

American Environmental History

Last Updated: Fri, 08/01/2025

Course prefix: HTS

Course number: 3005

Section: A

CRN (you may add up to five):
92701

Instructor First Name: Stephanie

Instructor Last Name: Bryan

Semester: Fall

Academic year: 2025

Course description:

Today, our country and our world face multiple, intersecting environmental crises—from invasive species to biodiversity loss, infectious disease outbreaks, pollution, food and water insecurity, extreme weather events, rising sea levels, and so forth. As you will learn in this course, every crisis has a history, but history also offers perspective, lessons, and hope. We will examine not only the roots of past environmental crises but also stories of adaptation, resilience, and recovery that reveal humanity's ongoing capacity to respond and innovate. Together, we will explore how people across different times and places have understood and interacted with the natural world. You will discover how these relationships have evolved—and how they have shaped both human societies and the environments we live in. By engaging with this history, you will gain valuable tools for thinking more critically, creatively, and constructively about the environmental challenges we face today.

Course learning outcomes:

- Students will explore the many ways in which humans have influenced their environments and how those environments have, in turn, influenced human societies
- Students will examine key moments that have shaped the course of American environmental history
- Students will understand the foundational themes and methods that define environmental history as a discipline
- Students will learn how historical attitudes and relationships with the land connect to and influence present-day environmental concerns
- Students will critically engage with both primary and secondary sources, evaluating their context, purpose, perspective, and reliability

- Students will use digital humanities tools to investigate, interpret, and communicate environmental history

Required course materials:

There are no required books. All readings will be provided on Canvas.

Grading policy:

Your final grade will be assigned as a letter grade according to the following scale:

- A 90-100%
- B 80-89%
- C 70-79%
- D 60-69%
- F 0-59%

Grades will be allocated accordingly:

- Attendance and Participation 15%
- Discussion Facilitation 15%
- Digital Herbarium 20%
- Industrial Atlanta OpenTour Entry 25%
- Pecha Kucha Presentation 25%

Attendance policy:

Attending class, participating in group discussions, and engaging in class activities are essential to your success and to that of your classmates. You are expected to attend class in person. Not attending a scheduled class in-person results in an absence.

There may be times when you cannot or should not attend class, such as if you are not feeling well, have an interview, or have family responsibilities. Therefore, this course allows 3 absences without penalty, regardless of reason. After that, penalties accrue.

Exceptions are allowed for Institute-approved absences (for example, those documented by the Registrar) and situations such as hospitalization or family emergencies (documented by the Office of the Dean of Students). Your instructor can communicate with you about how to access materials or make up work you may have missed during your absence or suggest ways to participate in class remotely and/or asynchronously. It is the student's responsibility to bring documentation of any such emergency to the instructor's attention as soon as possible.

For More information on Georgia Tech's Policy regarding Student Absence from Class Due to Illness or Personal Emergencies, see: <https://catalog.gatech.edu/policies/student->

Academic honesty/integrity statement:

Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of academic integrity. All work submitted must be original and properly cited. Plagiarism, cheating, or any form of academic dishonesty will result in immediate consequences as outlined in the university's academic integrity policy.

Core IMPACTS statement(s) (if applicable):

This is a Core IMPACTS course that is part of the Social Sciences area.

Core IMPACTS refers to the core curriculum, which provides students with essential knowledge in foundational academic areas. This course will help master course content, and support students' broad academic and career goals.

This course should direct students toward a broad Orienting Question:

- How do I understand human experiences and connections?

Completion of this course should enable students to meet the following Learning Outcomes:

- Students will effectively analyze the complexity of human behavior, and how historical, economic, political, social or geographic relationships develop, persist or change.

Course content, activities and exercises in this course should help students develop the following Career-Ready Competencies:

- Intercultural Competence
- Perspective-Taking
- Persuasion