

**What Went Down on the Farm:  
Stanford Campus as a Laboratory for Environmental History**

History 53S  
Sources & Methods Seminar  
Winter Quarter 2007  
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 3:15 - 4:45 p.m.  
Building 160, Room 325

Instructor: Jon Christensen  
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2-3 p.m. and by appointment  
Office: History Department, Building 200, Room 312  
E-mail: [jonchristensen@stanford.edu](mailto:jonchristensen@stanford.edu)  
Course web site: <http://www.stanford.edu/~jonallan/history53s.html>

### **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

Environmental history is made of earth and trees, maps and dreams, plans and problems, a world made and a world that might have been. The 8,400-acre Stanford campus and surrounding community from foothills to bay is our laboratory for digging into archives and exploring the landscape, learning hands-on techniques to uncover the past, understand the present, and think about the future in any place. Sources include archaeology, ecology, university business files, letters, photographs, trees, buildings, and the land itself, with field trips to Jasper Ridge, Stanford Shopping Mall, and points in between.

### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

This is a sources and methods seminar, designed for the purpose of introducing undergraduates to the processes of historical investigation and interpretation by which archival material becomes narrative description and explanation, and by which interpretation itself becomes open to disagreement and revision. The object is to bring students into the historian's workshop and to provide first hand experience in interpreting documents, constructing a coherent story from them, interpreting their larger implications, learning how it is possible to agree on facts but to disagree on what they mean, and discovering what happens when history contradicts memory.

Environmental history uses many of the sources and methods of other branches of history—social history, political history, economic history, the history of science, and intellectual history—plus sources and methods of other disciplines that environmental history has helped bring into historiography: geography, geology, ecology, botany, palynology (the study of pollen), and other even more obscure methods for digging into the history of the environment and the environment itself. This course will be a journey

through these various approaches and methods in history, and a wide variety of sources, all focused on one place and people's relationships with this environment over time.

Sources and methods are closely tied together in histories. At the end of this course, you should be able to take the methods you learn in this course and apply them to any place, reading the landscape by finding and analyzing a diverse set of sources that can open up illuminating questions in environmental history. The goal of this course is to find that every place, like the Stanford campus in this case, is alive with ideas and questions and problems and solutions in environmental history.

## **COURSE READINGS**

**There are three books required for this course:**

John McPhee, *Assembling California* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993)

Ian Tyrell, *True Gardens of the Gods: California-Australian Environmental Reform, 1860-1930* (University of California Press, 1999)

We will be reading substantial portions of these two books. Please purchase them as soon as possible from the Stanford Bookstore or another source. You will need John McPhee's book immediately. These books will also be on reserve at Green Library. But I strongly encourage you to acquire your own copy if you are interested in environmental history and California. They are terrific, important books.

I also strongly recommend that you buy a cheap used copy online of this out-of-print paperback as soon as possible:

Raymond Dasmann, *The Destruction of California*, (Various paperback editions, c. 1965).

**There are two highly recommended books for this course:**

Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, (Cambridge University Press, 1994)

William Cronon, Ed. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (W.W. Norton, 1995)

We will be reading two chapters from Worster's book, and one chapter from the anthology edited by Cronon. So you could get by without purchasing these books. And like the others, they will be on reserve at Green Library. But they are two seminal books in environmental history. And if you have a real interest in this field, I encourage you to buy a copy, and work through them in due time.

**All other readings will be available in the Course Reader, which will be available for purchase in class, online on our own course web site at <http://www.stanford.edu/~jonallan/history53s.html>, or as handouts.**

Please print out copies of the online readings so that you can bring them to class for discussion.

## **ASSIGNMENTS & GRADING**

Participation: 20 percent

Three individual assignments: 20 percent each

Group project: 20 percent (10 percent for individual, 10 percent for group component)

The key ingredients to any successful sources and methods course are straightforward: attendance, careful reading, participation, and hands-on practice in research, writing and presentations. Attendance is mandatory, and multiple absences will adversely affect your grade. If you know of an upcoming absence, please tell me in advance.

**Readings:** The readings listed under each day are the readings that must be completed before class that day so that you are prepared to contribute to the discussion in class that day. Your participation grade will be determined by your preparation and thoughtful contributions to those discussions. So completing the readings is essential. We will be reading primary and secondary sources and discussing critically how they are used and can be used by historians. In this light, please pay special attention to footnotes and citations in the secondary sources as we will pay particular attention to how historians use primary sources. We will also have a few methodological readings sprinkled through the quarter. All readings, other than the required books, will be available on CourseWork or in class. Because CourseWork is sometimes difficult to access, especially at the beginning of the quarter, I will also post the readings on our own course web site. Please print out online readings, so that you can go over them carefully on paper, making notes to yourself as you go, and bring them to class. And if you have any problems let me know, and I will find a way to help you get the readings.

**Participation:** This course is designed to help you gain an understanding of the historian's craft through examining, learning, discussing, and practicing the use of sources and methods in history. Participation is vital to the success of this course. Because this is a course built around discussion, everyone must participate regularly. The goal is not to create an aggressive, competitive environment where students speak merely to score imaginary participation points. Good participation demands active listening, the framing of good questions, and respect for others' opinions. Since participation is so important, I will do my best to maintain a comfortable atmosphere. Each student will sign up to help lead the discussion on at least one day. Students will not need to plan a full presentation, but should be prepared to briefly state the relationships between the primary and secondary readings and open up the discussion with some questions that help us explore those relationships.

**Assignments:** The assignments are all aimed at learning and practicing the historian's craft in a fairly tightly contained context because of the limited amount of time we have available. The assignments will give you hands-on experience with key skills of the historian's use of sources and methods: finding, evaluating, and asking questions of primary and secondary sources; finding and checking sources and facts from secondary sources to evaluate the uses, editing and context of sources; choosing the sources, methods, and questions to write a short environmental history; and presenting your work in writing and in person.

**Assignment #1: Finding Sources for a Decade in the Life of Stanford's**

**Environment.** You will choose a decade from a hat. Your job is to find five sources from which you could begin to construct a history of that decade focusing on changes in the campus environment. At least three of the sources must be primary sources, and at least one of the sources must be a secondary source. At least three of the sources must provide specific insight into significant environmental changes on campus during that decade. And at least one of the sources should be a source that provides a broader context for what was happening here during that decade. Your assignment is to identify five sources, provide a bibliographic citation and write a paragraph notation about each one, explaining the questions that it helps you ask, and the answers you could find there. In class, you will be asked to tell us what you found, and share any sources you discovered that you might like to explore further. **DUE THURSDAY, JANUARY 25.**

**Assignment #2: Checking It Twice: Sources and Facts.** You will choose one of the secondary sources that we will be reading this quarter from a list that I will provide at our second meeting. You will choose five different citations from the reading to trace back to the sources available in Special Collections or other library collections. At least three sources must be primary sources in Special Collections. All of the sources should be the basis of consequential arguments that the author makes and they should sample as diverse a variety of sources as possible. Your assignment is to find and read the sources and determine how the author used each source answering these three questions: Is the source accurately quoted? Is any important information left out? Does the context change your view of how the source is used? You will write a paragraph notation evaluating the author's use of each of the sources. And in our class discussion of that secondary source, you will share your overall evaluation of the author's use of primary sources with the rest of the class. **Please note that the DUE DATE for this assignment will depend on the secondary source you decide to fact check.**

**Assignment #3: An Environmental History of a Person, Group, or Idea.** You will choose a person, group of people, or an idea from a list that I will provide. Or you can suggest your own. Your assignment is to find primary sources and at least one secondary source and write a short 3-5 page environmental history. By this time, we will have explored some of the different sources and methods that environmental history uses from other approaches to history. Part of your assignment is to choose the sources and methods that work best for your topic. I will be available to work with you on that. **DUE THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15.**

**Assignment #4: A History of Place.** This is a group project, and an individual assignment. You will break into groups. You will choose a place from a list that I will provide, or you may propose a place. Your job, as a group, is to find the primary and secondary sources you need to understand the environmental history of this place. At this point you should be working almost entirely with primary sources, although you may include a few secondary sources for broader context. You will have both an individual and a group assignment for this project. Your individual assignment is to write a 3-5 page paper on some aspect of the environmental history of this place using one or more of the different methods that environmental history has borrowed from other approaches to history, such as social history, political history, economic history, the history of science, and intellectual history. Your group assignment is that your papers should add up to an environmental history of this place without too much duplication between your papers. You might do this by taking different approaches or using different sources or both. I will meet with each group to discuss this. Your paper will be part of your preparation for your participation in your group leading a class field trip to your site. During the field trip you will not only tell your classmates about your findings, but also open up questions for discussion. Ideally, you will conduct this field trip as if it were a professional assignment to guide a group of historians on a probing journey through your site. You won't necessarily want to tell people what to see, but as in your writing, to help them to see anew through the sources, which in this case include the place, and the methods you bring to understanding the sources and the place. **DUE ON THE DAY OF YOUR FIELD TRIP.**

## **COURSE SCHEDULE**

### **Tuesday, January 9**

#### **Stanford and Environmental History**

Field trip: Stanford Museum.

### **Thursday, January 11**

#### **University Archives and Special Collections**

Field trip: We will meet in class and then go to Special Collections in Green Library, where we will meet with University Archivist Maggie Kimball, who will introduce us to procedures in Special Collections, and the archival materials that we will be using as primary sources throughout the course and that you may use for your assignments.

Primary source reading: Stanford University, *The Founding Grant with Amendments, Legislation and Court Decrees*, pages 1-40. Available in class on first day.

Secondary source reading: Selections from Norman E. Tutorow, *The Governor: The Life and Legacy of Leland Stanford—A California Colossus*. In *Course Reader*.

**Tuesday, January 16**  
**Assembling California**

Primary source reading: “Re-Assembling California,” A Dialogue with John McPhee and Eldridge Moores; and geology papers. Available online.

Secondary source reading: John McPhee, *Assembling California*, pages 3-131, 172-200, 225-253.

**Thursday, January 18:**  
**Native Americans, Exploration, Missions, Ranchos**

Primary source reading: Selections from the diaries of explorers and missionaries. Available online.

Secondary source reading: David J. Weber, *The Spanish Frontier in North America*. In *Course Reader*.

Methodological reading: Selection from James West Davidson and Mark Hamilton Lytle, *After the Fact: The Art of Historical Detection*. In *Course Reader*.

**Tuesday, January 23**  
**Jasper Ridge**

Field trip: This class session we will visit the Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve in the foothills on campus. We will make arrangements for carpools in class.

Primary source readings: Archaeological papers. And Sara-Larus Tolley, et al, “Beautiful Tree: California Indians and Oaks,” *News from Native California*, Fall 2005, 21-45. In *Course Reader* or available online.

Secondary source readings: Selections from Albert Hurtado, *Indian Survival on the California Frontier*. In *Course Reader*.

Methodological reading: Selection from Richard Muir, *The New Reading the Landscape: Fieldwork in Landscape History*. In *Course Reader*.

**Thursday, January 25**  
**Grasslands and Forests**

Primary source readings: Selections from the diaries of John Muir and other 19<sup>th</sup> century observers, along with maps, and surveys. Available online or as handouts.

Secondary source readings: Raymond F. Dasmann, “the Prairies That Vanished,” “Land of the Tall Timber,” and “Saving the Pieces,” *The Destruction of California*.

Methodological reading: Hugh M. Raup, “The View from John Sanderson’s Farm.” Available online.

**ASSIGNMENT #1 DUE THURSDAY JANUARY 25:**  
**Finding Sources for a Decade in the Life of Stanford’s Environment**

**Tuesday, January 30**  
**Race, Class, Work, and Environmental Space**

Primary source readings: Handwritten leases, business records, and letters between Jane Lathrop Stanford and tenant farmers growing crops and flowers, University Archives, Special Collections. Available online or as handouts.

Secondary source readings: Ian Tyrrell, *True Gardens of the Gods: California-Australian Environmental Reform, 1860-1930*, pages 1-55.

**Thursday, February 1: Gender, Home and Environment**

Primary source readings: Selection from *American Garden* (c. 1890) and contracts between Jane Lathrop Stanford and a boarding house and garden farm in 1894, University Archives, Special Collections. Available online or as handouts.

Secondary source readings: Ian Tyrrell, *True Gardens of the Gods*, pages 103-120; and Cecilia Tsu, “‘Independent of the unskilled Chinaman’: Race, Labor, and Family Farming in California’s Santa Clara Valley,” *Western Historical Quarterly*, Winter 2006. Available online.

**Tuesday, February 6**  
**Trees and Memories**

Primary source readings: Selections from Stanford University Arboretum records. Available online or as handouts.

Secondary source readings: Selections from Ronald N. Bracewell, *Trees of Stanford and Environs*. Available online.

**Thursday, February 8**  
**Eucalyptus Dreams**

Primary source readings: Selections from the University Archives. Available online or as handouts.

Secondary source reading: Ian Tyrrell, *True Gardens of the Gods*, pages 56-86.

**Tuesday, February 13**  
**Nature, Nurture, and Eugenics**

Primary source readings: Selections from David Starr Jordan, “Eugenics and War” speech and selections from *The Days of a Man*. In *Course Reader*.

Secondary source readings: Edward McNall Burns, “Race and Civilization” in *David Starr Jordan: Prophet of Freedom*. In *Course Reader*.

**Thursday, February 15**  
**Ecology and Population**

Primary source readings: Selection from the papers of Paul Ehrlich, Special Collections. Available online or as handout.

Secondary source readings: Donald Worster, *Nature’s Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*, pages 342-387.

**ASSIGNMENT #3 DUE THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15:**  
**An Environmental History of a Person, Group, or Idea**

**Tuesday, February 20**  
**The Cold War University**

Primary source readings: Selections from letters and memos in Biology Department archives, Special Collections. Available online.

Secondary source readings: Selections from Rebecca S. Lowen, *Creating the Cold War University: The Transformation of Stanford*. In *Course Reader*.

**Thursday, February 22**  
**The Silicon Valley Campus**

Primary source readings: Selections from planning documents, University Archives. Available online or as handouts.

Secondary source readings: Selection from Margaret Pugh O'Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley*; and John Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940*. In *Course Reader*.

**Tuesday, February 27**  
**Environmentalism on Campus and Beyond**

Primary source readings: Selections from Wallace Stegner papers, Special Collections, and from newspapers and pamphlets, University Archives. Available online or as handouts.

Secondary source readings: Donald Worster, *Nature's Economy*, pages 388-433.

**Thursday, March 1**  
**No class**

Independent group meetings: Please schedule a meeting with your group to work on your group project together, and arrange an appointment to meet with me next week.

**Tuesday, March 6**  
**Stanford Shopping Center**

Field trip: This class section will meet on site at the Stanford Shopping Center, where I will lead a field trip that will model the kinds of questions that I would like you to open up in your field trip for the class the following week.

Primary source readings: Selections from documents pertaining to the planning, leasing, and design of the Stanford Shopping Center, University Archives. Available online or in class.

Secondary source readings: Jennifer Price, "Looking for Nature at the Mall: A Field Guide to the Nature Company," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon, pages 186-203.

**Thursday, March 8**

**No class**

Independent group meetings: Please schedule a meeting with me this week for your group to discuss your findings and troubleshoot the organization of your final project and field trip. We must also determine and make available to other students a selection of primary and secondary source readings for each of the final projects to be presented the following week.

Methodological reading: Jenny Price, “Thirteen Ways of Seeing Nature in L.A.” *The Believer*. Available online.

**Tuesday, March 13**

**Final project field trip**

Primary and secondary readings: The readings for these sessions will be a selection of primary and secondary sources for each of the sites to prepare for our visits. Please check the class web site for these readings and read them in advance.

**Thursday, March 15**

**Final project field trips**

Primary and secondary readings: The readings for these sessions will be a selection of primary and secondary sources for each of the sites to prepare for our visits. Please check the class web site for these readings and read them in advance.

**ASSIGNMENT #4 DUE:**

**A History of Place.**

Your paper will be due on the day that you lead your field trip.