

Panorama of Yosemite Valley from A(t1906)rint

## THE CONSERVATION MOVEMENT

HIS 10001; Spring 2017  
Tue & Thur, 9:30-10:50am; Noyce 3821

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Spring Office Hours:  
Tue & Wed 1:30-3:00pm  
& by appointment

“Of all the questions which can come before this nation, short of the actual preservation of its existence in a great war, there is none which compares in importance with the great central task of leaving this land even a better land for our descendants than it is for us.”

—Theodore Roosevelt, “The New Nationalism” 1910

### Course Description

This class explores the nature and process of history, focusing on the century-long debate among scholars to understand the complex origins, character and impact of the conservation movement. Weaving together strands of scientific, political, moral and aesthetic thought, the movement to conserve the nation's natural and human resources became the defining features of the progressive era, helping to shape the modern world of the twentieth century. But how does one write the history of a movement that included such a diverse array of actors, ideals, and causes? As we shall see, the banner of conservation encompassed everything from the national parks to eugenics, from

## Required Texts

*The first three required books are available for purchase at the Campus Bookstore, while the last two\* are available as free e-texts through the ACLS e-book program (which can be accessed through the Grinnell Library catalog).*

John H. Arnold, *History: A Very Short Introduction* (New York & London: Oxford University Press, 2000).

Nancy Langston, *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West* (Seattle & London: University of Washington Press, 2015)

Ian Tyrell, *Crisis of the Wasteful Empire and Conservation in Theodore Roosevelt's America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015)

\*Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency* (1959, ACLS E-book)

\*Karyl Jacoby, *Crimes against nature squatters, poachers, thieves, and the hidden history of American conservation* (orig. publ. 2003, ACLS E-book)

## Course Objectives

Student Objectives

but also taking the appropriate time to address the discussion questions, to organize your notes accordingly, and to note specific examples and passages you want to highlight in class

While I like to let conversations evolve naturally, with students choosing to “jump in” at their own pace, I will also do a fair amount of calling on students to ensure that everyone is participating, and that the conversation is not confined to a narrow circle. Calling on students is also important in terms of allowing me to evaluate how everyone is processing the material, analyzing the issues, and engaging with the viewpoints of others.

Class participation accounts for 25% of your overall grade, and I take this evaluation seriously. I record a participation grade for each class session, and will make these available to you on a regular basis so that you can track how you are doing in this aspect of the course. These grades will apply when we break up into small groups for either discussion or class exercises. Feel free to come by my office hours or schedule an appointment early in the semester if you have questions or concerns about participation.

#### Film Analysis (10% of Total Grade) Feb 6

This assignment involves a critical analysis of the documentary film *A Midwife's Tale* (PBS, American Experience), in light of Arnold's discussions about the process of history. Further guidelines will be posted a week before the assignment is due on blackboard and discussed in class.

#### Two Exams (25% of Total Grade), Mar 9 & Apr 18

These two in-class exams will focus on analyzing key concepts and debates from the prior course readings. Students will be allowed to prepare and use a limited amount of notes during the exam. Further guidelines will be posted on blackboard and discussed in class.

#### Document Analysis (10% of Total Grade) Due Mar 3

This short assignment (3-4 pages) will focus on critically analyzing one of the primary sources relating to the ideology of conservation. Further guidelines will be posted on blackboard and discussed in class.

#### Annotated Bibliography Project (25% of Total Grade)

One of the key assignments for HIS 100 is shared across all the units taught by faculty at Grinnell is an annotated bibliography project. Students will choose a particular debate or theme in the history of conservation that they would like to explore in greater depth, and will be responsible for researching the historiography (i.e. the historical conversation or debate surrounding this issue). They will create a comprehensive bibliography of these, in which each scholarly article or book is read and analyzed. (a-1 (b))

Extensions & Late assignments





Thursday (Mar.6): The Dark Side of Conservation?  
 Reading Due: Jacoby, Crimes Against Nature.

**Spring Break (March 20-March 3)**

**Week 9**

Tuesday (Apr.4) Analyzing Gender

Reading Due: Nancy Unger, "Nature's Housekeepers": Progressive Women as Midwives to the Conservation Movement and Environmental Consciousness."

Jennifer Price, "When Women were Women, Men were Men, and Birds were Hats."

Thursday (Apr.6): Incorporating Race into the Story

Group A: Miles Powell, Vanishing America: Species Extinction, Racial Peril, and the Origins of Conservation.

Group B: Jeff Romm, The Coincidental Order of Environmental Justice.

Group C: Mark D. Hersey, My Work Is That of Conservation: An Environmental Biography of George Washington Carver (excerpts).

**Week 10**

Tuesday (Apr.11) Environmental History Perspectives

Reading Due: Nancy Langston, Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares: The Paradox of Old Growth in the Inland West, 86, 104-56.

Thursday (Apr.13) Wrestling with Nature's Complexity

Group A: Langston, Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares, 202-48, 260-95.

**Week 11**

Tuesday (Apr.18): **Second Exam**

