**HIST 3355/GEOG 3355: The Environmental History of the United States**

**PROFESSOR**: C. MORRIS

**OFFICE**: UH 346

**EMAIL**: morris@uta.edu

**FACULTY PROFILE:** <https://www.uta.edu/mentis/public/#profile/profile/view/id/1212/category/3>

**OFFICE HOURS**: MWF Noon – 1:00 p. m.

**SECTION INFORMATION**: HIST 3355/GEOG 3355, SECTION 001

**TIME AND PLACE**: MWF 10:00 a.m. – 10:50 a.m., COBA 254

**CONTENT:** This course will introduce students to basic concepts necessary to understand and engage present-day debates over policy, politics, and science of sustainability and the relationship between people and the natural environment. This will be accomplished primarily be exploring the history of sustainability and the human-environmental relationship in the United States. The history of the United States has been shaped by a close relationship between people and the North American environment, relationships that have not always been sustainable. The land has altered human behavior and touched human consciousness as surely as people have transformed the land in ways both constructive and destructive. From the colonial period when nature mediated relations between Europeans and Native Americans to cattle ranching in the West to modern environmental engineering to conservation and environmentalist politics, this class will explore the largely unconsidered but crucial role non-human nature has played in the human history of America (and vice versa).

**LEARNING OUTCOMES:** By the end of the semester students will be able to explain the concept of sustainability and related concepts, and to apply those concepts critically and thoughtfully to issues and examples drawn from the relationship between people and the natural environment in the present and in American history.

**TEXTBOOKS:** Thomas Thwaites, *The Toaster Project*

Mark Fiege, *The Republic of Nature*

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

Simon Dresner, *The Principles of Sustainability*

**ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT:**

Three Writing Exercises (5 points each) 15 points

Three Exams (20 points each) 60 points

Research Project 25 points

**Writing Exercises:** There will be three writing exercises, in which students will explain in a brief essay (500 words) a key concept as it applies to their own lives.

**Exams:** There will be two midterm exams and a final exam covering class readings and discussions. These exams will not be cumulative.

**Research Project:** The research project will be completed by groups organized by the instructor, and will consist of a group research essay (15-20 pages; 4-5 pages by each group member) and group class presentation on an aspect of the environmental history of the Upper Trinity River Basin.

**Extra Credit:** Extra-credit opportunities will be available to students who, for example, participate in the class ½ day canoe trip on a stretch of the Trinity River, visit one of the area’s Audubon centers, participate in activities at the Botanic Research Institute of Texas (BRIT) in Fort Worth, or attend a public lecture on a topic covered by this class.

**Missed assignments and Exams:** Students with a valid, documented reason for missing a writing assignment or exam will be permitted an extension or make-up exam as arranged with the instructor.

**ATTENDANCE:** There will be no grade for attendance. However, attendance will be noted for diagnostic purposes; students who attend class reliably and who regularly participate in class discussions always do better on exams and assignments.

**DROP POLICY:** Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance**. Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://wweb.uta.edu/aao/fao/>).

**AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT:** The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at [www.uta.edu/disability](http://www.uta.edu/disability) or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY:** Students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

*I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington’s tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence.*

*I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.*

UT Arlington faculty members may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents’ Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university’s standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student’s suspension or expulsion from the University.

**STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**:UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to [resources@uta.edu](mailto:resources@uta.edu), or view the information at [www.uta.edu/resources](http://www.uta.edu/resources).

**ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION:** UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

**STUDENT FEEDBACK SURVEY:** At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as “lecture,” “seminar,” or “laboratory” shall be directed to complete an online Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student’s feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington’s effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

**FINAL REVIEW WEEK:** A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.

**EMERGENCY EXIT PROCEDURES:** Should we experience an emergency event that requires us to vacate the building, students should exit the room and move toward the nearest exit, which is located outside the classroom and down the hall. When exiting the building during an emergency, one should never take an elevator but should use the stairwells. Faculty members and instructional staff will assist students in selecting the safest route for evacuation and will make arrangements to assist handicapped individuals.

**CLASS AND ASSIGNMENT SCHEDULE**:

WEEK ONE

Aug. 28 Introduction to class.

WEEK TWO

Aug. 31 Lecture/Discussion: What is Nature?

Reading Assignment: *The Toaster Project*, pages 9-87.

Sept. 2 *The Toaster Project*, pages 88-177. Handout for first writing exercise, due in one week.

Sept. 4 *The Toaster Project*, general discussion of the book, concepts, applications

WEEK THREE

Sept. 7 LABOR DAY HOLIDAY: No Class

Sept. 9 Lecture/Discussion: The Environmental Footprint of Pre-Columbian Americans

**FIRST WRITING EXERCISE DUE**: Environmental Footprint of a Cell Phone

Sept. 11 Discussion of Writing Exercises

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Introduction

WEEK FOUR

Sept. 14 Lecture/Discussion: Early American Concepts of Nature and Wilderness

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Chapters One and Two

Sept. 16 Discussion continued

Sept. 18 Discussion continued

WEEK FIVE

Sept. 21 Lecture/Discussion: Sustaining Slavery: Cotton Plantation Agriculture

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Chapter Three

Sept. 23 Discussion continued

Sept. 25 Discussion continued

WEEK SIX

Sept. 28 Lecture/Discussion: War and the Natural Environment

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Chapter Five

Sept. 30 Discussion continued

Oct. 2 Handout for Second Writing Assignment due October 12.

WEEK SEVEN

Oct. 5 **FIRST EXAM** on *The Toaster Project* and *The Republic of Nature*, Introduction, chapters 1, 2, 3, and 5.

Oct. 7 Lecture/Discussion: Capitalism and the Conquest of the Continent

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Chapter Six

Oct. 9 NO CLASS. There will be no class, but students will work on the writing exercise on the representation of nature and the improvement of nature at Whole Foods grocery stores.

WEEK EIGHT

Oct. 12 **SECOND WRITING EXERCISE DUE.**

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Chapter Seven

Oct. 14 Lecture/Discussion: Using Nature to Destroy the Planet: The Invention of the Atom Bomb

Oct. 16 Discussion continued

WEEK NINE

Oct. 19 Lecture/Discussion: Civil Rights and Environmental Justice

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Chapter Eight

Oct. 21 Discussion continued

Oct. 23 Discussion continued

WEEK TEN

Oct. 26 Lecture/Discussion: Energy Crises Past, Present, and Future

READING: *The Republic of Nature*, Chapter Nine

Oct. 28 Discussion continued

Oct. 30 Discussion continued

WEEK ELEVEN

Nov. 2 **SECOND EXAM** on *The Republic of Nature*, Chapters 6, 7, 8, and 9.

Nov. 4 Lecture/Discussion: Intersections of Science and the Humanities

READING: Carson, *Silent Spring*, selected chapters to be determined

Nov. 6 Discussion of *Silent Spring*

WEEK TWELVE

Nov. 9 Discussion continued

Handout for Third Writing Exercise, due in one week.

Nov. 11 Sustainability as Science and Humanism

READING: Dresner, *Principals of Sustainability*

Nov. 13 No Class: Students will work on Third Writing Assignment

WEEK THIRTEEN

Nov. 16 Discussion of the meaning of Sustainability

**THIRD WRITING EXERCISE DUE**, on the history of uses and meanings of the word “sustainable.”

READING: *Principals of Sustainability*. Skim Part One, focus on Part Two

Nov. 18 Discussion of *Principals of Sustainability*

Nov. 20 Discussion continued

WEEK FOURTEEN

Nov. 23 Discussion continued

Nov. 25 Discussion continued

Nov. 27 No Class – Thanksgiving Break

WEEK FIFTEEN

Nov. 30 Trinity River Project Presentations

Dec. 2 Trinity River Project Presentations

Dec. 4 Trinity River Project Presentations

WEEK SIXTEEN

Dec. 7 Trinity River Project Presentations

Dec. 9 **Trinity River Project Essays due**