



## TRENT SCHOOL OF THE ENVIRONMENT

### ERST-CAST-HIST 4670H - Environmental History

Fall session 2017, Peterborough

**Professor:** Stephen Bocking  
**Office:** ESB A132  
**Phone:** 748-1011 x7883  
**Email:** [SBocking@trentu.ca](mailto:SBocking@trentu.ca) (best way to contact me)  
**Office hours:** Tuesday 10:00 – 12:00  
Wednesday 10:00 – 12:00  
and by appointment

**Teaching assistant:** Magen Hudak, [magenhudak@trentu.ca](mailto:magenhudak@trentu.ca)

**Administrative assistant:** Mary O'Grady, [maryograde@trentu.ca](mailto:maryograde@trentu.ca), ESB C204, 705-748-1011 x7199

**Course time & location:** Tuesday 1:00 – 3:50 pm. Location: OCA 208

#### What this course is about

This course is about the history of our relationship with the environment. This includes topics such as the history of how we have used the environment for various purposes (agriculture, mining, urban development and so on), how we have sometimes decided to protect aspects of the environment (in parks, or through environmental laws, for example), and the development of our scientific understanding of the environment. We will see, among other things, how concerns about pollution and deforestation (for example) are not recent phenomena. An underlying theme is that our relationship with the environment is about both how we have changed it over time, and how it, in turn, has influenced us: our economy, our society, and our ideas about our place in the world.

One objective of this course is to provide opportunities to actually *do* history: to read original materials, such as first-hand accounts of environmental problems, and to practice interpreting these materials in the light of information provided by other historians. We'll also go outside, to look at, and think about, changes in the environment, and how we understand these changes.

Environmental history is full of fascinating stories. It is also an essential part of understanding our world today. By studying this history, we will be able to better understand current environmental issues and controversies. Environmental history has other practical uses: for example, it can be essential in designing strategies for restoring damaged landscapes to something closer to their original form. More generally, the environment itself is an historical entity: its current shape and form can't be understood without understanding what it was like in the past.

This course will meet every week for three hours. As this is a senior level course, I won't run it as a formal lecture. There will be much opportunity for you to participate in each class. I also encourage

you to meet individually with me whenever you would like. I am often in my office, and whenever I am, please drop in. I welcome your questions or conversation.

This course makes substantial use of Blackboard to distribute course information (including this syllabus, information about assignments, and various research materials) and to submit written work.

### Required texts

This course involves a substantial amount of reading. These readings are an essential component of the course, and I will expect you to have read the assigned articles and/or chapters before each class, as they will be the basis for much of the discussion, as well as the short papers and the in-depth assignment. Knowledge of these readings will also be essential in writing the final exam. Some of the readings are contained in a coursepack, available in the Trent Bookstore. Other readings are available online (as noted in the class schedule, below).

### Learning Outcomes

I have developed this course to address several learning outcomes. By the end of the course a successful student should:

1. Understand and have applied various general principles and techniques that are relevant to the study of environmental history.
2. Be aware of various key events and trends in the history of relations between humans and their environment.
3. Have a good working knowledge of the history of the Trent environment, including its regional context.
4. Be able to study a landscape, and identify and interpret evidence regarding its past.
5. Have a good understanding of how our current relationship with the environment – including environmental policies, resource development activities, protected areas, scientific research, activism, and other aspects of this relationship – has developed over time.

### Course Evaluation

The course assignments are designed to give you practice in thinking about, and doing, environmental history. More information about each assignment will be provided early in the term.

- The **in-class exercises** are opportunities to discuss and summarize key ideas from the class, including the assigned readings and material presented during the class itself. A period of time will be set aside at the end of each class for small groups (no more than three students) to complete this exercise. Each exercise is worth 2%, and is due at the end of the class. 12 exercises should be submitted by the end of the term. These exercises will receive a grade of either C (65%), B (75%), or A (90%).
- The **book review** is an opportunity to read a recent environmental history book, and write a review.
- The **local environmental history project** is an opportunity to combine study of several kinds of historical evidence, both text and field-based.
- The **in-depth assignment** is an opportunity to examine in more detail one of the specific topics discussed in the course, using both primary and secondary materials.
- The **final exam** will include all material from the course, including the readings.

### Grading Scheme

In-class exercises (**due each week**)

12 x 2%

24%

Book review ( <b>due October 31</b> )	14%
Local environmental history project ( <b>due November 21</b> )	20%
In-depth assignment ( <b>due December 8</b> )	12%
Final exam ( <b>December exam period</b> )	30%

(25% of the course grade will be returned before the Fall term drop date of November 7 2017.)

### **Late submission of work**

Late submission of the book review, local environmental history project, or in-depth assignment will be penalized with 2% deducted each day after the deadline. A revised deadline for written material **may be negotiated** with the course instructor **until 2 days before the deadline**.

### **Quality of Written Work**

The ability to write clear, well organized, grammatical and properly documented academic papers is essential. I encourage students to take advantage of the opportunities for assistance that are provided by Academic Skills. It would also be an excellent idea to consult their publications that discuss essay preparation.

I also encourage you to consult with me on your writing. I am willing to review preliminary drafts and works-in-progress, in order to help you to express your ideas and research results clearly. Consultation with me on your written work, and a serious effort to use the advice that I can give you, will almost certainly result in a higher mark.

### **University Policies**

**Please see the Trent University academic calendar ([www.trentu.ca/calendar](http://www.trentu.ca/calendar)) for University Diary dates, Academic Information and Regulations, and University and departmental degree requirements.** November 7, 2017 is the final date for withdrawal from fall-term courses. After this date, students remain registered in fall-term courses and will receive a final grade

### **Academic Integrity**

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from failure on an assignment to expulsion from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University's *Academic Integrity Policy*. You have a responsibility to educate yourself – unfamiliarity with the policy is not an excuse. You are strongly encouraged to visit Trent's Academic Integrity website to learn more: [www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.trentu.ca/academicintegrity).

### **Access to Instruction**

It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and documentation from a regulated health care practitioner and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in a course, the student should contact the Student Accessibility Services Office (SAS) at the respective campus as soon as possible.

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**Course Schedule**

**September 12:**        **Syllabus, grading, class mechanics, questions – introducing environmental history**

**September 19:**        **Doing and using environmental history**

**Readings**

Donald Worster, "Doing Environmental History," in: D. Worster, ed., *The Ends of the Earth: Perspectives on Modern Environmental History*, (Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 289-307.

William Cronon, "The Uses of Environmental History," *Environmental History Review*, 1993, 17(3): 10-22. (online)

Alan MacEachern, "An Introduction, in Theory and Practice," in: *Method & Meaning in Canadian Environmental History*, Alan MacEachern & William J. Turkel, eds. (Nelson, 2009), pp. ix-xv. (online)

**September 26:**        **Global environmental history**

**Reading**

J. R. McNeill, "The State of the Field of Environmental History," *Annual Review of Environment and Resources*, 2010, 35: 345-74. (online)

Frank Uekötter, "What Should We Remember? A Global Poll Among Environmental Historians," *Global Environment*, 2013, 6(11): 184-214. (online)

**October 3:**            **Environmental history in the field: Trent Nature Reserves [field trip]**

**Readings**

Oliver Rackham, "Rural Detection," in: *The Illustrated History of the Countryside*, (Phoenix Illustrated, 1997), pp. 8-15.

Stephen Bocking, "Nature's Stories? Pursuing Science in Environmental History," in *Method & Meaning in Canadian Environmental History*, Alan MacEachern & William J. Turkel, eds. (Nelson, 2009), pp. 294-310. (online)

William Cronon & students, "Learning to Do Historical Research: How to Read a Landscape," ([www.williamcronon.net/researching/landscapes.htm](http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/landscapes.htm)) (2008). (online)

**October 10:**        **The environment and the formation of Canada**

**Readings**

Ramsay Cook, "Making a Garden Out of Wilderness," in: *Canada, Quebec, and the Uses of Nationalism* (McClelland and Stewart, 1995), pp. 51-72.

Suzanne Zeller, *Inventing Canada: Early Victorian Science and the Idea of a Transcontinental Nation*, (University of Toronto Press, 1987), pp. 3-9, 269-274.

Stephen Bocking, "The Background to Biodiversity: A Brief History of Canadians and Their Living Environment," in S. Bocking, ed., *Biodiversity in Canada: Ecology, Ideas, and Actions*, (Broadview Press, 2000), pp. 3-30.

**October 17:**        **Environmental history: studying the records [MaDGIC Unit / Archives visit]**

**Readings**

Michael Edmonds, "The Pleasures and Pitfalls of Written Records" in: D. Egan & E. A. Howell, eds., *The Historical Ecology Handbook: A Restorationist's Guide to Reference Ecosystems*, (Island Press, 2001), pp. 73-99.

William Cronon & students, "Sources for Environmental History: Finding Your Way Back to the Past," ([www.williamcronon.net/researching/](http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/), scroll down) (2008). (online)

Stephen Bocking & Barbara Znamirowski, "Stories of People, Land, and Water: Using Spatial Technologies to Explore Regional Environmental History," in: J. Bonnell & M. Fortin, eds., *Historical GIS Research in Canada* (University of Calgary Press, 2014), pp. 83-108. (online)

### << Reading Week >>

#### **October 31: Transforming landscapes**

##### Readings

Neil S. Forkey, "The Road from Bobcaygeon: Lumber and Colonization, 1850s-1870s," in: *Shaping the Upper Canadian Frontier: Environment, Society, and Culture in the Trent Valley*, (University of Calgary Press, 2003), pp. 75-96.

Janet Foster, "Parks, Resources, and the Role of Wildlife" in: *Working for Wildlife: The Beginning of Preservation in Canada*, 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed., (University of Toronto Press, 1998), pp. 16-54.

R. Peter Gillis, "Rivers of Sawdust: The Battle over Industrial Pollution in Canada, 1865-1903," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 1986, 21(1): 84-103.

Tina Loo, "Making a Modern Wilderness: Conserving Wildlife in Twentieth-Century Canada" *Canadian Historical Review*, 2001, 82(1): 1-18. (online)

#### **November 7: The urban and industrial environment**

##### Readings

Ken Cruikshank & Nancy B. Bouchier, "Blighted Areas and Obnoxious Industries: Constructing Environmental Inequality on an Industrial Waterfront, Hamilton, Ontario, 1890-1960," *Environmental History*, 2004, 9: 464-496. (online)

Michèle Dagenais, "The Urbanization of Nature: Water Networks and Green Spaces in Montreal," in *Method & Meaning in Canadian Environmental History* (2008), pp. 216-235. (online)

Jay Young, "Filled with Nature: Exploring the Environmental History of Downtown Toronto," in: Sandberg et al., eds., *Urban Explorations: Environmental Histories of the Toronto Region* (L. R. Wilson Institute for Canadian History, 2013), pp. 19-39

H. V. Nelles, "How Did Calgary Get Its River Parks?" *Urban History Review*, 34(1), 2005: 28-45. (online)

#### **November 14: Northern environmental history**

##### Readings

Liza Piper & John Sandlos, "A Broken Frontier: Ecological Imperialism in the Canadian North," *Environmental History*, 2007, 12(4): 759-795. (online)

Tina Adcock, "Many Tiny Traces: Antimodernism and Northern Exploration between the Wars," in: Bocking & Martin, eds., *Ice Blink: Navigating Northern Environmental History* (University of Calgary Press, 2017), pp. 131-177. (online)

Stephen Bocking, "Navigating Northern Environmental History," in: Bocking & Martin, eds., *Ice Blink: Navigating Northern Environmental History* (University of Calgary Press, 2017), pp. 3-32.

#### **November 21: The environmental history of parks**

##### Readings

William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in: W. Cronon, ed., *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, (W. W. Norton, 1996), pp. 69-90.

Alan MacEachern, "Changing Ecologies: Preservation in Four National Parks, 1935-1965," in: *Natural Selections: National Parks in Atlantic Canada, 1935-1970*, (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), pp. 189-228.

**November 28: Science & the environment: new ways of understanding nature and ecosystems**

**Readings**

Stephen Bocking, "Visions of Nature and Society: A History of the Ecosystem Concept," *Alternatives*, 1994, 20(3): 12-18. (online)

Mark J. McLaughlin, "Green Shoots: Aerial Insecticide Spraying and the Growth of Environmental Consciousness in New Brunswick, 1952-1973," *Acadiensis*, 2011, 40(1): 3-23. (online)

**December 5: The origins of environmental concern: how does the environment become a political issue?**

**Readings**

Donald Worster, "Healing the Planet," in *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, 2nd ed., (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). pp. 342-387.

Samuel Hays, "Three Decades of Environmental Politics: The Historical Context," in: *Explorations in Environmental History*, (University of Pittsburgh, 1998), pp. 334-378.

Frank S. Zelko, "Making Greenpeace: The Development of Direct Action Environmentalism in British Columbia," *BC Studies*, Vol.142/143 (Summer/Autumn 2004), pp.197-239. (online)

**Final exam: during exam period**