

History 481: Woods, Trees, and Property in Early America, Spring 2019

CRN: 42057 and 42048

Lincoln Hall 307

Tues. and Thurs. 11 a.m.-12:15 p.m.

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Office Hours: Tues. 2:30-3:30 p.m., Wed. 11 a.m.-12 p.m.

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“He that is nourished by the acorns that he picked up under an oak, or the apples he gathered from the trees in the wood, has certainly appropriated them to himself. No body can deny but the nourishment is his. I ask then, when did they begin to be his?”

John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* (1689)

“Whose woods these are I think I know.”

Robert Frost, “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening” (1923)

Course Description: “When explorers landed, America was trees,” writes the environmental scholar Robert G. Lillard in *The Great Forest* (1947). English writers such as John Locke pictured America as a vast “forest primeval,” like the primordial void that served as the imaginary starting-point for their theories of property. And indeed, the North American mainland east of the Mississippi was canopied by one of the world’s largest and densest expanses of forest, at a time when much of Europe had long been deforested and the landscape of England was being rapidly transformed by the clearing of wooded commons to make way for privately owned pastures and fields. This course explores how conflicts over the seemingly unbounded American forest shaped the formation of property in the British Atlantic and the new United States, and how changing property relations remade the sylvan landscape of early America in turn. From the enclosure of the commons to the politics of conservation, the course examines the ways in which alternative claims to the animal, vegetable, and mineral wealth of the woods became bound up with contests over ownership of land and labor in the built environment. Its three main units survey the role of competing claimants to woodlands in the development of real property (land and improvements), productive property (agriculture and industry), and protected resources (parks and nature preserves) from the colonial era to the industrial age. Finally, the course considers how the profusion of wildlife and paucity of property that Americans once found in the woods might relate to our own age of economic accumulation and environmental destruction.

Required Books (available at the UIC Bookstore and on reserve at the Daley Library):

Allan Greer, *Property and Dispossession: Natives, Empires, and Land in Early Modern North America*

Call No.: E98.L3 G73 2018

Jennifer Anderson, *Mahogany: The Costs of Luxury in Early America*
Call No.: HD9769.M33 U625 2012

Steven Stoll, *Ramp Hollow: The Ordeal of Appalachia*
Call No.: HD210.A66 S76 2017

Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar, *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*
Call No.: F128.65.C3 R67 1992

Karl Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature: Squatters, Poachers, Thieves, and the Hidden History of American Conservation*
Call No.: SB486.S65 J34 2001

Course Requirements:

1. *Class participation* (5 percent of course grade). All students are expected to complete the assigned reading for each week and to participate actively in class discussion. A grade of “C” is given for consistent attendance and preparation; a grade of “B” for consistently active and engaged participation; and a grade of “A” for superior participation throughout the term. ***Attendance in the first week of class is mandatory.***

2. *Essay assignments* (45 percent of course grade). Students must complete three essay assignments designed to develop their ability to read and respond critically to the required books. These include a *summary* of the second assigned book (*Mahogany*), worth 10 percent of the course grade; a *review* of the third assigned book (*Ramp Hollow*), worth 15 percent of the course grade; and an *interpretive essay* based on either the fourth assigned book (*The Park and the People*) or the fifth assigned book (*Crimes Against Nature*), worth 20 percent of the course grade. You may choose to write interpretive essays on both the fourth and the fifth assigned books, in which case whichever grade for this assignment is higher will count toward the course grade. For detailed instructions, see the separate document, “Essay Assignments.” **Please note: All written assignments must be submitted BOTH in hard copy AND electronically on the course Blackboard site.**

3. *Short report* (10 percent of course grade). Students must choose one event or issue in the history of woods, trees, and property in early America and prepare a 3-page (double-spaced, 12-point font) written report as well as a 5-10-minute oral report, to be presented in class on a date to be agreed on with the instructor. The topic for the report may be chosen from the list of possible topics to be handed out separately, or students may select another topic with the instructor’s approval. The report is to be based on reading of at least one primary source (produced by the historical actors themselves) and two secondary sources (articles or books by historians or other scholars).

4. *Midterm and final exams* (40 percent of course grade). Both will be take-home exams designed to develop students’ ability to synthesize and analyze all of the lectures, readings, and films, examining specific issues and periods in depth and detail while critically considering broad themes of the course as a whole. Each exam is worth 20 percent of the course grade.

Please note: The exams must be submitted BOTH in hard copy AND electronically on the course Blackboard site.

Graduate Requirements:

Graduate students in this class have the same requirements for the exams, short report, and class participation as undergraduates, which are worth the same percentages of the course grade, but they will be graded by a different and higher standard, reflecting the expectations for graduate-level work. Instead of the essay assignments, graduate students must write a 12-15-page research paper on a topic in early American environmental history, to be chosen in consultation with the instructor, based on both primary and secondary sources. A proposal for the paper, including a prospective bibliography, is due Jan. 31; a complete first draft is due April 18; and the final paper is due May 2. The research paper is worth 45 percent of the course grade.

Course Policies:

Absences and late arrivals: Students are responsible for attending all classes on-time. If you need to miss class, be sure to email the instructor ahead of time—at least one day before the class you will miss if possible. Any two unexcused absences or instances of arriving late will lower the class participation portion of your course grade by one-half grade.

Late papers: Due dates for the take-home essays and exams are listed in the schedule of readings and assignments below. Late papers will be graded down by one grade for each day they are late.

Computers, cell phones, etc.: **Use of laptop computers, cell phones, and other electronic devices during class is NOT permitted except by special arrangement with the instructor.**

Academic honesty: Please familiarize yourself with UIC's academic integrity policy, which can be found here: <http://www.uic.edu/ucats/cat1315/GR.shtml#qa>. Any instances of plagiarism or other academic dishonesty will result in an "F" on the assignment, and a formal report will be filed with the Dean of Students.

Students with disabilities: If you are a student with a documented disability and require special accommodations, or if you require special arrangements in the event of evacuation, please let the instructor know as soon as possible.

Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

All assigned readings are either from the required books or posted on the course Blackboard site.

UNIT I. MAKING LAND

Week 1 (Jan. 15 and Jan. 17). Woods and Property: Introductions

Required Reading: C. B. Macpherson, "The Meaning of Property"; Kathryn Newfont, "Of Forests and Commons"; Greer, *Property and Dispossession*, pp. 1-144.

Week 2 (Jan. 22 and Jan. 24). Landlords and Levellers: Conflicts Over Commons

Required Reading: Gerrard Winstanley, “Declaration from the Poor Oppressed People of England” (1649); Selection from John Evelyn, *Sylva, or a Discourse of Forest-Trees and the Propagation of Timber in His Majesties Dominions* (1664); John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, ch. 5, “Of Property” (1689); Greer, *Property and Dispossession*, pp. 145-270.

Week 3 (Jan. 29 and Jan. 31). Natives and Colonists: Natural Properties

Required Reading: Selection from William Wood, “New England’s Prospect” (1634); Paige Raimon, “Naturalizing Power: Land and Sexual Violence Along William Byrd’s Dividing Line”; Greer, *Property and Dispossession*, pp. 271-435.

Week 4 (Feb. 5 and Feb. 7). Wildlife and Livestock: The Animal Kingdom

Required Reading: Virginia DeJohn Anderson, “King Philip’s Herds: Indians, Colonists, and the Problem of Livestock in Early New England”; Selection from Gervase Markham, *Cheape and Good Husbandry* (1653); Anderson, *Mahogany*, pp. 1-124.

In-class film: “*Land of the Eagle*”

Week 5 (Feb. 12 and Feb. 14). Naval Masts and Liberty Trees: The King’s Broad Arrow

Required Reading: Selection from Fayrer Hall, *The Importance of the British Plantations in America to this Kingdom* (1731); Anonymous article in *The New-Hampshire Gazette, and Historical Chronicle* 21 Aug. 1767; Anderson, *Mahogany*, pp. 125-209.

UNIT II. PRODUCING PROPERTY**Week 6 (Feb. 19 and Feb. 21). Craftsmen and Consumers: The Republic of Wood**

Required Reading: Peter Boag, “Thinking Like Mount Rushmore: Sexuality and Gender in the Republican Landscape”; Anderson, *Mahogany*, pp. 210-316.

Book summary of *Mahogany* due Feb. 21.

Week 7 (Feb. 26 and Feb. 28). Loggers and Mill Owners: Timber Lines

Required Reading: Chad Montrie, “‘Think Less of the Factory Than of My Native Dell’: Labor, Nature, and the Lowell Mill Girls”; Stoll, *Ramp Hollow*, pp. xiii-126.

Week 8 (March 5 and March 7). Farmers and Fishermen: Riparian Rights

Required Reading: Gary Kulik, “Dams, Fish, and Farmers: The Defense of Public Rights in Eighteenth-Century Rhode Island”; Stoll, *Ramp Hollow*, pp. 127-211.

Midterm Exam due March 5.

Week 9 (March 12 and March 14). Cultivators and Capitalists: The Southern Upcountry

Required Reading: Stoll, *Ramp Hollow*, pp. 212-290.

In-class film: “*Appalachia: A History of Mountains and People*”

Book review of *Ramp Hollow* due March 14.

Week 10 (March 19 and March 21). Planters and Slaves: The Southern Lowcountry

Required Reading: Selection from Mart Stewart, “*What Nature Suffers to Groe*”: *Life, Labor, and Landscape on the Georgia Coast, 1680-1920*; Kimberly K. Smith, “What is Africa to Me?”

Wilderness in Black Thought, 1860-1930”; Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *Park and People*, pp. 1-120.

SPRING BREAK (March 25-March 29)

UNIT III. CULTIVATING NATURE

Week 11 (April 2 and April 4). Naturalists and Gardeners: Fruits of Labor

Required Reading: Selection from Courtney Fullilove, *The Profit of the Earth: The Global Seeds of American Agriculture*; Selection from Philip J. Pauly, *Fruits and Plains: The Horticultural Transformation of America*; Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *Park and People*, pp. 121-237.

Week 12 (April 9 and April 11). Landscape Architects and Laborers: Urban Arcadia

Required Reading: Rosenzweig and Blackmar, *Park and People*, pp. 238-372.

In-class film: “Frederick Law Olmsted: Designing America”

Interpretive essay on *Park and People* due April 11.

Week 13 (April 16 and April 18). Romantic Writers and Artists: Roots of Environmentalism

Required Reading: Selection from Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (1854); Selection from George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature* (1864); Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, pp. xv-80.

Week 14 (April 23 and April 25). Rancheros and Realtors: The Pacific Cornucopia

Required Reading: Richard Henry Dana on the Hide and Tallow Trade (1840); Guadalupe Vallejo Recalls the Rancheros (1890); Selection from Jared Farmer, *Trees in Paradise*; Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, 81-148.

Week 15 (April 30 and May 2). Rangers and Squatters: Conflicts Over Conservation

Required Reading: Thomas Andrews, “‘Made by Toile?’ Tourism, Labor, and the Construction of the Colorado Landscape”; Jacoby, *Crimes Against Nature*, pp. 149-204.

In-class film: “The Last Refuge”

Interpretive essay on *Crimes Against Nature* due May 2.

Final Exam due by 5 p.m. on Thursday, May 9.