

## **Booms and Busts in North American History**

HTY 398 (002)  
Spring 2016  
Tues. and Thurs. 9:30-10:45 AM  
Stevens 155

Dr. Mark McLaughlin  
Stevens Hall 275B, (207) 581-2028  
Email: mark.j.mclaughlin@maine.edu  
Office Hours: Tues. and Thurs. 11:00  
AM-12:00 PM or by appointment

### **Course Description:**

This course examines natural resource development and the broader commodification of nature in the geographical area now referred to as North America from the sixteenth century to the present. Particular attention will be paid to resource booms and busts as analytical windows into the various political, economic, social, and environmental consequences of the past exploitation of nature. The course will follow a rough chronology, and cover topics such as the fur trade, forestry, the fisheries, the gold rushes, mining, hydroelectric development, and oil and gas. Prerequisites: first-year students require permission. 3 credits.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

Students who successfully complete the course will be able to:

- identify and interpret the historical effects of natural resource development and the broader commodification of nature in North America.
- deconstruct and analyze the various political, economic, social, and environmental consequences of the past exploitation of nature.
- compare and contrast various resource booms and busts that have occurred over the last 500 years of North American history and account for temporal and spatial commonalities and differences.
- determine connections between present-day problems and outcomes to the past exploitation of nature.
- evaluate and debate historical processes, trends, and ideas through both oral and written forms of analysis.

### **Required text:**

There is no required text for this course. However, there will be readings assigned for the discussion meetings. These will be made available electronically and at the Fogler Library's Reserve Desk. The list of assigned readings and information about how you can access the readings will be posted on Blackboard at least one week in advance of the associated discussion meeting.

## **Grading:**

Students are responsible for understanding the material presented in the lectures, in the readings, and in the discussions. All assignments must be submitted to receive a passing grade. The assignments and their values are as follows:

- Class Participation: 20%
- Discussion Papers: 10%
- Research Paper: 25%
- Midterm Exam: 20%
- Final Exam: 25%

## **Participation:**

Student participation is required, even during classes scheduled as lectures, so attendance is strongly encouraged. The main opportunity for student participation will be during the six discussion meetings, scheduled to take place on 28 January, 11 and 25 February, 31 March, and 14 and 28 April. The discussion meetings will center around assigned readings related to topics covered during lectures in the couple of weeks prior to a particular discussion meeting. As noted above, the readings will be made available electronically and at the Fogler Library's Reserve Desk. The list of assigned readings and information about how you can access the readings will be posted on Blackboard at least one week in advance of the associated discussion meeting. There will be included with the assigned readings a set of questions to help stimulate class discussion, which will also form part of the basis of the discussion paper assignment described below.

## **Discussion Papers:**

As part of the course evaluation, students are required to write two 500-word discussion papers (2 double-spaced pages, 12-point font, Arial), with each being worth half, or 5%, of the 10% total. The papers will be based on the discussion meetings and associated readings, and it is up to individual students to decide which two of the six discussion meetings they wish to address. It is strongly suggested that students take notes as they do the readings, both to facilitate better in-class discussions and to make the writing process easier. Once we have discussed a particular set of readings, students then have one week to complete their papers; for example, if you choose to write on discussion meeting #1 (28 January), then your paper would be due by 4 February.

In the papers, students will address one of the discussion questions that are paired with the assigned readings. Stronger papers will include references to the assigned readings and class lectures and discussions. The papers must follow the conventions of formal essay writing and adhere to the Chicago Manual of Style; a useful citation guide is available here: [www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html).

## **Research Paper:**

Students are required to write a research paper, approximately 3,000 words in length (10-12 double-spaced pages, 12-point font, Arial) , which is due on 28 April.

The first step is to write a research proposal of no more than one double-spaced page, which is due on 11 February. The proposal must deal with a major question in the broader commodification of nature in the geographical area now referred to as North America from the sixteenth century to the present. The proposal must identify the question to be addressed in the research paper, the approach to be taken, and the sources to be utilized. It is fine if some aspects of the student's overall approach to the essay are altered slightly in the move from the proposal to the full research paper. Such alterations occur occasionally as one becomes more familiar with the sources.

Students must use both primary and secondary sources in their research papers (note – Wikipedia is not an acceptable source). Secondary sources are the books, articles, and theses written on your subject and others related to it. Primary sources are original documents, correspondence, newspapers, and other materials which shed new light on your subject. The former are quicker and easier to use, the latter more time-consuming but sometimes more fun. Only experienced students should base their essays largely on primary sources. It may be necessary to narrow the topic to cover it adequately in the time available. It may also be useful to base the essay on secondary sources and then dip briefly into primary sources to add a little more to our knowledge. Students should avoid excessive reliance on a single secondary source.

Ideally, a research paper should make some original contribution to scholarship. This may result from a variety of approaches: the derivation of new interpretations from “second-hand” material, the testing of “old” ideas in the light of new material gleaned from primary sources, or the telling in an interesting fashion of a story not previously available. Whatever the approach, it is important that the author knows what he/she is trying to accomplish and makes this clear to the reader in the introduction.

The essay must adhere to the basic tenets of a formal historical research paper. Formal prose is required, so avoid using contractions (use "will not" instead of "won't"), abbreviations, slang, and colloquialisms. The best "style" for historical writing is that which conveys the most meaning in the fewest words. That is the kind of style which tends to be vigorous and keeps the reader awake. In working from one draft to another, be on the lookout for words that can be left out or other short cuts to the same or more precise meaning. Also, the citation of sources and the bibliography must conform to the Chicago Manual of Style, available at [www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html).

Finally, students should consult the instructor if they are having problems at any point during the writing and/or researching process.

**Exams:**

The midterm exam will be given in class on 3 March, while the final exam will be held during the exam week at the end of the semester (TBD).

**Late Assignments:**

An assignment must be handed in at the beginning of the class on the date that the assignment is due. Assignments handed in after the due date, without prior arrangement, will be considered late. Late assignments will be penalized 5% per overdue day on the final grade of the assignment. Extensions to help students organize their work may be given without penalty if requested at least a week in advance. Extensions within a week of the due date will require presentation of a physician's note/medical certificate.

**Absenteeism:**

Absenteeism is strongly discouraged, as you cannot achieve a good class participation mark without being present. Please be advised that you are responsible for keeping abreast of all lectures, discussions, and disseminated information, including course changes and special announcements made in class. I may take steps to accommodate absence from class upon presentation of a physician's note/medical certificate.

**Academic Honesty:**

Academic honesty is very important. It is dishonest to cheat on exams, to copy term papers, to submit papers written by another person, to fake experimental results, or to copy or reword parts of books or articles into your own papers without appropriately citing the source. Students committing or aiding in any of these violations may be given failing grades for an assignment or for an entire course, at the discretion of the instructor. In addition to any academic action taken by an instructor, these violations are also subject to action under the University of Maine Student Conduct Code. The maximum possible sanction under the student conduct code is dismissal from the University.

**Communications with the Instructor:**

Students can contact me through a number of means. My office hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM, or you can make an appointment to meet with me at a mutually convenient time. I can also be reached by phone; my office number is (207) 581-2028. Finally, you can email me: mark.j.mclaughlin@maine.edu. Please note that my reply may be delayed if you send me an email outside of the hours of Monday to Friday, 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM.

## Students with Disabilities:

If you have a disability for which you may be requesting an accommodation, please contact Disabilities Services, 121 East Annex, 581-2319, as early as possible in the term.

## Sexual Discrimination Reporting:

The University of Maine is committed to making campus a safe place for students. Because of this commitment, if you tell a teacher about an experience of **sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, relationship abuse (dating violence and domestic violence), sexual misconduct, or any form of gender discrimination** involving members of the campus, **your teacher is required to report** this information to the campus Office of Sexual Assault & Violence Prevention or the Office of Equal Opportunity.

**If you want to talk in confidence** to someone about an experience of sexual discrimination, please contact these resources:

- For *confidential resources on campus*: **Counseling Center: 207-581-1392** or **Cutler Health Center: at 207-581-4000.**
- For *confidential resources off campus*: **Rape Response Services: 1-800-310-0000** or **Spruce Run: 1-800-863-9909.**
- **Other resources:** The resources listed below can offer support but may have to report the incident to others who can help:
- For *support services on campus*: **Office of Sexual Assault & Violence Prevention: 207-581-1406, Office of Community Standards: 207-581-1409, University of Maine Police: 207-581-4040 or 911.** Or see the OSAVP website for a complete list of services at <http://www.umaine.edu/osavp/>.

## Course Schedule:

Disruption Clause: In the event of an extended disruption of normal classroom activities, the format for this course may be modified to enable its completion within its programmed time frame. In that event, you will be provided an addendum to the syllabus that will supersede this version.

### Week #1

January 19: Exploring Theory

January 21: Pre-Contact North America

### Week #2

January 26: Contacts

January 28: Discussion Meeting #1

Week #3

February 2: The North Atlantic Fisheries

February 4: The Fur Trade

- Discussion Paper #1 due

Week #4

February 9: The Great Land Rush

February 11: Discussion Meeting #2

- Research Proposal due

Week #5

February 16: Clearing the Forests

February 18: Growing Cotton

- Discussion Paper #2 due

Week #6

February 23: Growing Wheat

February 25: Discussion Meeting #3

Week #7

March 1: Seals, Bison, and Pigeons

March 3: Midterm Exam

- Discussion Paper #3 due

March 7: Spring Recess Begins

March 21: Classes Resume

Week #8

March 22: Working Waterways

March 24: The Gold Rushes

Week #9

March 29: Consuming the Coasts

March 31: Discussion Meeting #4

Week #10

April 5: Coal Mining

April 7: Industrialized Forestry

- Discussion Paper #4 due

Week #11

April 12: Industrialized Fisheries

April 14: Discussion Meeting #5

Week #12

April 19: Hydroelectric Development

April 21: Mining Minerals

- Discussion Paper #5 due

Week #13

April 26: Oil and Gas

April 28: Discussion Meeting #6

- Research Papers due

Week #14

May 3: Commodifying Waste

May 5: Class Wrap-up and Exam Prep

- Discussion Paper #6 due

May 9-13: Final Exam Week - date of final exam for this course TBD