

Environmental History & Ethics (EMS 613)

Pratt Institute

Fall 2006

Dr. Robert L. Chapman

Course Requirements

Examinations:

Take-home mid-term; three to five essay questions

Final in-class essay examination

Research Paper:

10 – 12 page research paper on a approved topic

Grades will be calculated as follows: mid-term 25%; final 25%; research paper 50%.

Course Focus: With modern technologies significantly enlarging our spheres of action and responsibility, we must ask: What is the history of environmental concern in the United States? To what extend are social/institutional value assumptions responsible for our present environmental condition? How far should moral concern extend when considering the relationship between culture and nature? These are key questions that must be answered if we are to successfully integrate human action with natural processes.

Objectives:

To refine our critical skills, helping us to better discern the nested and complex issues under consideration, which in turn should serve to guide our actions toward nature and provide some measure for obligation and responsibility.

Required Readings

Introductory essay:

The Global Ecological Crisis, Carolyn Merchant

Historical:

The Ancient Roots of Our Ecological Crisis, Donald Hughes

The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis, Lynn White, Jr.

The Cultural Basis of Our Environmental Crisis, Lewis Moncrief

Historical Dimensions of the American Crisis, H. Paul Santmire

Cultural:

1491, Charles C. Mann

Restoration, Holmes Rolston III

The Trouble with Wilderness: or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature, William Cronon

Constructing Nature: The Legacy of Frederick Law Olmsted, Anne Whiston Spirn

Social Sustainability: People, History, and Values, Setha M. Low

The New Sustainability, Gord Steeves

The Urban Bestiary, Kelty Miyoshi McKinnon

Regional:

Westchester is No Place, Robert L. Chapman

Is Westchester Some Place? Ned Kaufman

Of Places, Parks, and Human Nature, Rene Dubos

The Hudson River Valley: a bioregional story, Thomas Berry

“Unguarded Gates” of the Atlantic: Aestheticized Decay and the Transformation of Regional Identity, Caroline Lee

The Columbian Legacy and the Ecosterian Response, Kirkpatrick Sale

Democracy and Sense of Place Values in Environmental Policy, Bryan Norton & Bruce Hannon

Ethical:

Responsibility Today: The Ethics of an Endangered Future, Hans Jonas

Postmodern Environmental Ethics: Ethics as Bioregional Narrative, Jim Cheney

Multicultural Environmental Ethics, J. Baird Callicott

Ideals of Human Excellence and Preserving the Environment, Thomas Hill

The Ecological Crisis as a Crisis of Character, Wendell Berry

Schedule

Historical: the goal is to demonstrate the evolution of ecological/environmental issues and concerns.

Weeks 1 – 2

Cultural: the goal is to investigate human attitudes to nature and follow human choices and analyze some of the social consequences of these decisions. (Mid-term summation)

Weeks 3 – 5

Regional: the goal is to continue the analysis from the previous section on a local level. (Examination due week 6)

Weeks 6 – 10

Ethical: the previous section raise serious issues about values and the role of evaluation; the goal of this section is to introduce various attempts to answer those ethical issues.

Weeks 11 – 13 (Research paper due week 12; final examination week 13)

"The range of choice open to the individual is not the decisive factor in determining the degree of human freedom, but *what* can be chosen and what *is* chosen by the individual."

Herbert Marcuse