

HIS 334 Environmental History of the United States

Spring 2022: T, TH 11:00-12:15, MHRA 2209

Dr. Greg O'Brien

Office: MHRA 2135

Office Hours: T, TH 1:00-2:00 or by appointment - email me or send me a message via Canvas

Email: wgobrien@uncg.edu

[Dr. O'Brien's webpage \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Department of History website \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

[Department of History Facebook page \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

I acknowledge that UNC Greensboro is located on the traditional lands of the Keyauwee, Catawba, Eno, Sappony, Shakori, and Saura Nations. See the full [UNCG Land Acknowledgement](#).

Covid-19

If a student tests positive for COVID-19 they should self-report their health status here: <https://update.uncg.edu/> (Links to an external site.)

If you feel sick, even with mild cold-like symptoms, do not come to class. The Omicron variant is highly contagious and is an air-borne virus. Masks are required everywhere on campus, even outside.

[Additional UNCG Resources](#)

Attendance and related issues: Students are expected to attend all classes and to keep up with the reading assignments and video / website presentations which will serve as the basis for class discussions. Tuesdays are generally devoted to lectures and presentations while on Thursdays we will discuss the materials for that week. Students are required to come to class prepared; assigned readings completed, assignments completed on time. When you come to class you should be prepared to take notes and to discuss the topics of the day, and you will have a written assignment of some sort to turn in every Thursday. I allow three "free" absences no questions asked. Anything above that will only be excused with official notification of participation in a university event (such as being on an athletics team), notification from the Dean of Students Office, or other official documentation approved by me (such as a positive Covid test). All assignments must be completed and turned in via Canvas on the date they are due, or earlier. No late assignments are accepted without prior approval. All that being said, if you are having any difficulties,

especially related to Covid-19, just keep me up to date and we should be able to work out a way for you to complete the course on time.

DESCRIPTION:

In HIS 334 you will examine the interaction of humans and nature in American history from before European arrival to today. The approach will be roughly chronological, with emphasis on selected issues, events, and persons. The course will consider three large themes: 1. The way that Americans (of different sorts) have thought about nature and the relationship between people and nature. 2. The history of the human impact on nature and of nature's impact on people in the area now known as the United States. 3. The roles of government, industrialization, pollution, resource management, and the modern environmental movement in shaping the way that Americans interact with the environment.

HIS Major Field: United States. Marker: ENV.

There is no prerequisite for this course (anyone at UNCG can take it), but if you feel that you need a refresher on key aspects of American history, check out the free online U.S. history textbook [The American Yawp \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon successful completion of this course students will be able to:

1. Analyze and comprehend historical changes in human interaction with nature in what is now the United States from the colonial era to today. [Historical Comprehension]
2. Use historical thinking to contextualize and analyze primary and secondary sources representing different points of view. [Historical Analysis]

REQUIRED TEXT

Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role In American History* (Fourth edition, 2019)

There will be additional readings accessible for free and linked to on Canvas.

ASSIGNMENTS

See the Course Modules for weekly readings and assignment details.

***All written assignments submitted via Canvas must be one of the following file types:
.doc / .docx / or .pdf**

Reminder: I do not accept late assignments without prior approval from me.

1. Class Discussion on Thursdays

Each Thursday the class will be devoted to discussion of that week's readings, videos and other materials listed under that week's Module. I am evaluating you on participation so be prepared to talk. I will take notes about your participation and compile them into one final discussion grade at the end of the semester (SLO 1).

2. Reflections on weekly readings, lectures, and/or videos

Most weeks on or before Thursday you will submit a one paragraph response to my prompt about that week's reading and video materials. See each course Module for specific weekly reflection assignments.

Format: Each weekly reflection should be comprised of one paragraph, no more than one page, answers based entirely on the readings for that week. These weekly reflections are not being graded for grammar, though write as clearly and concisely as possible. They are being graded for how well they reflect the information and arguments found in the readings for this week and how well they answer the question(s). I use a ten point grading system for these weekly reflections: 100, 90, 80, 70, 60, and so on (SLO 1).

NOTE: I will post my PowerPoint presentations for each week as we go through the semester.

3. Analytical Essays

You are required to write two analytical essays this semester. For each essay, I will give you a question(s) based on the readings, videos, and/or lecture presentations; you are to address the question(s) in a 4-5 page essay. A good and thoughtful answer will require that you have read and absorbed the assigned book and other readings, PowerPoint presentations, and any videos / websites, and thought carefully about the question and your answer. I do not expect you to do any additional research in order to write these essays, other than the assigned readings and other materials. (SLOs 1 & 2)

The instructions for Analytical essay #1 are in the [Week 5 Module](#) and under [Assignments](#), and the instructions for Analytical essay #2 are in the [Week 8 Module](#) and under [Assignments](#).

[Grading Rubric for Analytical Papers](#)

4. Biography Essay/Unessay

Americans from many different backgrounds have played formative roles in the development of environmental consciousness in the United States. Among them are

scientists, politicians, activists, writers, organizers, farmers, parents, and workers. They have focused on conservation, preservation, toxic pollution, environmental racism, public health, and other areas. You will explore the lives and careers of one of these Americans and make the case that they should be nominated for a newly created award honoring Americans who have expanded environmental awareness in the United States.

Your project can be in the form of a PowerPoint or other visual presentation or mapping or timeline software production, a videotaped lecture or performance, a podcast, webpage, a written paper of around 10 pages, or some other format approved by me. Your goal is to make the case that all Americans must know about this person in order to gain understanding about environmental issues in the United States. You will turn in this final project to me via Canvas. More detailed instructions are found in the [Assignments](#) and in the [final Module](#). (SLOs 1 & 2)

NOTE: Plagiarism (to take the ideas, writings, etc. of another and present them as your own) is strictly forbidden and will be punished to the fullest extent possible, including failure of the course. Please review [UNCG's policy on plagiarism. \(Links to an external site.\)](#)

There are no exams in this course!

GRADING SUMMARY

Discussion Participation	= 10%
Weekly Reflections	10 x 2 = 20%
Analytical Essays	2 x 20 = 40%
Biography Essay/Unessay	= 30%
	100%