

History 262 : People/Nature/Technology: North American Landscapes

This class explores human interactions with the environments they inhabit, asking a set of interrelated questions in a range of historical contexts: How have physical environments influenced human choices? How have human choices, assumptions, and cultural practices shaped physical environments? How have people at different places and times understood "nature" and their relationship to it? When do they see "nature" and when "natural resources" and when "technology"? What modes of control of the world around them have they found acceptable or problematic, why, and who should make the choices? The "people" we will attend to inhabit a continent of indigenous nations, colonizing settlers and imperial dreamers, forced migrants and voluntary ones, and (eventually) the full range of citizens primarily of the United States. We will interrogate vocabularies, such as: land, landscape, backcountry, rural, urban, wilderness, park, industrial park... and we will inevitably need to problematize the categories: how do we conceive of the slashes between people/nature/technology, and how does our historical vocabulary shape the questions we ask? This course will make use of primary and secondary sources, and will emphasize reading, writing, and discussion as well as lecture.

Credits 4