

History of Sustainability, Spring 2025  
AMH 2631-5JD1

Professor Jack E. Davis

(he, him, his)

[davisjac@ufl.edu](mailto:davisjac@ufl.edu) (best means for communicating with the prof)

Rm: K-F 117

T: 1:55-2:45, Thrs: 1:55-3:50

Ofc Hours: Thrs, 10:30-1:30

Ofc phone: 273-3398

## Summary

This course is offered to help satisfy a core requirement in the Sustainability Studies major. The course, however, is open to all students.

Sustainability is not a new concept. Historically, it has existed under different names: conservation, scientific management, efficiency, wise use, natural resource management, land ethic. It has been driven by economic, ethical, social, and political incentives. It has been shaped by religious or spiritual beliefs, public and corporate policy, by science and scientific trends, economic conditions, and, most importantly, by nature itself.

The course offers a survey of sustainability that deals with these principles and covers the full sweep of American history. It will begin not with an examination of Euramerican beliefs and practices but with native ones. The so-called seventh-generation concept did not originate with a modern-day cleaning product or as an ecological concept but with the cultural beliefs of traditional peoples. Students will explore the origins of the concept and its clash with Euramerican priorities in colonial America. Semantical differences are important to understanding that clash. In place of animist beliefs of natives, Euramericans imposed the label of “natural resources” on nature, creating a predetermined prism through which Americans still view nature and reinforcing their tendency to set themselves apart and above the natural world. Students will also look at evolving imperatives in American society—local, regional, and global—that forced many Americans to rethink their relationship with the natural world. Tobacco planters in colonial and antebellum Virginia, for example, desperately searched for ways to sustain their fast-depleting soil to stanch population loss to fresh lands on the western frontier and further South. Settlement in territorial Florida was to a large extent a product of this challenge unmet and solutions ignored. Another theme of the course will be cataclysmic events (economic depression and so-called natural disasters, for example) and major events in American history (industrialization and urbanization; technological and scientific developments; the rise of the consumer republic, for example) that inspired calls for and innovation in sustainable practices. A review of different practices and the personalities behind them will constitute an important component of the course. Finally, the course will conclude with an analysis of sustainability today as a product of multiple historical antecedents.

As a principal goal, the course will provide students with an understanding of the past that helps them make more informed decisions about the present and future. Students will be required to

read a range of assigned texts and undertake research and writing projects (using archival and Internet sources, primary and secondary) that will enhance cognitive and communication skills.

### **Course Objectives:**

- \* Expanding one's knowledge of sustainability and its place in the larger American experience.
  - \* Introducing the student to scholarship in the history of sustainability.
  - \* Promoting critical thinking about social and environmental ethics.
  - \* Advancing the student's experience in the reading, researching, and writing tasks of the historian.
- Improving the student's cognitive and communication skills.

### **Course Requirements:**

- Take-home essays 1 and 2 (2 x 30%)                      70% (due March 4 and April 24)
- Research essay, "Clamelot"                              30% (due April 15)
- Class participation    10%
- Grammar and Writing Style Guide (factored into writing assignments) (due January 20)
- Nearly every week you will be required to write a haiku poem on a TBA topic of either a grammar rule or a course-related subject. This requirement will be factored into your class participation grade.

**(Please see last section of syllabus for a description of course requirements.)**

### **Course Grading Scale (see UF grading scale at end of syllabus):**

A+ =97-100  
A =94-96  
A- =90-93  
B+ =87-89  
B =84-86  
B- =80-83  
C+ =77-79  
C =74-76  
C- =70-73  
D =65-69

Assignments not completed earn a 0

Plagiarized assignment (see plagiarism section below) earn a 0

Assignments not turned in before or by the stated due date will not be accepted. All assignments must be submitted through Canvas.

Only course grades of C or better will satisfy Gordon Rule, general education, and college basic distribution credit.

**Required Books:**

Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind* (Yale University Press, most recent edition).  
Additional readings are on reserve in Library West or available on-line.

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week I:** Jan 14 & 16

**Introduction to the Course****Defining Sustainability: What Does it Mean from a Humanities Perspective?**

Donald Worster, *The Wealth of Nature: Environmental History and the Ecological Imagination*, chap 12.

Robert Goodland, "The Concept of Environmental Sustainability," *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics* 26 (1995): 1-24 (in Jstor).

**\*\*Grammar and Style Guide Exercise Due Jan 20\*\***

**Week II:** Jan 21 & 23

**Where Humans Fit**

**\*\*Grammar and Style Guide Exercise Due Jan 20\*\***

William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," *Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature*, 69-90.

**Comparing Native and Euramerican Perspectives: Economy, Society, and Natural Endowments**

David Suzuki and Peter Knudtson, *Wisdom of the Elders: Sacred Native Stories of Nature*, chap 1, 1-22.

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*, chaps 3-5.

**Week III:** Jan 28 & 30

**Comparing Native and Euramerican Perspectives, cont.****From Infinite to Finite or Not**

Nash, *Wilderness and the American Minds*, chap 2 and 3.

**Week IV:** February 4 & February 6 (\*\*no class on February 6\*\*)

**Forgotten Roots of American Sustainability**

George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature: Physical Geography as Modified by Human Action*, chap 3, 128-329 (E-book).

**Week V:** Feb 11 & 13

**Forgotten Roots, cont.**

Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, chaps 4 and 5.

**National Identity**

Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*, prologue and chap 1.

**Week VI:** Feb 18 & 20

**Hidden Connections**

Jennifer Price, *Flight Maps: Adventures With nature in Modern America*, chap 1

**Prologue to a New Gospel**

Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, chaps 6 & 7.

**Week VII:** Feb 25 & 27

**Biophilia**

Donald Worster, *A Passion for Nature: The Life of John Muir*, prologue.

**Week VIII:** March 4 & 6

**\*\*Take-Home Essay 1 Due March 4\*\***

**Resource Sustainability During the Progressive Era and Great Depression**

**Woods and Water**

Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, chaps 8-10.

**Week IX:** March 11 & 13

**The Urban Model**

Cyrenus Wheeler, "Sewers: Ancient and Modern," (Cayuga County Hist. Soc., 1887): 7-29, 42+

Available online at: [http://www.sewerhistory.org/articles/design/1887\\_abs01/article.pdf](http://www.sewerhistory.org/articles/design/1887_abs01/article.pdf)

**Week X: March 15-23 SPRING BREAK**

**Week XI:** March 25 & 27

**Greenspace**

Anne Whiston Spirn, "Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted," *Uncommon Ground*, 91-113.

**Wildlife**

Jared Orsi, "From Horicon to Hamburgers and Back Again: Ecology, Ideology, and Wildfowl

Management, 1917-1935,” *Environmental History Review* 18 (Winter 1994): 19-40.

**Week XII:** April 1 & 3

**Sustaining Agriculture in the Wake of Ruin**

Worster, *The Wealth of Nature*, chap 6.

Kevin Roose, “Sheep Lawn Mowers, and Other Go-Getters,” *New York Times*, November 2, 2011(Google the title to find on-line).

**Week XIII:** April 8 & 10

**The Electric Good and Better Life**

Wesley Arden Dick, “When Dams Weren’t Damned: The Public Power Crusade and Visions of the Good Life in the Pacific Northwest in the 1930s,” *Environmental Review* 13 (Autumn-Winter 1989): 113-53.

Marc Reisner, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and Its Disappearing Water*, chaps, 5 & 6, 145-213.

Film: *Cadillac Desert*, episode 1.

**Week XIV:** April 15 & 17

**An Unsustainable Course?**

**\*\*Clamelot Paper Due April 15\*\***

Lyndon B. Johnson, “Beautification,” Roderick Nash ed., *American Environmentalism: Readings in Conservation History*, 181-86.

Rachel Carson, “Pesticides,” Nash, *American Environmentalism*, 191-94.

President’s Science Advisory Committee, “Pollution,” Nash, *American Environmentalism*, 195-201.

Paul Ehrlich, “Overpopulation,” Nash, *American Environmentalism*, 202-05.

Barry Commoner, “Fundamental Causes of the Environmental Crisis,” Nash, *American Environmentalism*, 206-14.

The Council on Environmental Quality, “The State of the Environment,” Nash, *American Environmentalism*, 215-26.

**Mechanisms of Sustainability: High-tech Management and Planning**

Samuel P. Hays, “From Conservation to Environmentalism,” Nash, *American Environmentalism*,

144-52.

Film: *Gimme Green*

Week XV: April 22

**Redefining Parameters**

Andrew Kirk, "Appropriating Technology" *The Whole Earth Catalog* and Counterculture Environmental Politics," *Environmental History* 6 (July 2001): 374-94.

Mauricio Schoijet, "Limits to Growth and the Rise of Catastrophism," *Environmental History* 4 (October 1999): 515-30.

**April 24**

**\*\*Take-Home Essay 2 Due\*\***

**Course Requirements Descriptions:**

All written work for the course must be typed or computer generated and in 12-point double-spaced print with default or one-inch margins. Your work must also be presented in **third-person** language. All assignments must be turned in through the Canvas course page. If you submit your paper after the deadline time and date, ten points will be deducted from your assignment. If you have trouble submitting, call the help desk at 352-392-4357.

*Class participation:* Students are expected to come to class for lectures and prepared to participate in discussions. Class participation grade will be based on answering a question asked by the professor. Each student will be called on once a week to answer a question. If you are not present, you will be marked absent. You are allowed one free absence for the semester. Each additional absence will cost 10 percent of the course participation grade. Example: if you miss four classes, your class participation grade will be 80 (or 8 of 10 percent).

*Grammar and Writing Style Guide* exercise can be found on my Canvas site. Download and answer the questions by highlighting that which you believe to be the correct response. You will be required to follow the rules of the guide in all writing assignments for the course. If you fail to complete the guide before any one of the writing assignments is due, you will lose 5 points from the assignment grade. If you fail to follow the standards laid out in the guide, you will be penalized 2 points for standards covered in the guide and 3 points for standards covered in the guide and a haiku poem. Submit to Canvas.

*Take-home essays* will represent responses to a set of discussion prompts posted on Canvas. The prompts will be drawn from the assigned readings, films, and course discussions, and you will be expected to use the course readings and your class notes as sources to answer the questions (do not consult any other sources). Each answer must be presented in essay format, using formal,

academic language and style (i.e., complete sentences, tightly constructed paragraphs, no colloquialisms). Do not, in other words, provide answers in lists or bullets. Those exams that address each prompt in a rigorous and organized manner are more likely to earn a decent grade. These grades, too, will be dependent in part on your compliance with the rules in the course “Grammar and Style Guide” exercise.

*Research essay, “Clamelot”*: The object of this assignment is to have you research and write about the conversion of Cedar Key, Florida, from a traditional fishing economy, following the 1995 gill-net ban, to an economy based on sustainable aquaculture. You will need to hunt down research materials, construct a paper, and prepare to discuss this historical development in class. You should focus on themes of sustainability, which may take you beyond Cedar Key (hint, the Suwanee River). The final product of the assignment is a three-page, double-spaced writing assignment, not including endnote and bibliography pages. Use default margin and footer and header settings. Use 11- or 12-point font. You must also footnote or endnote your sources and provide a bibliography of all sources consulted. Remember, this is a history course, and your assignment is a history research paper. So don’t write solely, or even extensively, about what Cedar Key is doing now. Again, following the rules of the “Grammar and Style Guide” exercise is imperative to doing work of full potential.

*Class Rules* are relatively minimal. You may take notes with a computer. Cell phones sounds and vibrations should be silenced. If your phone rings, I reserve the right to answer it. (See In-Class Recording below.)

### **Other Business:**

### **Plagiarism and Honesty Code:**

Keep in mind that your written assignments must represent original work. You cannot copy the words, phrases, arguments, ideas, and conclusions of someone else or of another source (including Internet sources) without giving proper credit to the person or source by using both **quotation marks** and a **footnote**. Do not cobble together paragraphs or passages of separate texts and then try to claim that you have done original and legitimate work. You must write with your own ideas and in your own words. If you copy the words of someone else without putting those words in quotation marks, REGARDLESS OF CITING THE SOURCE, you are plagiarizing. Plagiarism is theft, and it is academic dishonesty. You can be reported to the Dean of Students office for plagiarism, and the incident may then become a permanent part of your academic record. Plagiarism **will** earn you a failing grade in the course, a grade that is final and that cannot be made up. If you have any questions about how you are citing or using sources, come to me for the answers.

UF students are bound by The Honor Pledge which states, “We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honor and integrity by abiding by the Honor Code. On all work submitted for credit by students at the

University of Florida, the following pledge is either required or implied: “On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment.” The Conduct Code specifies a number of behaviors that are in violation of this code and the possible sanctions. <https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/process/student-conduct-code/>

Again, please consult with me if you have any questions or concerns.

### **In-Class Recording:**

Students are allowed to record video or audio of class lectures. However, the purposes for which these recordings may be used are strictly controlled. The only allowable purposes are (1) for personal educational use, (2) in connection with a complaint to the university, or (3) as evidence in, or in preparation for, a criminal or civil proceeding. All other purposes are prohibited. Specifically, students may not publish recorded lectures without the written consent of the instructor. A “class lecture” is an educational presentation intended to inform or teach enrolled students about a particular subject, including any instructor-led discussions that form part of the presentation, and delivered by any instructor hired or appointed by the University, or by a guest instructor, as part of a University of Florida course. A class lecture does not include lab sessions, student presentations, clinical presentations such as patient history, academic exercises involving solely student participation, assessments (quizzes, tests, exams), field trips, private conversations between students in the class or between a student and the faculty or lecturer during a class session. Publication without permission of the instructor is prohibited. To “publish” means to share, transmit, circulate, distribute, or provide access to a recording, regardless of format or medium, to another person (or persons), including but not limited to another student within the same class section. Additionally, a recording, or transcript of a recording, is considered published if it is posted on or uploaded to, in whole or in part, any media platform, including but not limited to social media, book, magazine, newspaper, leaflet, or third party note/tutoring services. A student who publishes a recording without written consent may be subject to a civil cause of action instituted by a person injured by the publication and/or discipline under UF Regulation 4.040 Student

### **Classroom Assistance:**

Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed. Students with disabilities who experience learning barriers and would like to request academic accommodations should connect with the Disability Resource Center. Click here (<https://disability.ufl.edu/get-started/>) to get started with the Disability Resource Center. It is important for students to share their accommodation letter with their instructor and discuss their access needs, as early as possible in the semester.

### **Health Considerations in the Classroom**

- \* Sanitizing supplies are available in the classroom if you wish to wipe down your desks



prior to sitting down and at the end of the class.

- \* Hand sanitizing stations will be located in every classroom.

- \* If you are sick, please stay home as a courtesy to the campus and classroom community. Please visit the UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website about next steps, retake the questionnaire and schedule your test for no sooner than 24 hours after your symptoms began. Please call your primary care provider if you are ill and need immediate care or the UF Student Health Care Center at 352-392-1161 (or email [covid@shcc.ufl.edu](mailto:covid@shcc.ufl.edu) <<mailto:covid@shcc.ufl.edu>>) to be evaluated for testing and to receive further instructions about returning to campus. UF Health Screen, Test & Protect offers guidance when you are sick, have been exposed to someone who has tested positive or have tested positive yourself. Visit the UF Health Screen, Test & Protect website <<https://click.info.gator360.ufl.edu/?qs=8f0d5e01a3f7385148f144e2089093522a358a8d85cb9db73c31675d3c5e5c0d27748d40c212f544822551342f1912ea5b4f2b890d5952e8>> for more information.

- \* Course materials will be provided to you with an excused absence, and you will be given a reasonable amount of time to make up work.

### **Online Course Evaluation:**

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/students/>. Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via <https://ufl.bluera.com/ufl/>. Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at <https://gatorevals.aa.ufl.edu/public-results/>.

### **Academic Resources Information:**

E-learning technical support: Contact the UF Computing Help Desk at 352-392-4357 or via e-mail at [helpdesk@ufl.edu](mailto:helpdesk@ufl.edu).

Career Connections Center: Reitz Union Suite 1300, 352-392-1601.

Career assistance and counseling services.

Library Support: Various ways to receive assistance with respect to using the libraries or finding resources.

Teaching Center: Broward Hall, 352-392-2010 or to make an appointment 352- 392-6420.

General study skills and tutoring. Writing Studio: 2215 Turlington Hall, 352-846-1138.

Help brainstorming, formatting, and writing papers.

Student Complaints On-Campus: Visit the Student Honor Code and Student Conduct Code webpage for more information.

On-Line Students Complaints: View the Distance Learning Student Complaint Process.

### **History Majors:**

If you are a history major or minor and wish to receive important announcements on courses, scholarships, awards, and the Phi Alpha Theta Honor Society, please sign on to the history department listserv. Compose a message to: [majordomo@clas.ufl.edu](mailto:majordomo@clas.ufl.edu). In the text of the message, type the following: subscribe [hist-ba@history.ufl.edu](mailto:hist-ba@history.ufl.edu)

### ***Alpata: A Journal of History***

Keep in mind that the undergraduate- and graduate-student members of Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society at the University of Florida publish an academic journal each spring. In the fall, the journal editors will be sending out a call for submissions (articles and book reviews) to the journal. The journal is also looking for talented students who would like to serve on the editorial board. Please contact me if you're interested.

### **UF Grading Scale**

Please note UF's new grading scale with the addition of minuses.

A = 4.0

A- = 3.67

B+ = 3.33

B = 3.0

B- = 2.67

C+ = 2.33

C = 2.0

C- = 1.67

D+ = 1.33

D = 1.0

D- = 0.67

E = 0.0

E1 = 0.0 Stopped attending or participating prior to end of class

I (incomplete) = 0.0

Welcome, and good luck!