

History 484, Section WC3
Spring 2007
Dr. Good

Armstrong, Room 110
Mondays, 3:30-5:20pm

Historical Research Capstone: Environmental History

Welcome to the course that turns you from a history student into a practicing historian. In this course you will join the conversation with other historians and you will define, research, and write your own contribution to the historical enterprise. Should you require a writing sample for a job application or for graduate school, this essay will represent your best work.

Expectations:

- 1) Participation and completion of assignments is expected on time.
- 2) Students will conduct library exercises aimed at developing bibliographies, defining a research topic, and at practicing research that is topically organized.
- 3) The research paper will be evaluated in rough draft, with the instructor and one student providing comments to guide the author in the improvement of writing and towards further research. The final draft will be evaluated for both the depth of research and the cogency of argument.

Primary Sources: You will be expected to base the research project on sources produced at the time of the historical events. These may include books, journal and newspaper articles, government documents, anthropological reports, scientific reports, manuscript materials from the West Virginia Collection or the National Archives, etc. Depending on the topic you choose to research, this material may require travel to Pittsburgh, Washington, DC, etc. So choose carefully. The internet may be used mainly for preliminary searching, but original printed or manuscript (hand-written) documents must form the core of your research material.

Secondary Sources: We begin the semester by building a strong common background by reading and reviewing six books in environmental history. These are among the most important books in the topic and they have been chosen to provide a broad overview of the field. We will discuss the books by Worster and Cronon in the first week on eCampus, and the others during the next few weeks. You will write three short essay reviews, one on Worster and Cronon, one on Steinberg and Merchant, and one on Burns and Grove. These essays are staged to prep you in different skills necessary for the ultimate research project.

These six books are:

- 1) Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: The Roots of Ecology*
- 2) William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*
- 3) Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History*
- 4) Carolyn Merchant, *The Columbia guide to American environmental history*

- 5) Shirley Stewart Burns, *Bringing Down the Mountains: The Impact of Mountaintop Removal on Southern West Virginia Communities*
- 6) Richard H. Grove, *Nature and the Orient: The Environmental History of South and Southeast Asia*

When you define your research project, you will identify relevant secondary literature beyond these six books and incorporate it into your project and final research essay. The WVU library may not have the books you need. You may request these through Interlibrary Loan or EZ-Borrow or buy them anyway you know. You will write a fourth essay review on books related to your research project. This essay review will get you ready to work as a historian, in conversation with other historians, on the topic YOU have chosen.

Lastly, you must buy, read, and USE:

- 1) Mary Lynn Rampolla, *A Pocket Guide to Writing in History*.
- 2) William Strunk, E.B. White, and E.B. White Jr., *The Elements of Style*, 4th ed., 1999.
- All footnotes, bibliography, and style will be judged and graded according to these standards.

Evaluation: Students should note that the work load in this course is higher than normal. It is, after all, the ultimate history course. You are **absolutely expected** to have finished assignments and to be ready for discussion at assigned times. All written assignments are to be delivered both as a Word attachment via email and in hardcopy. Late delivery begins with a penalty of one letter grade after 5pm on due date and escalates one letter grade per week thereafter. **Plagiarism means a zero on the assignment concerned on first offense, an F in the class on second offense. Dr. Good will rigorously check originality of student work.**

Grades will be determined on the basis of:

*Class Participation, including attendance and discussion.....	100
*Essay reviews:	
Worster and Cronon, due Friday, Jan. 18	25
Steinberg and Merchant, due Friday, Jan 25	25
Grove and Burns, due Friday, Feb. 1	25
Two books of your choice, due Friday, Feb. 22	25
*Library Research Assignment, due Friday, Feb. 22	
Title and 250-word Abstract for conference organizer.....	20
Primary Bibliography (as in Rampolla).....	10
Secondary Bibliography (as in Rampolla).....	10
Outline of main arguments: interpretation.....	30
Outline of types of data: evidence	30
*First drafts of research essays, due Thursday, March 20	200
*Reviewers' comments due back Monday, March 31	50
Final draft of research essay, due Friday, April 18	400
Conference presentations, 5-10 minutes each, Monday, April 28 in class	<u>50</u>
Total	1000

Dr. Good will schedule an individual conference with each student to discuss the first drafts the week of March 31. Each student will read a first draft by another student as if he or she were an anonymous reviewer for a journal. Suggestions for changes, additions, clarifications, better use of evidence, etc. must be made.

The main hallmark of your research essay is quality. The essay shall be about 25 to 30 pages, double-spaced, with footnotes and bibliography. Remember to follow the citation style in Rampolla. Your first draft should be a solid attempt. Reviewer's comments should be no more than two pages, double-spaced. The text for conference presentation should be the right length for a 5 to 10-minute oral presentation. It must include a PowerPoint presentation.

I will be available for conferences one-on-one at any time. Don't be afraid to contact me.

Course Schedule. All classes are in regular classroom unless otherwise stated.

Monday, Jan. 14. First meeting. Discuss goals of course, seriousness of course. What is environmental history?

Friday, Jan. 18. Essay review #1 due. Hard copy and Word file via email.

Monday, Jan. 21. NO CLASS. Martin Luther King Day.

Friday, Jan 25. Essay review #2 due.

Monday, Jan. 28. Meet to discuss Worster, Cronon, Steinberg, and Merchant. Again, what is environmental history?

Friday, Feb. 1. Essay review #3 due.

Monday, Feb. 4. Meet to discuss Grove and Burns. Discuss the next assignments.

Monday, Feb. 11. **Meet in West Virginia Collection**, 6th floor of Main Library.

Monday, Feb. 18. Discussion: progress reports on Library Assignments. Problems coming up with topics? Next step: research and writing plans.

Friday, Feb. 22. Essay review #4 and Library Research Assignment due.

Monday, Feb. 25. NO CLASS. Individual consultations available.

Monday, Mar. 3. **Meet in Eliza's Café**. Dr. Good available for consultation.

Monday, Mar. 10. Discussion: progress reports on research and writing.

Monday, Mar. 17. NO CLASS. Individual consultations available.

Thursday, Mar. 20. First draft of research essay due.

Monday, Mar. 24. NO CLASS. Spring recess.

Monday, Mar. 31. NO CLASS. **Individual consultations REQUIRED. Referee's report on other student's first draft due.**

Monday, Apr. 7. NO CLASS.

Monday, Apr. 14. Meet to present progress reports.

Friday, Apr. 18. Final draft of research essay due.

Monday, Apr. 21. Meet to evaluate the research experience. Assessment.

Monday, Apr. 28. **Undergraduate conference on Environmental History. Open to whole Department of History: Faculty, graduate students, history majors.**

Social Justice: WVU and I are committed to social justice. I expect to maintain a positive learning environment based upon open communication, mutual respect, and non-discrimination. WVU does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, age, disability,

veteran status, religion, sexual orientation, color, or national origin. Neither do I. Any suggestions as to how to further an open and positive environment in this class will be appreciated and given serious consideration.

Disability: If you are a person with a disability and anticipate needing any type of accommodation to participate in this class, please advise me and make appropriate arrangements with Disability Services (293-6700).

Cell phones and Beepers: Turn them off before you enter the room! If you forget and it rings during class, turn it off immediately and do not answer it, in the class or in the hall. You get one “OOPS” and that’s it. If you know of an emergency situation that requires that you be accessible, tell me before class and sit near the door. Penalty for misbehavior: **Extreme embarrassment and public humiliation for your bad manners!!**

ESSAY-REVIEWS: ADVICE AND QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOU:

HOW TO CRITIQUE SOMEONE ELSE’S WRITING¹

Essay-Review #1: Use the following four rules explicitly in your essay, 3-5 pages, double-spaced, with footnotes and bibliography as in Rampolla.

Mortimer’s Four Rules for Interpretive Reading:

1. Come to terms with an author by interpreting his basic words
2. Grasp the author’s leading propositions through finding his important sentences
3. Know the author’s arguments by finding them in, or constructing them out of, sequences of sentences
4. Determine which of his problems the author solved and which he did not, and, of the latter, decide which the author knew he failed to solve

Essay-Review #2: Ditto, using these rules. Build on rules above.

Mortimer’s Rules of Critical Reading:

1. You must first be able to say, with reasonable certainty, I understand, before you can say any one of the following things: I agree, I disagree, or I suspend judgment
2. There is no point in winning an argument if you know or suspect you are wrong
3. Regard disagreements as capable of being resolved

Essay-Review #3: Ditto, just these rules.

Mortimer’s Rules for Talking Back:

1. An author may be unformed
2. An author may be misinformed, ie, assert what is not true
3. An author may be illogical
4. An author may be incomplete, ie, he may not have solved all the problems he started

ken from Mortimer J. Adler, *How to Read a Book: The Art of Getting a Liberal Education*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1940, chapter 12, “The Etiquette of Talking Back,” pp. 235-250.

¹ Th

with, or he may not have made good use of his materials

5. An author may fail to make distinctions that are necessary or relevant

Essay-Review #4: Ditto, but make this one 5 to 6 pages.

A Matter of Interpretation:

All historical writing is interpretive. The question is always how well the interpretation is grounded. How well reasoned are the arguments that support the interpretation? How solid is the documentary evidence behind the arguments?

One task of the critical reader is to separate interpretation from evidence. One might either

- * take an overtly interpretive statement and analyze the arguments and evidence in its favor;

- * take an apparently straightforward factual account and show that there is actually a hidden agenda, a hidden assumption, a hidden interpretation that lies behind it.

- * or take the reading as a whole

As in any critique, your first obligation is to understand the author. The next step, in which you agree, disagree, correct, expand on, etc., assumes the first step. A careful, critical reader does both.

A critical reader also **DIFFERENTIATES** between the historian's interpretation and his or her data:

- * Identify the author's points of opinion, interpretation, argument

- * Justify your interpretation with specific examples or short quotes

- * How far do the author's views go beyond the data?

- * Does the author have an overall, perhaps hidden, assumption or interpretation that has led them beyond the data?

You may not always have strong answers to all of these points, but try. And be honest.

How do I grade the essay-reviews?

Addresses appropriate level of guiding questions or points	5
Writes clearly and using good grammar	5
Depth of analysis, use of evidence.....	5
Uses required footnote and bibliographic style	10
Total	25

How do I grade the first draft of the research essay?

Title	10
Thesis, clarity and depth	20
Argument, engagement of a historical question or issue	50
Use of evidence, quality of primary sources.....	50
Conclusion, reach beyond discussion	20
Uses required footnote and bibliographic style	50
Total	200

How do I grade the “referee’s report” on someone else’s essay?

Use of criteria learned in essay-review exercises to critique essay	25
Constructive suggestions to writer.....	25
Total	50

How do I grade the final version of the research essay?

Effort to revise paper in accordance with comments from referee and Dr. Good	100
Title	10
Thesis	20
Argument, engagement of a historical question or issue	100
Use of evidence, quality of primary sources.....	100
Conclusion	20
Uses required footnote and bibliographic style	50
Total	400

How do I grade the conference presentation?

Clear statement of historical problem, thesis.....	20
Adequate summation of your research and argument.....	20
Engagement with listeners	10
Total	50

A few parting words: Don’t be too intimidated! I expect hard work and a serious attitude, but I understand that this is your first effort in extended research and writing, at least for most of you. If you put your heart into this, we will have a very stimulating semester. If you don’t...