



HISTORY 227: EXPLORATIONS IN THE HISTORY OF RACE AND ETHNICITY
Race and Environment in the History of the United States

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Summer 2018 (ACC)
May 29 – June 17
MTWRF 9:00AM-12:00PM
202-4 Bradley Memorial (1225 Linden Dr.)

Office hours:
MTWRF 12:00-1:00 PM or by appointment
117 Bradley Memorial

Nature is not so much her own ever-sweet interpreter, as the mere supplier of that cunning alphabet, whereby selecting and combining as he pleases, each man reads his own peculiar lesson according to his own peculiar mind and mood.

— Herman Melville, *Pierre* (1852)

Our movement is not a reaction to the environmental movement. We have come here to define for ourselves the issues of the ecology and the environment... We have come for you to hear our understandings from our mouths directly, so there will be no confusion and no misunderstandings.

— Dana Alston, "Moving Beyond the Barriers" (1991)

Why do pollution crises like the one that struck Flint, Michigan, in 2014 seem to happen most often in places with majority Latinx and African American populations? Why has the National Park Service struggled to attract non-white visitors? Why are some accusing Earth Day's "March for Science" as having been "too white"?

This course examines the evolution of the concept of race and the experiences of racial groups through the lens of environmental history. We will follow three threads through the course of U.S. history: how constructions of race and ethnicity and ideas about the natural world have shaped each other; how access to, and experiences of, landscapes and natural resources have differed along racial lines; and how mainstream conservation and environmental movements have discriminated against non-white Americans. We will also explore how non-white Americans have developed distinct ecological consciousness and environmental critiques that incorporate structures of racial, gender, and economic oppression.

Credits, Designation & Instructional Mode

This is a 3-credit course. The credit standard for this course is met by an expectation of a total of 135 hours of student engagement with the course learning activities (at least 45 hours per credit), which include regularly scheduled classes, reading, writing, audio production, group meetings, and other student work as described in the syllabus.

This course counts toward the University's Ethnic Studies requirement. The mode of instruction in this course is all face to face. There are no prerequisites.

Canvas

The course syllabus, readings, assignment descriptions, announcements, and grading information is available on our Canvas site: <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/101830/>

Learning Goals

This course will prepare students to:

- Identify historical antecedents and cultural values in racial and environmental rhetoric
- Link changing racial and environmental politics and ideas to broader processes of economic and cultural development
- Examine complex arguments and narratives and translate them to a lay audience
- Communicate ideas effectively through formal and informal oral presentations and discussion
- Record, edit, and mix short audio essays at an intermediate level

Grading

A (Excellent)	92.5% or above	370 points or higher
AB	87.5-92.4%	350-369 points
B (Good)	82.5-87.4%	330-349 points
BC	77.5-82.4%	310-329 points
C (Fair)	69.5-77.4%	278-309 points
D (Poor)	59.5-69.4%	238-277 points
F (Failure)	0-59.4%	0-237 points

Assessments

Attendance	40 pts (10%)
Participation	80 pts (20%)
Quizzes (13)	80 pts (20%)
Podcast: Research Precis	40 pts (10%)
Podcast: Editing Exercise	20 pts (5%)
Podcast: Draft Script (group grade)	20 pts (5%)
Podcast (group grade)	60 pts (15%)
Oral Examination	60 pts (15%)

Exams

Each day will begin with a short **quiz** of 4-5 questions covering the day's assigned material. They are designed to measure engagement with the readings and podcasts but not comprehension. As long as you spent substantial time with the material, even if you didn't fully understand it, you won't have any trouble.

The final exam will take place in class on Thursday, June 14. Each student will sit for a 10-12 minute one-on-one **oral examination** with Brian. Potential questions will be distributed in advance and will draw from readings, podcasts, and class discussions.

Assignments

The major project in this course is a short (8-12 minute) podcast episode exploring a historical moment where race and environment intersected, which you will produce with one or two other students. Before you begin working in your group, you will work on your own to complete two related assignments: an **audio editing exercise** (due Friday, June 1 by 6:00 PM) applying what you learned during an in-class audio workshop, and a **research precis** summarizing your findings from preliminary research (due Sunday, June 3 by 6:00 PM). You will then discuss your research with your partner(s), conduct additional research, and then transform that research into an engaging script for your podcast episode. Your **draft script** is due Thursday, June 7 by 6:00 PM. There will be class time available for you to get support with recording and editing. The polished **podcast episode** is due at the beginning of the final day of class, Friday, June 15. Detailed rubrics explaining the grading of each assignment will be distributed in advance.

Readings

There are no books to purchase. All course readings are available on our Canvas site and as a packet at the L&S Copy Center (6120 Sewell Social Sciences). While purchasing the packet is optional, you are required to bring the assigned readings with you to every class.

Absences and Late Assignments

Attendance is mandatory. In this condensed summer term, missing one day is equivalent to missing a week of classes during the fall or spring semester. Students forced to be absent because of an emergency or illness will be given an assignment that requires three hours to complete as well as the reading quiz missed.

No late work will be accepted without arrangements made in person in advance.

Electronic Devices

Laptops and tablets are not permitted in class except during podcast production. Cell phones use is prohibited.

Accommodations

If you have a documented disability and need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments of the course, please alert Brian by the Thursday of the first week. For support getting such documentation, contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center (702 W. Johnson St. #2104 263-2741). Disability information is confidential and protected under federal law.

Academic Integrity

By enrolling in this course, each student assumes the responsibilities of an active participant in UW–Madison’s community of scholars in which everyone’s academic work and behavior are held to the highest academic integrity standards. Academic misconduct compromises the integrity of the university. Cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, unauthorized collaboration, and helping others commit these acts are examples of academic misconduct, which can result in disciplinary action. This includes but is not limited to failure on the assignment/course, disciplinary probation, or suspension. Substantial or repeated cases of misconduct will be forwarded to the Dean of Students Office for additional review. For more information, refer to <http://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/>. For a full description of UW–Madison students’ rights and responsibilities, consult the *Undergraduate Guide*. <http://guide.wisc.edu/undergraduate/#rulesrightsandresponsibilitiestext>

Diversity and Inclusion

Diversity is a source of strength, creativity, and innovation for UW-Madison. The University of Wisconsin–Madison fulfills its public mission by creating a welcoming and inclusive community for people from every background—people who as students, faculty, and staff serve Wisconsin and the world. For more information, visit <https://diversity.wisc.edu/>

Schedule

Tuesday, May 29 Learning the “Cunning Alphabet”

READING: William Cronon, “The Trouble with Wilderness” (1995)

PODCAST: *Project Milwaukee* — “A Homegrown Environmental Justice Advocate” (9:56)

Wednesday, May 30 A Natural History of Race

READING: Barbara Jeanne Fields, “Slavery, Race, and Ideology in the History of the United States” (1990)

PODCAST: *This Is Hell!* — “Graying the Race Card” (35:29)

Thursday, May 31 Could Landscapes Change the Race of Settlers?

READINGS: Joyce E. Chaplin, “Natural Philosophy and an Early Racial Idiom in North America: Comparing English and Indian Bodies” (1997)

Conevery Bolton Valenčius, “Racial Anxiety” from *The Health of the Country: How American Settlers Understood Themselves and Their Land* (2002)

PODCAST: *Backstory* — “Blood Brothers” (7:00)

Friday, June 1 Were Enslaved People Treated Like Animals?

READINGS: Karl Jacoby, “Slaves by Nature? Domestic Animals and Human Slaves” (1994)

Walter Johnson, “To Remake the World: Slavery, Racial Capitalism, and Justice” (2018)

PODCAST: *99% Invisible* — *The Great Dismal Swamp* (24:00)

Sunday, June 3 Research precis due (uploaded to Canvas) by 6:00 PM

Monday, June 4 How Did Cleaning Up Cities Racialize the People Living in Them?

READINGS: Nayan Shah, “Public Health and the Mapping of Chinatown” from *Contagious Divides: Epidemics and Race in San Francisco’s Chinatown* (2001)

Carl A. Zimring, “Searching for Order” from *Clean and White: A History of Environmental Racism in the United States* (2015)

Tuesday, June 5 How Did the Great Migration Shape Ideas of Nature?

READINGS: Elizabeth D. Blum, "Women, Environmental Rationale, and Activism during the Progressive Era" (2006)

Brian McCammack, "Black Chicagoans in Unexpected Places" from *Landscapes of Hope: Nature and the Great Migration in Chicago* (2017)

ASSESSMENT: **Audio editing exercise due (uploaded to Canvas) by 6:00 PM**

Wednesday, June 6 What if the Conservation Movement Had Been Led by Black Southerners?

READINGS: Mark D. Hersey, "Where the Soil Is Wasted" from *"My Work Is that of Conservation": An Environmental Biography of George Washington Carver* (2011)

Kimberly K. Smith, "Possessing the Land" from *African American Environmental Thought* (2007)

PODCAST: *The Salt* — "[Farmer John Boyd Jr. Wants African Americans to Reconnect with Farming](#)" (4:14)

Thursday, June 7 How Did Segregation Shape Sense of Place?

READINGS: Mark Fiege, "The Road to *Brown v. Board*: An Environmental History of the Color Line" from *The Republic of Nature* (2012)

PODCAST: *Institute for Research on Poverty*, "[Pollution and Environmental Justice in Low-Income Communities of Color](#)"

ASSESSMENT: **Draft podcast script due (uploaded to Canvas) by 6:00 PM**

Friday, June 8 How Have Myths about Native Peoples Affected Their Lives?

READINGS: Traci Brynne Voyles, "Preface" and "Cowboys and Indians in Navajo Country" from *Wastelanding: Legacies of Uranium Mining in Navajo Country* (2015)

PODCAST: *Code Switch* — "[The Difficult Math of Being Native American](#)" (21:53)

Monday, June 11 How Did the Environmental Justice Movement Begin?

READINGS: Gregg Mitman, "Choking Cities" from *Breathing Space: How Allergies Shape Our Lives and Landscapes* (2007)

Eileen McGurty, "Identity Politics and Multiracial Coalitions in the Environmental Justice Movement" (2006)

PODCAST: *Inside NC*— "[Birthplace of Environmental Justice](#)" (10:30)

Tuesday, June 12 What Caused the Contemporary Lead Poisoning Epidemic?

READINGS: Robert R. Gioielli, "Black Survival in Our Polluted Cities" from *Environmental Activism and the Urban Crisis* (2014)

Christopher Sellers, et al., "[The Flint Water Crisis](#)" (2016)

Jessica Glenza, "Flint Crisis, Four Years On: What Little Trust Is Left Continues to Wash Away" (2018)

Gerald Porter Jr., "[Wisconsin's Rate of Lead Poisoning Worse than Flint, Michigan's](#)" (2018)

PODCAST: *Reveal*— "[Poisoned, Ignored, and Evicted: The Perils of Living with Lead](#)" (42:12)

Wednesday, June 13 Is Mainstream Environmentalism Racist?

READINGS: Peter Coates, "The Nature of Alien Nature" from *American Perceptions of Immigrant and Invasive Species* (2006)

J. Drew Lanham, "Birding While Black" from *The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature* (2016)

Jedediah Purdy, "[Environmentalism's Racist History](#)" (2015)

Thursday, June 14 What Do Recreational Landscapes Reveal about Racial Inequalities?

READINGS: Annie Gilbert Coleman, "The Unbearable Whiteness of Skiing" (1996)

Lisa Sun-Hee Park and David Naguib Pellow, "Living in Someone Else's Paradise" from *The Slums of Aspen: Immigrants vs. the Environment in America's Eden* (2011)

Latria Graham, "[We're Here You Just Don't See Us](#)" (2018)

PODCAST: *Code Switch*— "[Being 'Outdoorsy' When You're Black or Brown](#)" (20:47)

ASSESSMENT: Oral examinations in class

Friday, June 15 Where Do We Go from Here?

ASSESSMENT: Podcasts due (uploaded to Canvas) by the beginning of class