

HISTORY 300W/400
The History of Nature
Spring 2015



This upper-level research seminar explores the history of western ideas and attitudes toward nature from (roughly) the Enlightenment to the present. Drawing on a range of thinkers and writers from Petrarch to Rachel Carson as well as some selected secondary scholarship, we will study just a few of the many ways in which humans have thought about and treated the natural world around them and how the natural world has shaped human history in turn. Obviously, give so vast a subject as this we cannot aspire to anything like comprehensiveness. The assigned readings constitute a mere sampler meant to encourage deeper independent engagement with the subject. A still-essential starting point for those so encouraged is Clarence J. Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore: Nature and Culture in Western Thought from Ancient Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century* (1967).

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stewart.weaver@rochester.edu. Office Hours: Wednesday 10-12 and by appointment.

Books: The following books are required and available for purchase at the new Barnes and Noble bookstore. You may also order them on line if you prefer:

Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World* (Oxford)
William Cronon, *Changes in the Land* (Hill & Wang)
Londa Schiebinger, *Nature's Body* (Rutgers Univ. Press)
R. W. Emerson/H. D. Thoreau, *Nature and Walking* (Concord Library)
Charles Darwin, *Voyage of the Beagle* (Penguin)
Alexander Humboldt, *Personal Narrative* (Penguin)
John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (Penguin Nature Classics)
Mark Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness* (Oxford)
Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*. (Houghton Mifflin)
Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (Touchstone)

Note that there will be additional short reading assignments every week as the syllabus indicates. All readings not listed above will appear in due course as PDF files under “Course Materials” on Blackboard. Moreover, I reserve the right to improvise and adjust reading assignments as needed as the semester proceeds. The syllabus remains a work in progress.

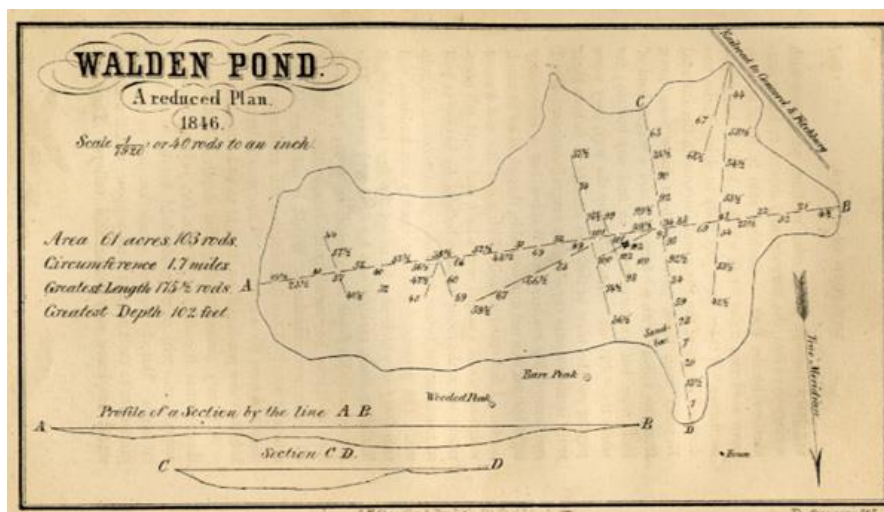
Course Requirements:

1. consistent reading, attendance, and class participation (20%)
2. weekly prepared comments or prompts for class discussion, to be submitted to me by e-mail no later than noon on the day of class (10%)
3. 4-6 page review essay on any topic of interest, due March 18 (20%)
4. 12-15 page (HIS 300) or 20-25 (HIS 400) page final research paper, due May 4 (50%)

A Note on the Papers: All papers for this class must be written in stylistic and editorial conformity with *The Chicago Manual of Style*. For an excellent writing manual that is consistent with Chicago style, see Kate L. Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*. For a guide that is particular to writing history papers, see William Kelleher Storey, *Writing History: A Guide for Students*. I am of course available myself at all times for help with writing, as are the consultants at the College Writing and Speaking Center in Rush Rhees Library. See <http://writing.rochester.edu/help/index.html>

Internet Resources: For a complete and responsible gateway into online resources for the interdisciplinary study of history, nature, and the natural environment, go to H-Environment (<http://www.h-net.org/~environ/>) and follow the links to “online resources.”

Academic Honesty: All students in this class will be expected to be familiar with and abide by the principles of academic honesty as laid down by the College of Arts and Sciences academic honesty policy. For the full articulation of this policy (including the consequences of its violation), see <http://www.rochester.edu/college/honesty/>



Class Schedule

- January 14: Introduction to the Seminar
- * Raymond Williams, “Ideas of Nature,” from *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (1980)
 - * Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science*, 155 (March 1967)
- January 21: Latitudes and Attitudes: the Foundations of Environmental History
- * Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (1983), chs. 1, 2, 4 (“Compassion for Brute Creation”) **OR** 5 (“Trees and Flowers”), and 6.
 - * William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (1983), chs. 1, 2, 3, 5 (“Commodities of the Hunt”) **OR** 6 (“Taking the Forest”), and 8.
- January 28: The Economy of Nature: Ecology in the 18th Century
- * Gilbert White, from *The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne* (1789)
 - * Carl von Linné (Linnaeus), from *The Economy of Nature* (1749)
 - * Donald Worster, from *Nature’s Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (1977), Part One, “Two Roads Diverged: Ecology in the Eighteenth Century,” pp. 1-25.
- February 4: The Gender of Nature
- * Londa Schiebinger, *Nature’s Body*, 2nd ed (2004), chs. TBA
- February 11: The Science of Nature, the Nature of Science
- * Alexander von Humboldt, from *Personal Narrative of a Journey to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent* (1814-25)—selections TBA

* Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle* (1839)—selections TBA

February 18: Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory

* Petrarch, “The Ascent of Mont Ventoux” (1350)

* William Wordsworth, from *The Prelude, or Growth of a Poet’s Mind* (1799-1850). Selections TBA.

* John Ruskin, from *Modern Painters*, vol. 4 “Of Mountain Beauty” (1856).

* Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (1959), Introduction (pp. 1-33).

February 25 The Views from Concord and Cooperstown

* Ralph Waldo Emerson, from *Nature* (1836)

* Henry David Thoreau, from *Walden* (1854); “Walking” (1862); “Ktaadn” (1864)

* Susan Fennimore Cooper, from *Rural Hours* (1850)

March 4: Natural Theology and the Darwinian Revolution

* William Paley, from *Natural Theology; or, Evidences of the Existence and Attributes of the Deity* (1802)

* Charles Darwin, from *Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871).

* Alfred Russel Wallace, “On the Tendency of Varieties to depart indefinitely from the Original Type” (1858).

* Peter Bowler, from *Evolution: The History of an Idea* (1984), chs. 5 & 6 (selections TBA)

March 7 – 15 Spring Break

- March 18: Art & Nature—A thematic tour of the Memorial Art Gallery
Short review essays due
- March 25: Two Prophets of Conservation
- * George Perkins Marsh, from *Man and Nature* (1864)
 - * John Muir, *My First Summer in the Sierra* (1911)
 - * Max Oelschlaeger, from *The Idea of Wilderness* (1991), ch. 6, “John Muir: Wilderness Sage,” pp. 172-204.
- April 1 The Trouble with Wilderness
- * William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature,” in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (1996).
 - * Mark Spence, from *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (2000)
- April 8 Ethics and Ecology: the birth of the environmental movement
- * Aldo Leopold, from *A Sand County Almanac* (1949)
 - * Rachel Carson, from *Silent Spring* (1962)
- April 15 Cries from the Desert
- * Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness* (1968).
 - * John McPhee, from *Encounters with the Archdruid* (1971), Part III: A River.
- April 22: Nature Constructed: A Tour of Highland Park
- * Frederick Law Olmsted, selections from his writings TBA

- * Anne Whiston Spirn, “Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted,” in William Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (1996)

April 29 Conclusion: The End of Nature?

- * Bill McKibben, from *The End of Nature* (1989), selections TBA
- * Michael Pollan, from *The Omnivore’s Dilemma* (2006), selections TBA
- * Barbara Kingsolver, “Knowing Our Place,” in *Small Wonder* (2002).

Monday May 4: Research Papers Due

