The fertile soils of Washington’s Yakima Valley produce prodigious harvests of apples, cherries, and hops that are prized across the world for their richness and quality. The Columbia is the fourth largest river in North America and the dams that span its banks once produced enough electricity to power most of the country. Whatever else it may be, the Northwest is a land of immense natural wealth.

Yet, despite this abundance people have bitterly fought over the Northwest’s natural resources. Since the nineteenth century, Indians, commercial fishermen, and sport fishermen have argued over who owns the salmon. Since the early twentieth century, loggers, environmentalists, Forest Service agents, and lumber industry representatives have debated timber harvest quotas and wilderness designations. No sooner had the dams on the Columbia River gone up than urban and rural people each began to contest power allocation. The list of resource conflicts in the Northwest could go on and on.

This course asks why in this land of plenty, in this region of excess natural wealth, in this place where there seems to be more than enough to go around, have people fought so fiercely over nature, who owns it, and who gets to use it?

In answering this question we will consider the social, political, economic, and environmental history of the Northwest from the eighteenth century to the present. We will examine how race, ethnicity, gender, and class have shaped peoples’ access to natural resources and explore how political movements and federal action have shaped the landscape and environmental policies. We will think about changing perceptions of nature and attempt to understand how culture and economic imperatives impact the way people relate to the physical environment.

Ultimately, this class attempts to give students new perspectives on the Northwest’s contemporary problems. We’re still fighting over nature today. By exploring the history of these conflicts, this class invites you to consider how the past informs present-day problems and encourages you to think critically and creatively about how those problems might be solved.
Learning Objectives

Students who take this course can expect:

- A better understanding of the history of the Pacific Northwest (defined here as British Columbia, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and northern California) from roughly the seventeenth century to the present;

- A better understanding of environmental conflict in the Northwest and, in particular, the ways that race, ethnicity, gender, class, political movements, political economy, federal and state policy, and urban growth have shaped land-use debates and peoples’ access to natural resources;

- To engage in critical discussions about the Northwest’s present-day problems and to think about how history can help us better understand and creatively address those problems;

- To experiment with interdisciplinary approaches to the study of history and explore how methodologies from geography, political science, environmental studies, social history, and environmental history can enrich our understanding of both the past and present;

- To hone their writing, analytic, and interpretive skills through thoughtful classroom discussions, written assignments, and careful readings of primary and secondary source documents.

Class Format

This course is organized thematically. We will begin with an investigation of Native Americans, empire, and struggles for indigenous rights in weeks one and two, examine the capitalist transformation of the Northwest in weeks three and four, study state power and cities in weeks five through seven, and finish with a history of Northwest environmentalism and environmental justice in weeks eight, nine, and ten. Proceeding thematically means there will be some chronological overlap. However, this approach has the benefit of allowing us to more fully delve into a topic, explore it from multiple angles, and more carefully trace the histories of people, politics, and ideas through time.

This class meets twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Generally speaking, Tuesdays and the first half of class on Thursdays will be devoted to lecture while the second-half of class on Thursdays will be devoted to a discussion of the readings. I naturally expect you to be active during discussions. But even in lectures I will regularly pose questions and ask for your reaction to pictures, video clips, and excerpts of text. I also strongly encourage you to ask questions during lectures and stop me if there’s something you’d like to know more about. In other words, I want you to be an active participant in all facets of this class.
Assignments

The major writing assignment for this class is a ten-to-twelve page research essay. Your task will be to identify a contemporary issue, debate, or problem in the Northwest and then situate that debate in its historical context. (For instance, urban environmentalists are currently lobbying the Oregon legislature to invest in wind power. These proposals are facing strident opposition from rural people in the eastern part of the state. Thus, for your paper you could describe what’s at stake for people on both sides of wind-power debate and then provide a history of conflicts between rural and urban people over electricity.) This project will require you to consult newspapers or other media sources to outline the contemporary dimensions of the issue you’re studying, then consult secondary sources to provide the historical context. A list of potential topics and recommend readings will be posted on the course website. On October 13th you must turn-in a short (roughly one-page) research proposal that states your intended topic. The final draft of your paper is due on November 24th.

You must also complete a take-home midterm and a (non-cumulative) take-home final. Both the midterm and final will be a combination of short-answer questions and a longer essay that will ask you to synthesize material presented in class and test your comprehension of lectures and readings. The take-home midterm is due on October 27th and the take-home final is due on December 9th. Questions for both the midterm and final will be distributed approximately one week before the due dates.

Finally, participation is a major part of your grade. Please have the readings completed by the day they are listed in the course schedule below and come to class prepared to discuss the major themes and ideas presented therein. I would also strongly encourage you to develop your own questions about the readings and pose those questions to your classmates.

You must complete every assignment to receive a passing grade in the class.
Final grades for this class will be determined on the following basis:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Weight</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-Home Midterm</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Take-Home Final</td>
<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Paper Proposal</td>
<td>5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Research Paper</td>
<td>35%</td>
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I will follow the guidelines established by the History Department in evaluating your work:

A+: Work of unusual distinction.

A: Work that distinguishes itself by the excellence of its grasp of the material and the precision and insight of its argument.

B: Work that satisfies the main criteria of the assignment, and demonstrates command of the material, but does not achieve the level of excellence that characterizes work of A quality.

C: Work that demonstrates a rudimentary grasp of the material and satisfies at least some of the assigned criteria reasonably well.

D: Work that demonstrates a poor grasp of the material and/or is executed with little regard for college standards.

F: Work that is weak in every aspect, demonstrating a basic misunderstanding of the material and/or disregard for the assigned question.

For more information on the History Department’s grading guidelines, please see [http://history.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/](http://history.uoregon.edu/undergraduate/)

Don’t do it. Plagiarism or academic dishonesty in any form will not be tolerated and students found guilty of academic misconduct may face disciplinary action as outlined in the Students’ Code of Conduct:

[https://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct.aspx](https://uodos.uoregon.edu/StudentConductandCommunityStandards/AcademicMisconduct.aspx)

You should familiarize yourself with the University’s policies concerning plagiarism and what constitutes academic misconduct:

[http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html](http://library.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/index.html)

Please come see me if you are unsure about how to properly cite and credit another author’s work, or if you have questions about what constitutes plagiarism.

Graduate students taking this course will have different reading and writing assignments. We will also meet as a group roughly every-other-week to discuss additional readings. I will distribute a separate syllabus for graduate students.
The following books are required for this course. They are available for purchase at the U of O Bookstore:


Additional readings listed in the course schedule will be posted in pdf form on the course website.

This course uses the Canvas system and you can access the course website via your Canvas front page. The course website contains this syllabus, assignment guidelines, the questions for the take-home midterm and final (when posted), and lecture slides. Please submit all written work online, via the course website. I will comment on and grade your written work directly in the Canvas system. If you would like me to evaluate and grade a hard copy of your work, please let me know and we can make suitable arrangements.

I am here to help you. I encourage you to come see me during my scheduled office hours, of if you can’t make those, let me know and I’m happy to find another time to meet. You can come see me to talk about any of the material covered in class, a reading you didn’t quite understand, or if there’s some aspect of Northwest history you’d like to know more about. I’m also more than happy to read early drafts of your paper and make suggestions for improvements. Or, you can just stop by just to chat. Email is the best way to get ahold of me. I will respond to all student emails within 24 hours.
Schedule of Topics and Readings

**PART I**

**Power and Place in Northwest Indian Country**

September 29
Explorers in a Native World

October 1
Settlers in a Native World or Natives in a Settler World?


October 6
“Making Indians:” Tribes, Treaties, and the Federal Government

October 8
“The Right of Taking Fish at All Usual and Accustomed Grounds:” Fish-Ins and Native American Activism in the Late-Twentieth Century

Reading: Sullivan, *A Whale Hunt*, 13-155 and 189-278
October 13
Railroaded: Gilded Age Corruption and the Building of the Transcontinental Railroads

Research Proposals Due

October 15
“The Anarchy of Production:” Immigrants and Migrants in the Northwest’s Resource Extraction Economy


October 20
Rebels and Reformers: Radical Politics and Civil Rights Unionism from the Progressive Era to the Depression

October 22
“Hell No, WTO:” The Northwest in the Late-Twentieth Century Global Economy

Reading: Polishuk, *Sticking to the Union*, pp. 8-156.
October 27
The Gospel of Efficiency: Progressive Era Conservation and the US Forest Service

Midterm Exam Due

October 29
“Roll On Columbia, Roll On:” Dams, the New Deal, and Rural Electrification


November 3
The Nuclear Northwest

November 5
The Oregon Story: Tom McCall, Richard Neubergerr, and Cold War-Era Conservation


November 10
Regional City, Network City: Portland and Seattle in the Cold War

November 12
“No Separate Peace:” Civil Rights in the Urban Northwest

No Reading. In-Class Exercise using the Seattle Civil Rights and Labor History Project (depts.washington.edu/civilr)
November 17
“Roadless, Primitive, Untouched:” Making Wilderness in the Northwest

November 19
Devil’s Bargains: From Rural Production to the Tourist Economy


November 24:
Reimagining the Rural Working-Class

In Class Film: Sometimes a Great Notion (1970)

Final Papers Due

November 26
No Class—Thanksgiving Holiday

December 1
“No Compromise in Defense of Mother Earth:” Ecotage and Radical Environmentalism

December 3
“Loggers Are an Endangered Species, Too:” The Spotted Owl and Loggers in the Late Twentieth Century

Reading: Dietrich, The Final Forest, pp. 1-173.

December 9
Take-Home Final due by 10:00 a.m.