse Key! Saturday and Sunday Nov. 4th and 5th.*** *An hour’s drive west of Gainesville and another mile into the Gulf of Mexico by boat, the Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge protects rare undeveloped barrier islands. The refuge is an important rookery for nesting migratory birds and a laboratory for Gulf science. We’ll meet Saturday morning in the quaint fishing village of Cedar Key (home of Clamelot, your final assignment), travel by boat to Seahorse Key and spend the night in a two-hundred-year-old lighthouse. The field trip fee will be a little under \$100; I’ll give you a specific figure as soon as I know class numbers and other details. We will be joining Professor Cynthia Barnett’s environmental journalism class. More info, directions and contacts to come by email.*

Week XII: Nov 7 & 9

The Electric Good and Better Life

Wesley Arden Dick, “When Dams Weren’t Damned: The Public Power Crusade and Visions of the Good Life in the Pacific Northwest in the 1930s,” *Environmental Review* 13 (Autumn-Winter 1989): 113-53.

Special Note: ***Tuesday Nov. 7th 6 p.m., Library East: Western park ranger turned environmental journalist [Jordan Fisher Smith](#), author of *Engineering Eden: The True Story of a Violent Death, a Trial and the Fight Over Controlling Nature, who also works in film and magazines, will lecture on how we share scientific knowledge in an era of alternative facts, when even park rangers are constrained in their campfire circle talks (making environmental communication that much more important). Sponsored by UF’s departments of History and Journalism, with additional support from the Center for the Humanities in the Public Sphere and the George A. Smathers Libraries.****

Week XIII: Nov 14 & 16

The Electric Good and Better Life, cont.

Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water*, chaps, 5 & 6, 145-213.

Film: *Cadillac Desert*, episode 1.

Post-WWII

Week XIV: Nov 21 (Thanksgiving Nov 23)

An Unsustainable Course

Lyndon B. Johnson, "Beautification," Roderick Nash ed., *American Environmentalism: Readings in Conservation History*, 181-86.

Rachel Carson, "Pesticides," Nash, *American Environmentalism*, 191-94.

President's Science Advisory Committee, "Pollution," Nash, *American Environmentalism*, 195-201.

Paul Ehrlich, "Overpopulation," Nash, *American Environmentalism*, 202-05.

Barry Commoner, "Fundamental Causes of the Environmental Crisis," Nash, *American Environmentalism*, 206-14.

The Council on Environmental Quality, "The State of the Environment," Nash, *American Environmentalism*, 215-26.

Week XV: Nov 28 & 30

Mechanisms of Sustainability: High-tech Management and Planning

Clamelot Paper Due

Samuel P. Hays, "From Conservation to Environmentalism," Nash, *American Environmentalism*, 144-52.

Film: *Gimme Green*

Redefining Parameters

Andrew Kirk, "Appropriating Technology" *The Whole Earth Catalog* and *Counterculture Environmental Politics*, *Environmental History* 6 (July 2001): 374-94.

Mauricio Schoijet, "Limits to Growth and the Rise of Catastrophism," *Environmental History* 4 (October 1999): 515-30.

Aquaculture and the Cedar Key Model

Week XVI: Dec 5

Take-Home Essay 2 Due

Course Requirements Descriptions:

All written work for the course must be typed or computer generated and in 12-point double-spaced print with default or one-inch margins. Your work must also be presented in third-person language.

Writing Mechanics exercise can be found on my web site. Click the “Writing Mechanics Exercise” link under the “Course Handouts” section. Printout and answer the questions by circling that which you believe to be the correct response. You will be required to follow the rules of writing mechanics in all writing assignments for the course. Up to five points will be deducted from your assignment grade if you violate these rules.

Take-home essays will represent responses to a set of discussion prompts posted on my web site. The prompts will be drawn from the assigned readings and the course discussions, and you will be expected to use the course readings and your class notes as sources to answer the questions (do not consult any other sources). Each answer must be presented in essay format, using formal, academic language and style (i.e., complete sentences, tightly constructed paragraphs, no colloquialisms). Do not, in other words, provide answers in lists or bullets. Those exams that address each prompt in a rigorous and organized manner are more likely to earn a decent grade. These grades, too, will be dependent in part on your compliance with the rules in the “Writing Mechanics” exercise.

Research essay, “Clamelot”: The object of this assignment is to have you research and write about the conversion of Cedar Key, Florida, from a traditional fishing economy, following the 1995 gill-net ban, to an economy based on sustainable aquaculture. You will need to hunt down research materials, construct a paper, and prepare to discuss this historical development in class. You should focus on themes of sustainability, which may take you beyond Cedar Key (hint, the Suwanee River). The final product of the assignment is a five-page, double-spaced writing assignment. Use default margin and footer and header settings. Use 11- or 12-point font. You must also footnote or endnote your sources and provide a bibliography of all sources consulted. Remember, this is a history course, and your assignment is a history research paper. So don’t write solely, or even extensively, about what Cedar Key is doing now.

Again, following the rules of the “Writing Mechanics” exercise is imperative to doing work of full potential.

Class Rules are relatively minimal. You may take notes with a computer. But if I catch you emailing or texting, I reserve the right to post your maleficence on Facebook. Cell phones should be turned off as if you are traveling on a commercial airliner. If your phone rings, I reserve the right to answer it.

Plagiarism:

Keep in mind that your written assignments must represent original work. You cannot copy the work of anyone else or text from the Internet or any other source and pass it off as your own. 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, **REGARDLESS OF CITING THE SOURCE**, you are plagiarizing. Plagiarism is theft, and it is academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is grounds for an automatic failing grade on the assignment, 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.

I CATCH A PLAGIARIST EVERY SEMESTER.

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.

UF Grading Scale

Please note UF's new grading scale with the addition of minuses.

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

Additional information can be found at the following link:

<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationgrades.html>

<http://www.isis.ufl.edu/minusgrades.html>

Course Evaluation:

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course. These evaluations are conducted online at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results>.

Welcome, and good luck!