American Environmental Thought

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This course is an introduction to the major American works of environmental thought and the history of American ideas about nature. I hope to place these ideas in the context of broader intellectual movements, so we'll give attention to the agrarian tradition, Romanticism, the rise of modern science, Progressivism, and post-war flowering of environmental consciousness. Important themes include: autonomy and individualism; labor and leisure; the stewardship ethic; nature as an economic, moral, spiritual and political resource gender issues; and many others too numerous to mention.

Course requirements:

1. This is primarily a discussion course. Students are expected to do the reading before class and come prepared to participate actively in discussion. I'll do a little lecturing, usually toward the end of the hour.
2. Students will share responsibility for leading discussion. Each class one student will write a short paper (3-4 pp) on the readings and lead the discussion. The discussion leader should distribute discussion questions at least 24 hours before class.
3. Your grade will be calculated as follows:
   - Participation: 15%
   - Short discussion paper & discussion questions: 15%
   - Two longer papers (7-10 pp): 35% each (choose topic from list provided)

- You may rewrite the long papers as often as you like, for a new grade.
- ALL assignments must be turned in on the day they are due. No late papers, please!

Deadlines:

- Paper #1: April 21
- Paper #2: May 24
- Final rewrites due: Friday June 2, at 5:00 pm

Books:

- Crevecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer*
- Thoreau, *Walden*
- Muir, *Story of My Boyhood and Youth*
- Carson, *Silent Spring*
- Abbey, *Desert Solitaire*

***Other readings are on reserve [R]***
I. Introduction
   Class 1: Lecture: The Development of Environmental Consciousness
   Class 2: Lecture: The American Wilderness

II. Agrarian Traditions
   Class 3: Jefferson, Taylor [R]
   Class 4: Crevecoeur, I, II, III
   Class 5: Crevecoeur, VII, VIII, IX
   Class 6: Crevecoeur, XI, XII

III. Romanticism
   Class 7: Thoreau, Economy
   Class 8: Thoreau, Where I Lived through The Bean-Field
   Class 9: Thoreau, The Village through House-Warming
   Class 10: Thoreau, Former Inhabitants through Conclusion

IV. The New Science of Nature
   Class 11: Lecture on the rise of modern science
   Class 12: Marsh, Man and Nature (selection) [R]
   *Tuesday, April 25th: Optional Lecture:

      "Why Fascists Go To Hobbit Camp; or, Environmentalism and the Right Wing"

      (Place and Time TBA)

V. The Frontier
   Class 13: Muir, Ch. 1-2
   Class 14: Muir, Ch. 3-5
   Class 15: Muir, Ch. 6-8

VI. Conservation and Preservation
   Class 16: Lecture on the rise of conservationism
   *Tuesday, May 2nd: Optional Lecture:

      "Tough Broads and Toxic Waste: Environmental Housekeeping From Alice Hamilton to Erin Brockovich"

      (Place and time TBA)
Class 17: Pinchot, Fight for Conservation (selection) [R]

Class 18: Bailey, The Country-Life Movement (selection) [R]

VII. Modern Environmentalism

Class 19: Leopold, The Land Ethic, Wilderness [R]

Class 20: Carson, Ch. 1-6

Class 21: Carson, Ch. 7-11

Class 22: Carson, Ch. 12-17


Class 24: Abbey, pp. 69-146

Class 25: Abbey, pp. 147-220

Class 26: Abbey, pp. 221-303

Class 27: Berry, Getting Along With Nature, Preserving Wilderness [R]

Class 28: Berry, An Agricultural Crisis [R]

Class 29: Conclusion: Environmentalisms Old and New