

Ellen Stroud
303 Rice Hall
History Department

telephone: 775-8530
e-mail: ellen.stroud@oberlin.edu
office hours: Tues, 2-4, drop-in hours
Wed, 5-7, sign up by 4:30

Writing Tutors: Maya Ziv (Maya.Ziv@oberlin.edu) and Laurie Stein (Laurie.Stein@oberlin.edu)

History 252: American Environmental History

Fall 2005
Tuesdays and Thursdays
8:35 - 9:50 am and 11-12:15 pm
King 239

This course explores the major themes of U.S. Environmental History, examining changes in the American landscape, the development of ideas about nature in the United States, and the history of U.S. environmental activism. Throughout the course, we will be exploring definitions of nature, environment, and environmental history, as we investigate the interactions between Americans and their physical worlds.

Reading:

The following books are available at the Oberlin Bookstore, and are on reserve at Mudd Library:

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

Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866*.

Mark Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks*.

Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*.

Eric Klinenberg, *Heat Wave: A Social Autopsy of Disaster in Chicago*.

In addition, a number of shorter readings are available both on reserve at the library, on electronic reserve (ERES): <http://eres.cc.oberlin.edu>, or through other electronic databases.

Class Discussion and Participation:

Despite the fact that this is a large class, course attendance and participation are crucial components. Each student is expected to have mastered that day's readings before class, and to be prepared to engage in intelligent discussion of those readings. Occasional in-class writing exercises will be considered as components of the participation grade, as will engagement in small-group discussions. In addition, at the end of the term, each student will discuss her or his research with the class. Class attendance and participation will account for 15 percent of the final course grade.

Because participation and discussion are such important components of this class, you are specifically encouraged to make it as easy as possible for everyone in class to play a part. Successful class discussions are a group effort, in which the most garrulous among us make space for those more reluctant to speak up.

In addition, because discussion happens much more freely in a class that is relatively small, and cohesive, and familiar with and supportive of each other, it will be important for you to attend the section for which you are registered. Occasionally it may be impossible for you to attend your own section, and once or twice, that will be acceptable. After the second time, however, you will be counted as absent if you do not attend at your registered time.

Writing:

This is a writing certification course, so we will be doing a lot of writing. You are encouraged to consult with the writing tutors frequently for advice and guidance on your writing work. If you contact them early enough, they will be available to help you formulate your ideas and work through rough drafts, which will be a major benefit to you. Take advantage of the help they offer! Remember, too, that they are also students with heavy schedules; there will be times when they are unavailable, and you may need to consult the tutors at the writing center in Mudd Library as well.

Your first formal writing assignment is due next week, on Thursday, September 15, at the beginning of class. The assignment will be distributed and discussed at our next class meeting; it is a very brief writing exercise, but one that you should take seriously, since we will be returning to it later in the semester.

The most significant piece of writing for this course will be an eight-to-ten-page environmental history of a subject of your choosing, using the methods and ideas learned throughout the semester. Guidelines for this paper will be posted on Blackboard. A two-page paper proposal with an annotated bibliography is due on Tuesday, October 4th. This proposal will not be graded independently, but will be considered as part of the grade for the final paper. That means that a late, incomplete, or poorly considered proposal will bring down your final grade, and a clear, concise, well-constructed proposal will improve it. Think the proposal through carefully, check the guidelines on Blackboard, and consult with your writing tutors about how best to approach the assignment.

Rough drafts of the final paper, though not required, will be accepted for comments until the beginning of class on Thursday, December 1st. You are encouraged to meet with the writing tutors to prepare both your rough draft and your final draft. Think ahead: the tutors will not be able to meet with every student during the last two weeks of class, and they will not be able to set up meetings after the last day of class, as they will be preparing for their own exams. The earlier you make an appointment with your tutor, the more likely they will be able to help you out.

Every student will also give a research presentation to the class during the week of December 6th, which will be considered as part of the class participation grade. Final drafts, which are the designated final project for the class, are due at 7 pm on Thursday, December 22 (which is the latest of the two scheduled finals times for this class).

Papers should all be submitted in hard copy, and should be double-spaced, with one-inch margins, and in a twelve-point font. All writing assignments are due at the beginning of class on the due date.

Due dates should be taken seriously. Papers will lose one-third of a letter grade for every 24-hour period they are late. That means, for example, that a paper that normally would have received a B+ would receive a B if it were turned in the morning after it was due.

Students must complete and turn in all written work in order to pass the course. That means, for example, that a student who has received an A on every assignment but one, but neglects to turn in that one, will fail the entire course.

Exams:

There will be two in-class exams for this course, the dates of which are included in course schedule. Exams cannot be made up except in absolutely extraordinary circumstances.

Grading:

To summarize, the course will be graded as follows:

Class attendance and participation:	15 %
First Paper:	10%
Project Proposal:	required, but not graded
First exam:	15 %
Second Exam:	30 %
Final Paper:	30 %

Schedule of Classes and Assignments:

Week One

Introduction

Tuesday, September 6

Introductions and Definitions

Thursday, September 8

What is Environmental History?

Reading:

William Cronon, "Kennecott Journey: The Paths out of Town," from William Cronon, George Miles and Jay Gitlin, eds., *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992), 28-51. (ERES)

Mart A. Stewart, "Environmental History: Profile of a Developing Field," *History Teacher* 31:3 (May 1998): 351-68. (ERES)

Week Two

Contact and Conquest

Tuesday, September 13

Pre-Contact Landscapes

Reading:

Neal Salisbury, "The Indians Old World: Native Americans and the Coming of Europeans," *William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, Volume 53, Issue 3 (July 1996), 435-458. (JSTOR)

Thursday, September 15

Colliding Worlds

Reading:

Thomas Jefferson, "Notes on the State of Virginia," Queries 1, 2, and 3 (1787), from Merrill D. Peterson, ed., *The Portable Thomas Jefferson* (New York: Penguin Books, 1975), 23-46. (ERES)

John M. Murrin, "Beneficiaries of Catastrophe: The English Colonies in America," from Eric Foner, ed., *The New American History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 3-23. (ERES)

First Paper Due

Week Three

Early European Settlement

Tuesday, September 20

Domesticating the Landscape

Reading:

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 3-81.

Thursday, September 22

New Economies

Reading:

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, 82-170.

Week Four

Antebellum Years

Tuesday, September 27

Library Workshop

Reading:

Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years*, 1-172.

Thursday, September 29

Early Urban Environments

Reading:

Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years*, 175-242.

Week Five

Transformations of War

Tuesday, October 4

Landscape, labor, and war

Proposal for final paper due

Thursday, October 6

Commodification

Reading:

William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1991), 97-147 and 263-309. (ERES)

Week Six

Industrial Landscapes

Tuesday, October 11

A Changing World

Reading:

Karl Jacoby, "Class and Environmental History: Lessons From "The War in the Adirondacks," *Environmental History* 2:3 (July 1997): 324-342. (ERES)

Thursday, October 13 Yom Kippur: No Class

Week Seven

Midterm Week

Tuesday, October 18 Midterm Exam (in class)

Thursday, October 20 Research Workshop

Week Eight

Fall Break

Tuesday, October 25 Fall Break (No Class)

Thursday, October 27 Fall Break (No Class)

Week Nine

The Creation of Wilderness

Tuesday, November 1 Conserving forests

Reading:
Mark Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness*, 1-82.

Thursday, November 3 Preserving ideals

Reading:
Mark Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness*, 83-139.

Week Ten

Dust and Depression

Tuesday, November 8 Managing the landscape

Reading:
Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 3-138.

Thursday, November 10 The New Deal

Reading:
Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl*, 140-243.

Week Eleven

Nuclear Nature

Tuesday, November 15

New Perils

Reading:

Aldo Leopold, "The Land Ethic," from *A Sand County Almanac, with Essays on Conservation From Round River* (New York, Ballantine Books, June 1990 printing, (copyright: Oxford, 1949)), 237-264. (ERES)

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, 187-297.

A time-management alert here: we have very light reading scheduled for next several class sessions, but we still have one book to go: you might want to get a head start on *Heat Wave*, which we will be discussing in two weeks. Also, this would be a good time to be meeting with the writing tutors about your final paper.

Thursday, November 17

Film: *Silent Spring*

Week Twelve

The Environmental Movement

Tuesday, November 22

Earth Day and Beyond

Reading:

Edward Abbey, *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (New York, Avon Books, 1976 (copyright: Ed Abbey, 1975), 1-7. (ERES)

Thursday, November 24

Thanksgiving: No Class

Week Thirteen

Environmental Justice

Tuesday, November 29

Reconceptualizing Crises

Reading:

Mike Davis, "Fortress L.A.," from *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future of Los Angeles* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books: 1992 (copyright: Verso, 1990)), 223-263. (ERES)

Eric Klinenberg, *Heat Wave*, 1-128.

Thursday, December 1 Urban Environments

Reading:
Eric Klinenberg, *Heat Wave*, 129-242.

Last day to turn in rough drafts of final paper

Week Fourteen

Presentations

Tuesday, December 6 Presentations

Thursday, December 8 Presentations

Week Fifteen

Concluding Thoughts

Tuesday, December 13 Is There Trouble with Wilderness?

Reading:

William Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," from William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995; paperback edition, 1996), 69-90 (ERES)

Dave Foreman, "All Kinds of Wilderness Foes," *Wild Earth* 24 (Winter 96/97), 1-4. (ERES)

Gary Snyder, "Nature As Seen from Kitkitdizze is no 'Social Construction,'" *Wild Earth* 24 (Winter 96/97), 8-9. (ERES)

George Sessions, "Reinventing Nature? The End of Wilderness? A Response to William Cronon's *Uncommon Ground*," *Wild Earth* 24 (Winter 96/97), 46-52. (ERES)

Bill Willers, "The Trouble With Cronon," *Wild Earth* 24 (Winter 96/97), 59-61. (ERES)

Thursday, December 14 Second Exam

Thursday, December 22 Final paper due at 7 pm, in hard copy.

Location to be announced.