

AMH 3630-25398  
American Environmental History/ Fall 2025  
MWF 4 (10:40-11:30)/Matherly Hall 004

Professor Jack E. Davis

(he, him, his)

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

Ofc. Flint 235

MWF 10:40-11:30 an

Office Hours: Wednesday and Friday, 11:30 am-1:00 pm

352-273-3398



This course is a substantive and interpretive inquiry into the historical roots of the nation's contemporary environmental issues. It covers the period from before the Columbian explorations to the present. Presented within the context of the larger and more familiar historical experience, it is a relatively comprehensive overview of the relationship between people and their natural physical surroundings. It begins on the premise that the natural environment has been not only an object—which humans contemplated, exploited, or protected—but also an active variable in shaping the course of American history.

Students should finish this course with an expanded knowledge of the integral place of the environment in American history. A principal ambition of the course is to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the American experience. If we incorporate the human

relationship with the environment into our study of the past, we gain clearer insight into the identity, beliefs, and values of human groups and how each defined its relationship with others.

### **Course Objectives:**

- \* Expanding one's knowledge of environmental history and its place in the larger American experience.
- \* Introducing the student to scholarship in environmental history.
- \* Promoting critical thinking about the human relationship with nature and its impact in the social relationships among different human groups.

### **Course Requirements:**

\* Haiku Poem: Each week you will be required to compose and recite in class a haiku poem based on the weekly assigned theme, which will come from either assigned reading material or the style guide rules. I will assign a theme each week. A haiku poem has three lines and a specific syllable number for each: 5 for the first, 7 for the second, and 5 for the third—no more, no less. The haiku assignment is part of the class participation grade.

\* Take-home essays (2 X 20%) 40%

\* Archive research and paper 25%

\* Internet research and paper 25%

\* class attendance and participation 10%

(5% reduction from participation grade for each absence after 2 freebie absences. That said, you cannot pass the class without attending. See details below.)

\* Grammar and Style Guide exercise (factored into all writing assignments)

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

Assignments not completed earn a 0

Plagiarized assignment (see plagiarism section below) earn a 0

Assignments not turned in before or by stated due date will not be accepted. All assignments must be submitted on Canvas in Word or DOC files only. **NO PDFs.**

### **Assigned Texts:**

William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (Hill & Wang) ISBN 0809016346

Dave Foreman, *Confessions of an Eco-Warrior* (Three Rivers Press, 1993)

Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) ISBN 0195140109 Paper.

Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (Oxford University Press, 1983 or latest) ISBN 0195032128

**Week I (Aug 22): Introduction: The Natural Web of History**

Readings:  
Steinberg, prologue

**Week II (Aug 25-29): New World Meets Old**

Readings:  
Steinberg, chapters 1 and 2

**Week III (Sept 3 & 5): Anglos and Indians  
(Monday September 1, Labor Day Holiday)**

Readings:  
Cronon, all

***Grammar and Style Guide Exercise Due Friday September 5 on Canvas by 11:59 pm***

**Week IV (Sept 8-12): Cronon continued; the 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Landscape—Perceptions and Realities**

Readings:  
Steinberg, chapters 3 and 4.

**Week V (Sept 15-19):  
King Cotton and the Civil War**

Readings:  
Steinberg, chapters 5 and 6; Dianne D. Glave and Mark Stoll, editors, *To Love the Wind and the Rain: African Americans and American and Environmental History* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005) 0822958996, chapters 2 and 3 (on reserve in Library West)

**Week VI (Sept 22-26): The New South, the West, and the Locomotive Force of Change**

Readings:  
Steinberg, chapters 7 and 8.

**Week VII (Sept 29-Oct 3): The Urban Wilderness**

Film: *Cadillac Desert: Mulholland's Dream*

Readings:  
Steinberg, chapter 10.

***Take-Home Essay # 1 Due October 3 on Canvas by 11:59 pm***

### **Week VIII (Oct 6-10): Organized Conservation**

Readings:

Steinberg, chapter 9.

### **Week IX (Oct 13 & 15) (Homecoming Oct 17): Organized Conservation cont.**

Readings:

Carolyn Merchant, "Women of the Progressive Conservation Movement, 1900-1916," *Environmental Review* 8 (Spring 1984): 57-86.

### **Week X (Oct 20-24): Sunshine Environments**

Readings:

Jack E. Davis, *An Everglades Providence: Marjory Stoneman Douglas and the American Environmental Century*, chapters 13, 14, 16 (on reserve Library West).

### **Week XI (Oct 27-31): Economic Depression and New Deal Conservation**

Readings:

Worster, all.

Film: *Cadillac Desert: An American Nile*

### **Week XII (Nov 5 & 7) (No class November 3): The Continuing Saga of Food and Water**

*Internet Research Paper Due November 3 on Canvas by 11:59 pm*

*Meet in Library West Room 100 (to the left after you enter) on November 5 for archival research session*

Readings:

Steinberg: chapters 11 and 12

Film: *Cadillac Desert: The Mercy of Nature*

### **Week XIII (Nov 10-14): Postwar Consumer Society; the Green Racial Divide**

Readings:

Steinberg, chapter 13 and 14; Glave and Stoll eds., chapters 8, 12; Elizabeth Kolbert, "Turf Wars," *The New Yorker* (July 21, 2008) (access through UF Libraries E-Journal Locator).

Film: "Rachel Carson's Silent Spring"

### **Week XIV (Nov 17-21): Environmental Backlash; Environmental Justice**

Readings:

Foreman, all; Steinberg, chapter 15.

**Week XV (Nov 24 & 26) (Thanksgiving break Nov 28): Backlash continued**

*Archive Assignment Due November 24 on Canvas by 11:59 pm*

**Week XVI (Dec 1 & 3) Catching Up**

*(Last class December 3)*

*Take-Essay #2 Due December 8 on Canvas by 11:59 pm*

**Final Exam Day** (You have no in-class exams in this course.)

### **Course Requirements Descriptions:**

*Haiku Poem:* Each week you will be required to compose and recite in class a haiku poem based on the weekly assigned theme, which will come from either assigned reading material or the style guide rules. I will assign a theme each week. A haiku poem has three lines and a specific syllable number for each: 5 for the first, 7 for the second, and 5 for the third—no more, no less. The haiku assignment is part of the class participation grade.

*Submitting work:* All written work for the course must be written in 12-point double-spaced print and submitted on Canvas in .doc or docx. **(DO NOT SUBMIT A PDF FILE)** by the due date and time. Your work must also be presented in third-person language and follow the style guide.

*Course Attendance* and class participation is required. Students are expected to come to class for lectures and prepared to participate in discussions. All missed classes after 2 free absences will result in a deduction from your class participation grade. *\*\*If you miss 8 or more classes, or simply stop attending, because you believe you can pass the course successfully by only completing the written assignments, you won't. You will receive a failing grade.*

An absence is considered *excused* if there is an *acceptable reason* according to UF policy (<http://www.registrar.ufl.edu/catalog/policies/regulationattendance.html>). Examples of acceptable reasons are medical illness, religious holidays, and military obligation. It is the student's responsibility to notify the instructor of an excused absence and to provide documentation of an acceptable reason. Otherwise, the absence will be considered *unexcused* and will result in a quiz grade of zero if a quiz is administered when the student is absent. Whenever possible, the instructor should be notified prior to the absence. When this is not possible (e.g., due to unexpected emergency or illness), the instructor should be notified as soon as possible.

*Grammar and Style Guide* exercise can be found on my Canvas site. Download and answer the questions by circling 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 show proof of having completed 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, up to 5 points will be deducted from your assignment grade.

*Take-home essays* will represent responses to a list of essay questions posted on my web site. The prompts for discussion will be drawn from the assigned readings and the course lectures, and you will be expected to use the course readings and your class notes as sources to address the assignment. Your response 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 essays that address each prompt in a rigorous and organized manner are more likely to earn a decent grade. These grades, too, will be determined part by your compliance with the rules in the Grammar and Style Guide.

*Internet exercise* requires that you write a five-page paper, with footnotes and bibliography attached, using original-source materials from the Internet, such as, but not limited to, Proquest databases, Florida Heritage Collection, Reclaiming the Everglades, Southwest Florida Environmental Documents, and Florida's Natural Heritage. Your paper should have an environmental topic, such as the ecological impact of resource extraction, the views and work of an environmental activist, or the impact of nature on settlement or technology. Again, these are examples and do not limit the scope of your research interests. Be careful not to simply retell or describe what you find in on-line documents—such as letters, corporate papers, advertisements, and diaries. You should put your source materials and topic in historical context. Doing so will require you to utilize secondary-source materials—history books, biographies, academic articles (which you can find on Jstor), etc. For example, if you find on-line information about drainage in the Everglades in the early twentieth century, you will need to consult books about important historical individuals, places, or events. (ALL THIS IS IMPORTANT TO EARNING A DECENT GRADE.)

*Archive exercise* asks you to write a five-page paper with footnotes and bibliography attached. You will be required to use archival materials from the University of Florida Special and Area Studies Collections. The best materials from these collections and for the purpose of this course focus on Florida history. You might write a short environmental history of your home county; or about the human-nature relationship as recorded in the letters, journal, or diary of an early Florida pioneer; or about the environments that early travel writers of the South encountered. We will attend an orientation at the Special Collections library that will familiarize you with the primary-source materials available. One objective of this assignment is to give you experience working in archival materials—hard-copy matter as opposed to Internet sources. Such materials should form the bulk of your sources used for this paper. As with the Internet paper, you will need to present your subject in historical context.

Again, following the rules of the Grammar and Style Guide is imperative to completing work of full potential.

### **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**

In response to COVID-19, the following practices are in place to maintain your learning environment, to enhance the safety of our in-classroom interactions, and to further the health and safety of ourselves, our neighbors, and our loved ones.

- \* If you are not vaccinated, get vaccinated. Vaccines are readily available at no cost and have been demonstrated to be safe and effective against the COVID-19 virus. Visit this link for details on where to get your shot, including options that do not require an appointment: <https://coronavirus.uflhealth.org/vaccinations/vaccine-availability/>. Students who receive the first dose of the vaccine somewhere off-campus and/or outside of Gainesville can still receive their second dose on campus.

- \* You are expected to wear approved face coverings at all times during class and within buildings even if you are vaccinated. Please continue to follow healthy habits, including best practices like frequent hand washing. Following these practices is our responsibility as Gators.

- \* 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, stay home and self-quarantine. 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.



\* If you are withheld from campus by the Department of Health through Screen, Test & Protect you are not permitted to use any on campus facilities. Students attempting to attend campus activities when withheld from campus will be referred to the Dean of Students Office.

\* Continue to regularly visit [coronavirus.UFHealth.org](https://coronavirus.UFHealth.org) and [coronavirus.ufl.edu](https://coronavirus.ufl.edu) for up-to-date information about COVID-19 and vaccination.

### **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**

#### **Letter Grade Number Grade (edit if necessary)**

**A**

**100-92.5**

**A-**

**92.4-89.5**

**B+**

**89.4-86.5**

**B**

**86.4-82.5**

**B-**

**82.4-79.5**

**C+**

**79.4-76.5**

**C**

**76.4-72.5**

**C-**

**72.4-69.5**

**D+**

**69.4-66.5**

**D**

**66.4-62.5**

**D-**

**62.4-59.5**

**E**

**59.4-0**

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

**I (incomplete) = 0.0**