

HIST Cities in History

377 (U.S. Urban Environmental History)



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Semester Fall 2022

Time Mondays & Wednesdays, 10:00-11:20 a.m.

Location 330 Central King Building

Office Cullimore Hall, 329

Office Hours Monday & Wednesday, 11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. and other days and times by appointment. You can attend these office hours virtually or in person in the following ways:

- Physically stop into my office during the assigned hours.
- Sign up for a specific slot during these hours on our Canvas page.
- Simply “drop in” during these hours to my personal WebEx room at: <https://njit.webex.com/meet/mahernjit.edu>.
- Email me with a specific day/time you would like to meet.

You can find easy click-able links for each of these options at the top of our Canvas page under “Course Resources.”

Overview	<p>When most Americans think of nature, they imagine places far beyond city limits: wild forests, high mountains, rolling countryside, and wind-swept seashores. Yet if we look closer and think more deeply, we will see nature everywhere in and around our cities. Urbanites play in parks, drink water and bath in water flowing through faucets, and light their homes and heat their apartments with natural resources such as wood, oil, and gas. This course provides an introduction to this history in North America. In it we will explore the ever-changing relationship between urban America and the natural environment both inside cities and out in their hinterlands.</p> <p>While I have organized the course chronologically in an effort to trace this relationship between the city and its natural environment over time — from the colonial period through the industrial era and up into the post-World War II moment — over the course of the semester we will explore several important historical themes: the role nature played in geographically situating cities across the American landscape; early cultural reactions to industrialization and urbanization; the important economic and ecological relationship between cities and their hinterlands; the development of urban parks for recreation; political activism over urban pollution and public health; the migration of wealthier, and usually white, citizens to the suburbs; and the rise of the urban environmental justice movement.</p>
Course Goals	<p>There are four major objectives for this course.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To familiarize students with the long history of urban environmental history in the United States. • To develop in students the ability to think critically about major historical questions, to read primary historical sources analytically, and to articulate interpretations of the past based on the reading of these primary source materials. • To help students develop good writing and critical reading skills. • To help students express their ideas orally in both formal presentations and informal class discussions.
Attendance and Class Participation	<p>Throughout the semester I take attendance, and both your attendance as well as how you participate in class matter for your final grade. This is especially important since 15% of your grade depends on your class participation. Such participation should involve active listening and engagement — more than simply showing up.</p>
Reading	<p>Reading assignments will average 75-100 pages per week, and will consist of three books, a few articles, as well as primary historical documents that we will read and</p>

discuss in class. You are expected to have completed the reading assignment BEFORE class, since our discussions may draw directly on the readings for that week. When reading, try not only to understand the factual information being presented, but also to think critically about the author's argument.

Required Texts: You must purchase the books for the class. All three are currently available online in inexpensive paperback editions. Please make sure you purchase a hard copy of each book, since we will be referring to them while in class.

- Charles Rosenberg, *The Cholera Years: The United States in 1832, 1849, and 1866* (University of Chicago Press, 1987)
- Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford University Press, 1987)
- Andrew Hurley, *Environmental Inequalities: Class, Race, and Industrial Pollution in Gary Indiana, 1945-1980* (University of North Carolina Press, 1995)

**Course
Assignments**

Short Papers: Throughout the semester you will be required to write three short papers no longer than four pages in length. The papers will be in response to the three books we are reading during the term. For each assignment I will provide a question beforehand, which you will then go on to answer in your paper. You will be graded on both your *ideas* and your *writing*.

Exams

This course on urban environmental history in the United States will include two exams (one covering the first half of the course, and a second covering the second half). Both will draw on material from lectures, discussions, films, the assigned readings, and primary historical documents. Each exam will consist of three different types of questions: identification questions in which you will be asked to define a give term, event, or person; short answer questions involving a one or two sentence description of a given concept; and longer essay questions for which you will be expected to use the course materials to make analytical arguments.

Grading

Consistent effort and improvement will be weighted heavily in grading, which will be apportioned as follows:

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|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| • Attendance and Participation: | 15% (15 points) |
| • Short Papers: | 45% (15 points each) |
| • Mid-Term and Final Exam | <u>40%</u> (20 points each) |
| • Total Course Grade | 100% (100 points) |

For all of the assignments above you will be given a letter grade (A+, A, A-, B+, B, etc.), which will then be converted into a numerical grade for each assignment

according to either a 15 or 20 point scale, depending on the percentages above. These numerical grades will then be used to compute your final course grade.

Final Course Grades

A+ (97-100)	C+ (77-79)
A (90-96)	C (70-76)
B+ (87-89)	D (60-69)
B (80-86)	F (0-59)

Late Submissions: Written Assignments will lose one grade for every day late (A to A-, A- to B+). Assignments will not be accepted more than 1 week late.

All Students should be aware that the Federated History Department takes the NJIT and Rutgers honor codes seriously and enforces them strictly. Because of the nature of our assignments, if you plagiarize it will be obvious and I will be forced to report such actions to the Dean of Students. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will fail the course.

The history department at NJIT is part of the Federated History Department at NJIT—Rutgers University, Newark. Because these two departments are Federated, NJIT and Rutgers students can take history courses offered at either institution. The NJIT History Department also offers a minor in history. On the graduate level, the Federated Department of History also administers a joint Rutgers—NJIT master’s program in history, which offers two joint degrees: the Master of Arts (MA) and the Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT). Fields of concentration are available in American History, World History, and the History of Technology, Environment and Medicine/Health. Application is made to the program at Rutgers-Newark.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1

January 19

Introductions

Required Reading:
The syllabus

In-Class Discussion:
New York Times, front page

PART I BUILDING URBAN AMERICA

Week 2

January 24

Native American Cities

Required Reading:
Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, 1-39

January 26

Defining the Urban Environment

Required Reading:
Jennifer Price, "Thirteen Ways of Seeing Nature in L.A.," *The Believer*, April 2006 (Parts 1 & II).

Week 3

January 31

Colonial Urbanites

Required Reading:
Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, 40-81

February 2

Urban Hinterlands: Lowell, Massachusetts

Required Reading:
Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, 82-98

Week 4

February 7

Securing Water

Required Reading:
Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, 99-132

February 9

The Walking City and the Transportation Revolution

Required Reading:
Rosenberg, *Cholera Years*, 133-172

	Week 5
February 14	Industrialization: Newark, New Jersey Required Reading: Rosenberg, <i>Cholera Years</i> , 175-212
February 16	Discussion: Charles Rosenberg's <i>Cholera Years</i> Required Reading: Rosenberg, <i>Cholera Years</i> , 213-234
Week 6	
February 21	Urban Machine Politics Required Reading: Jackson, <i>Crabgrass Frontier</i> , 3-44
February 23	City Pollution Required Reading: Jackson, <i>Crabgrass Frontier</i> , 45-72 Assignment: First Paper Due (Rosenberg)
Week 7	
February 28	Newark's Water Problem Required Reading: Jackson, <i>Crabgrass Frontier</i> , 73-102
March 2	Review for First Exam Required Reading: Jackson, <i>Crabgrass Frontier</i> , 103-137
PART II	URBAN REFORM AND SUBURBANIZATION
Week 8	
March 7	First Exam Required Reading: None
March 9	The Anti-Urban Turn

	<p><u>Required Reading:</u> Crabgrass Frontier, 138-171</p>
	Week 9
March 14-16	<p>NO CLASS — SPRING BREAK <u>Required Reading:</u> Jackson, <i>Crabgrass Frontier</i>, 172-218</p>
	Week 10
March 21	<p>Urban Progressives Jackson, <i>Crabgrass Frontier</i>, 219-245</p>
March 23	<p>Documentary Film (to be announced) <u>Required Reading:</u> Jackson, <i>Crabgrass Frontier</i>, 246-271</p>
	Week 11
March 28	<p>Discussion: Kenneth Jackson's <i>Crabgrass Frontier</i> <u>Required Reading:</u> Jackson, <i>Crabgrass Frontier</i>, 272-305</p>
March 30	<p>Urban Parks <u>Required Reading:</u> None-catch up on Jackson book.</p>
	Week 12
April 4	<p>America Divided: The 1920s <u>Required Reading:</u> Hurley, <i>Environmental Inequalities</i>, 1-45</p> <p>Assignment: Second Paper Due (Jackson)</p>
April 6	<p>Suburbanization and White Flight</p>

	<p><u>Required Reading:</u> Hurley, <i>Environmental Inequalities</i>, 46-76</p>
	Week 13
April 11	<p>The Newark Riots <u>Required Reading:</u> Hurley, <i>Environmental Inequalities</i>, 77-110</p>
April 13	<p>Urban Environmental Justice <u>Required Reading:</u> Hurley, <i>Environmental Inequalities</i>, 111-135</p>
	Week 14
April 18	<p>Discussion: Hurley's <i>Environmental Inequalities</i> <u>Required Reading:</u> Hurley, <i>Environmental Inequalities</i>, 136-182</p>
April 20	<p>Newark's Ironbound Community Corporation <u>Required Reading:</u> None – catch up on Hurley</p>
	Week 15
April 25	<p>Cities and Climate Change <u>Required Reading:</u> To Be Announced</p> <p><u>Assignment:</u> Third Paper Due</p>
April 27	<p>Review for Second Exam <u>Required Reading:</u> None</p>
	Week 16
May 2	<p>Second Exam (In Class)</p>