War and Environment in U.S. History

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Fall 2016  
Office: DBH 111
TR 11-12:50 pm, DBH 201  
Office hours: T 1-3 pm

Warfare is one of the most dramatic ways in which humans interact with their environment. Soldiers forage in fields for food and fight for geographic space; they live at the mercy of the weather and die from exposure to disease. This class will investigate the ecological aspects of war in U.S. history, from the first conflicts of colonization to our present engagements in the Middle East. How have ecological shifts contributed to militarized conflict? What role has nature played in determining the course of a war? How does the preparation for war—the mobilization of men and natural resources—impact the environment? How have wars physically altered the nation’s landscape? Does experience in war alter our perceptions of nature and, ultimately, influence environmental policy? How has our nation’s need for natural resources driven our military’s interaction with the rest of the world? Proceeding chronologically through U.S. history, we will study wars both large and small, discussing the ways violent conflict has shaped and reshaped the nation’s peoples and landscapes. As a secondary thread of inquiry, we will also engage in a study of how historians know what they know about war through the analysis (and even creation) of primary sources.

Course Goals

- Debate and analyze the role of nature in warfare and the impacts that warfare have had on the natural world
- Make connections between the ecological dimensions of war and changes in society, politics, and economy
- Introduce students to the methodology of the historian—what sources to use, how to approach primary documents, and ways to give voice to non-human nature

Assignments

Participation/Leading Class Discussion (20%): The class is a discussion-based seminar. Each week I will provide brief lectures on the historical context and major events of the war or wars in question. The rest of our time will be devoted to discussion. You are responsible for reading the required texts before each class and consistently engaging in thoughtful conversation. Depending on the number of students enrolled, you will be responsible for leading the discussion of the readings at least one class during the semester. Ideally, discussions will be intellectually stimulating, and all students will be expected to listen to others’ points, critically engage the sources, respond thoughtfully and ask useful questions.

Reading Responses (20%): For each discussion, you will bring to class a typed 2-page response to the readings for that week. They may discuss a particular argument, explore connections
between the reading and the lecture or outside material, whatever. The purpose of these responses is to allow you ample time to prepare your thoughts for discussion and to help the student leader facilitate the conversation.

**Primary Source Paper (15%): 5 page minimum.** This is an exercise in interpreting source materials. You will choose a published, first-hand account of a battle, war, or its aftermath (I provide a list) and discuss how it might be used as a source for writing a history of that event. What does the account tell us about the event? Are there any ecological changes that can be inferred from the author’s description? Are there any biases on the part of the author which would impact the source’s reliability? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using traditional historical sources, such as memoirs and published accounts, in writing military OR environmental history? Class readings and lectures may be used and cited for context, but outside sources will not be used for this paper.

**Research Paper (30%): 10 page minimum.** There are multiple components to this paper, and the details will be provided in class.

**The Reflection Paper (15%): 5 page minimum, plus revised primary source paper.** This will be both a re-write of your primary source paper and a 5-page reflection. Utilizing the experience and wisdom of the historical process gained through writing your research paper, you will re-examine the source you chose, and reflect on how the semester’s discussion and writing has (or has not) changed the way you think about it.

**REQUIRED TEXTS**

We will be reading large sections of the following texts, which are available for purchase. I will also place copies on reserve in the library. Other readings (articles, chapters, excerpts) will be posted on Moodle or placed on reserve in the library.

- Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (Yale University Press, 2009)

**ATTENDANCE POLICY**

This class is a seminar, and its success depends upon your presence and full participation. Students who have more than **four absences** will receive an FA (failure due to absences) for the course. Students who must be absent due to University business should notify the teacher early in the course. Arriving late or leaving early from a class is disruptive; three tardies/early exits will be considered the equivalent of an absence. Students who come to class unprepared may be dismissed by the professor and such dismissal will be counted as an absence.
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

All submissions are due at the beginning of the class period on the day specified on the syllabus. Late writing assignments will be docked one letter grade per day late. Late speeches are not accepted unless permission has been granted by instructor prior to due date. Students will not be given extra credit assignments or allowed to make up work that they have missed due to absence other than that incurred for University business.

- All essays—including rough drafts—must be typed.
- Submissions must be double-spaced, with 1 inch margins and Times New Roman 12-point font. Failure to follow these very simple instructions will result in a loss of points.

GRADING SCALE

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PLAGIARISM

All submissions must be original with sources clearly and correctly documented. Work previously submitted for other courses is not accepted. Any student who represents the work of another as his or her own is guilty of plagiarism and will be subject to the penalties outlined in The Student Handbook, including failure in the course and suspension from the University. I have ZERO tolerance for cheaters, particularly in an upper-division course. If you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism, see me.

TECHNOLOGY

Consider this class an ancient technology zone. You will not be allowed to use laptops, computers, or tablets to take notes (unless you have an academic accommodation from Disability Resources for a specific technology). I have received too many complaints from too many students in years past of distractions caused by inconsiderate peers with disruptive addictions to connectivity. You will take notes the old-fashioned way: with a pen and notebook. This method allows you to more fully and creatively connect with the material, as well as hone your doodling and daydreaming skills.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you are registered with Disability Resources and have your accommodation letter, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible to discuss accommodations that may be necessary. If you have a disability but have not contacted Disability Resources, please call 726-2980/4078 or visit DR located within Career Development, Room 205 of the University Center. Students who may need course accommodations are welcome to make an appointment to see me during office hours.
Students with disabilities must be registered with Disability Resources, 726-2980/4078, and I must have received an accommodation letter before you begin receiving academic adjustments.

DISCLAIMER

The professor reserves the right to modify the content of the syllabus at any time during the semester. Students will be given ample notification if and when this occurs.

SCHEDULE

Introduction

August 30: Introduction to the course

September 1: A Problem of Sources
   ✤ Fred Anderson, “Disaster at Monongahela, from Crucible of War (Moodle)
   ✤ Paul Kopperman, “The Indiens Was Upon Us!” from Braddock at the Monongahela (Moodle)

Livestock

September 6: First Contact and the Consolidation of Colonialism

September 8: Student-led discussion
   ✤ Pekka Hämäläinen, The Comanche Empire, Chapter 1, pp. 1-49

Disease

September 13: Ecological Aspects of the American Revolution

September 15: Student-led discussion
   ✤ Elizabeth Fenn, Pox Americana, Chapters 1-4

Race

September 20: “Manifest Manhood”: The U.S.-Mexican War, Racial Identity, and Slavery

September 22: Student-led discussion
   ✤ The Comanche Empire, pp. 68-88, 100-106, 141-180, 190-201, 219-238
**Food**

September 27: No class

September 29: The Clash of Resource Demands in the U.S. Civil War
   - Primary source paper due

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**Eco-Terrorism?**

October 4: War that Didn’t End: the KKK and the Indian Wars

October 6: Student-led discussion
   - *The Comanche Empire*, Chapter 7; KKK Trial Transcripts (Moodle)

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October 11: FALL BREAK

October 13: FALL BREAK

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**Industry**

October 18: The First World War and the Modern Military-Industrial Complex
   - Autobiographies due

October 20: Student-led discussion
   - Edmund Russell, *War and Nature*, Chapters 2-4

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**Energy**

October 25: World War II, Resource Demands, and the Importance of Oil

October 27: Student-led discussion
   - Edmund Russell, *War and Nature*, Chapters 6, 7, 9

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**Indigenous Landscapes**

November 1: Student-led discussion
   - Kate Brown, *Plutopia*, pp. 15-140
November 3: Writing Day

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Technology

November 8: Cold War Chemical and Nuclear Scares

November 10: Student-led discussion
   ❖ Kate Brown, *Plutopia*, pp. 141-267

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Forests

November 15: Agent Orange: Its Impact on Forests, Civilians, and Veterans

November 17: Student-led discussion
   ❖ Excerpts from *The Vietnam War: An Eyewitness History* (Moodle)
   ❖ Edwin Martini, “Even We Can’t Prevent Forests: The Chemical War in Vietnam and the Illusion of Control,” (Moodle)

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Environmentalism

November 22: War and the Rise of the Environmental Movement
   ❖ Full draft of research paper due

November 24: THANKSGIVING BREAK

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Environmentalism, Part II

November 29: Protests, Wars, and the Earth

December 1: Student-led discussion
   ❖ Thomas Robertson, “‘This is American Earth’: American Empire, the Cold War, and American Environmentalism,” *Diplomatic History*, 32 no. 4 (Sept. 2008): pp. 561-584 (Moodle)
Recent Conflicts and Potential Consequences

December 6: Resource Wars in the Middle East and Wrap-Up

December 8: Writing day

**FINAL COPY OF YOUR RESEARCH PAPER AND THE REFLECTION PAPER DUE on December 14 at 11:00 a.m. (hardcopy and Moodle)**