

**THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS:
FROM THE ATOMIC BOMB TO GLOBAL WARMING**

**Trent University
Department of History**

**History 3756H/Environmental and Resource Studies 3756H
Winter 2010**

Lecture: Tuesday 9:00-10:50, DNA B104

Tutorials: Tuesday 2:00-2:50, 3:00-3:50, and 4:00-4:50, ECC 101.6

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Office Hours: Tuesday 11:00-11:45 and 1:00-1:45; and by appointment

Course Description: For the past few decades, Americans, Canadians, and people around the globe have worried about the environmental crisis. They have feared the proliferation of toxic chemicals and other threats to human health; they have mourned the loss of forests and the extinction of species; they have contemplated climate change and the fate of the planet. This course will provide a historical perspective on contemporary environmental problems. Beginning with the development of the atomic bomb and ending with the current debate over global warming, we will consider a wide range of topics and themes, stitching together cultural, environmental, and political history, as well as key developments in the history of science and technology. Although we will focus largely on trends within the modern United States, we will also consider the international and global dimensions of the environmental crisis. Throughout the course, we will read and discuss a diverse array of materials and also examine how photographs, films, and other visual sources have played a crucial role in conveying ideas about the human relationship to the environment.

Format: This course will combine lecture and discussion. In addition to the lectures on Tuesday at 9:00, students will meet in weekly tutorial sections on Tuesday afternoon. Attendance at both lectures and tutorials is crucial to your final grade.

Requirements: class attendance; informed participation and completion of tutorial assignments; a research prospectus; a research paper; and a final exam.

Grading:

Research Prospectus	10%
Research Paper	30%
Final Exam	35%
Tutorial Participation	25%

Tutorials: Tutorials will play a vital role in this course. They provide us with the opportunity to consider different interpretations of the past, to examine topics in more depth, and to discuss ideas in a constructive, respectful manner. In order for the tutorials to work properly, it is imperative that you complete the readings on the day they are assigned and come to class prepared to discuss them.

For each tutorial meeting, you will also be required to complete a small assignment, almost always based on the readings for that week. This assignment could involve, for example, preparing a discussion question or writing a brief response to a particular issue that I pose to the class. These tutorial assignments will not take long for you to complete, but they will help you grapple with the material in a serious manner before class and thus greatly enhance the quality of our discussions. Your assignment for each Tuesday tutorial will be posted on the myLearningSystem (WebCT) site for this course no later than Friday (although it will usually be available by Thursday). While these assignments will not be marked, I will use them as an important factor in determining your participation mark in the course.

After reading break, I will inform you of your participation mark for the first several weeks of the course. This mark will represent 15% of your overall grade in the course, and the participation mark earned for the latter weeks of the term will be worth 10% of the overall grade. Class participation, including successful completion of the tutorial assignments, will thus represent 25% of your overall mark for the course.

Research Prospectus and Paper: The major written assignment for this course is a research paper. You are free to pursue a topic of your own choice, as long as it focuses on some historical aspect of the environmental crisis. I encourage you to select an issue that you find particularly intriguing or compelling, something that you want to explore in greater depth. A detailed assignment sheet, as well as a list of suggested topics, will be distributed in class

Each student will be required to submit a research prospectus, offering some background on the topic, a brief discussion of key themes and questions, and a preliminary bibliography of some of the sources you plan to consider. The prospectus should be typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, and about 750-900 words (3 pages). It is due on **February 9**.

The final paper should be typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, and about 3000-3500 words (12 pages) in length. It is due on **March 30**.

Required Readings:

History 3956H Course Reader

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

Warren Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took On the Food Industry*

The above readings may be purchased at the Trent Bookstore

University Policies:

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offence and carries penalties varying from a 0 grade 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.

Access to Instruction

It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and/or health consideration and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in this course, the student should contact the Disability Services Office (BL Suite 109, 748-1281, disabilityservices@trentu.ca) as soon as possible. Complete text can be found under Access to Instruction in the Academic Calendar.

Schedule:

January 12

Lecture: The Bomb and Its Legacies

Tutorial Reading:

1. Scott Kirsch, "Watching the Bombs Go Off: Photography, Nuclear Landscapes, and Spectator Democracy," *Antipode* 29:3 (1997): 227-255.

January 19

Lecture: The Wilderness in American Culture and Politics

Tutorial Reading:

2. William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: Norton, 1995), 69-90.

3. Rebecca Solnit, "'Every Corner Is Alive': Eliot Porter as an Environmentalist and Artist," (2001), reprinted in *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*, ed. Alan C. Braddock and Christoph Irmscher (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 213-236.

4. Finis Dunaway, "Reframing the Last Frontier: Subhankar Banerjee and the Visual Politics of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge," (2006), updated version reprinted in *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in American Art History*, ed. Alan C. Braddock and Christoph Irmscher (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 254-274.

January 26

Lecture: Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*: Ecology, Gender, and Pesticides in Postwar America

Tutorial Reading:

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (especially 1-37, 103-172, 187-198, and 219-297)

February 2

Lecture: Earth Day and the Emergence of Modern Environmentalism

Tutorial Reading:

5. Adam Rome, "'Give Earth a Chance': The Environmental Movement and the Sixties," *Journal of American History* 90 (September 2003): 525-554.

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

February 9

Lecture: Contemporary Landscape Photography and the Fate of the Planet; or, Edward Burtynsky Goes to China (and Bangladesh); Film Screening: *Manufactured Landscapes*

RESEARCH PROSPECTUS DUE AT BEGINNING OF LECTURE

Tutorial Reading:

7. Carol Diehl, "The Toxic Sublime," *Art in America*, February 2006, 118-123.

8. Damon Smith, "Made in China: Jennifer Baichwal and Edward Burtynsky on Their Travels Across *Manufactured Landscapes*," *Bright Lights Film Journal*, Issue 58, November 2007, 1-13, <http://www.brightlightsfilm.com/58/58landscapesiv.html>.

9. William Langewiesche, "The Shipbreakers," *Atlantic Monthly*, August 2000, 31-49.

READING WEEK

February 23

Lecture: Food, Farms, and the "Countercuisine"; Film Screening: *King Corn*

Tutorial Reading:

Warren Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took On the Food Industry* (especially ix-xi, 1-182, and 243-255)

March 2

Lecture: Crisis and Confidence in the History of Nuclear Power: Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and the Case of France

Tutorial Reading:

10. John Wills, "Celluloid Chain Reactions: *The China Syndrome* and Three Mile Island," *European Journal of American Culture* 25 (2006): 109-122.

11. Timothy W. Luke, "'Packaging' Chernobyl: The Manufacture of Meaning from a Transnational Ecological Disaster," in his *Screens of Power: Ideology, Domination, and Resistance in Informational Society* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 181-204.

12. Michael Bess, excerpts from *The Light-Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960-2000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) 13-15, 28-37, and 92-109.

March 9

Lecture: The Toxic Threat and the Struggle for Environmental Justice

Tutorial Reading:

13. Gregg Mitman, "Choking Cities," in his *Breathing Space: How Allergies Shape Our Lives and Landscapes* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 130-166 and 275-281.

14. Giovanna Di Chiro, "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice," in *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York, Norton, 1995), 298-320.

March 16

Lecture: Colonial Legacies? Wildlife Conservation in Modern Africa

Tutorial Reading:

15. Bernhard Grzimek, excerpts from *Rhinos Belong to Everybody*, trans. Oliver Coburn (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), 173-176 and 185-193.

16. Jonathan S. Adams and Thomas O. McShane, excerpts from *The Myth of Wild Africa: Conservation without Illusion* (1992; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), xi-xix and 50-84.

17. Ramachandra Guha, "The Authoritarian Biologist and the Arrogance of Anti-Humanism: Wildlife Conservation in the Third World," *The Ecologist* 27 (January/February 1997): 14-20.

March 23

No Lecture or Tutorial Meetings (work on research papers)

March 30

Lecture: Global Environmentalism: From Stockholm to Kyoto
RESEARCH PAPER DUE AT BEGINNING OF LECTURE

No Tutorial Meetings

April 6

Lecture: Global Warming: Science, Politics, and Visual Culture; Film Screening: *An Inconvenient Truth*

Tutorial Reading:

18. Naomi Oreskes, "The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change: How Do We Know We're Not Wrong?" in *Climate Change: What It Means for Us, Our Children, and Our Grandchildren*, ed. Joseph F.C. DiMento and Pamela Doughman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007), 65-99.
19. John M. Meyer, "Another Inconvenient Truth," *Dissent* (Fall 2006): 95-96.
20. Chris Turner, excerpts from *The Geography of Hope: A Tour of the World We Need* (Toronto: Random House Canada, 2007), 1-27.
21. Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger, excerpts from *Break Through: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007), 130-154 and 256-273.