

# Encountering America's Public Lands: Abundant Landscapes, Complex Histories, and a Multitude of Teaching Opportunities

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OUR HISTORY DEPARTMENT BOASTS A More than twenty-year tradition of requiring a students to take and pass Senior Seminar, in which they produce an original, primary-source driven research paper. Although we are quite proud of the tradition, it is easy to find ourselves resting on laurels while a number of outside factors change around us, including general education requirements (mandated top-down from the system level) and individual student interests. Thus, we have the incentive to review on a continuous basis the scaffolding opportunities, department-level assessments, curriculum, and—equally important—ability of our department to offer dynamic, high-impact, non-survey courses earlier in the student learning experience. As a result of one such department meeting, we decided to revive an idea that was scuttled for over a decade—offering a special topics section under the title “Sophomore Seminar.”

I volunteered to lead the first three trials of the revisited “Sophomore Seminar” course, using the term “sophomore” loosely, to include incoming first-year students, new transfer students, and traditional second-year students. The purpose here was to

create a “History Lab” atmosphere with similar-interest history majors, though we certainly were open to other students. Inspired by participation in the 2014 version of the Stewardship of Public Lands seminar, hosted by the Yellowstone Association Institute and sponsored by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities’ American Democracy Project, my goal was the creation of a course themed on “Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands” in American history. A second goal was to intersect this idea with the concept of “Pedagogical Triangulation” as articulated by James Schul in an article reviewing the ways in which advocates endorsed the needs and goals of teaching history in the past. Schul reviews the traditionalist approach, the social scientist approach, and the social meliorist approach of history pedagogy, asking the reader to consider the relevance of combining the strengths of each approach to the teaching of history today.<sup>1</sup> Each of these approaches will be defined and unpacked in this article, while concrete examples from the “Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands” course are illustrated to underscore the relevance and possibilities of using the “Pedagogical Triangle” as an organizational concept in the teaching of history.

At the Stewardship of Public Lands seminar, faculty are introduced to “conflicts that are adjudicated, managed, and resolved in a democracy” by exploring issues related to Yellowstone National Park.<sup>2</sup> One advertisement for the program asks:

How does a democracy manage competing but often equally legitimate positions over public resources? How are the rights of all citizens protected in conflicts over public lands? How do universities design courses and programs to help undergraduates develop the understandings and skills necessary to think about, and become engaged in, conflict management and resolution? How do we help undergraduates become more thoughtful, more engaged citizens for our democracy?<sup>3</sup>

After exploring these issues, faculty are encouraged to take what they have learned back to their home institutions, applying new approaches “in preparing the next generation of informed, engaged citizens for our democracy.”<sup>4</sup> Perhaps best applicable to courses emphasizing public policy, conservation, or communication, I was inspired by the seminar, yet wanted to “experiment” by layering in historical context. I also sought to broaden the curriculum beyond Yellowstone Park and even America’s National Park System to include America’s public lands.

While our department was interested in providing dynamic, high-impact learning opportunities (read: non-survey courses) aimed at newly arriving students, we also were interested in introducing key historical thinking skills associated with the major. Here, the “Sophomore Seminar: Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands” course not only provided ample opportunity to engage in twenty-first-century civic dialogue, but also provided rich possibilities to practice the craft of history.

### Traditional History Approach

In history education, Ronald W. Evans reminds us, traditional history is defined as “content acquisition, chronology, and the textbook as the backbone of the course.”<sup>5</sup> As Marla Doughty summarizes, critics of traditional history are concerned that students “passively retain the subject material for the purpose of succeeding on a written test later in the unit.”<sup>6</sup> This approach continues to make up a large percentage of undergraduate history instruction time. Even when departments highlight historical skills over traditional history, they often shy away from a deep analysis of the *purpose* of traditional history, moving quickly to their support of inquiry skills such as sourcing, contextualization, and corroboration. Without a knowledge base or context, however, the inquiry skills often fall flat, and that is where the art of “table setting,” or lining up context is so important. Done in isolation, traditional history can be boring or off-putting to many students. Organized properly, traditional history can lead the course in exciting, non-traditional directions while making the case for the importance of history as a discipline.

For the “Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands” course, we use two main texts to establish context: Randall K. Wilson’s *America’s Public Lands: From Yellowstone to Smokey Bear and Beyond* (2014) and Alfred Runte’s *National Parks: The American Experience* (2010).<sup>7</sup> Two additional books, Stephen J. Pyne’s *How the Canyon Became Grand: A Short History* (1999) and Alice Wondrack Biel’s *Do (Not) Feed the Bears: The Fitful History of Wildlife and Tourists in Yellowstone* (2006) provide additional case study readings in the second half of the semester, underscoring the history of a particular national park and the debate over the interaction of humans, nature, and wildlife in public lands, respectively.<sup>8</sup>

Wilson's *America's Public Lands* starts by questioning: how is it that the United States, the country that cherishes the ideal of private property more than any other in the world, has chosen to set aside nearly one-third of its territory as public lands? Embedded in the question is the notion of contrasting views, an idea explored throughout the book. Over the first half of the book, Wilson provides a succinct historical narrative of the public land system in America, including cycles of land distribution and the impact of a variety of conservation actions. In the process, the opportunity to discuss the multiple views concerning land allows for the introduction of teaching, illustrating, and emphasizing point of view—an essential historical thinking skill further addressed under the pedagogical triangle category of the social scientist approach. Wilson continues the theme of multiple viewpoints over the second half of the book, organizing the history around land management agencies instead of a chronological ordering of land preservation actions. Holding the belief that we cannot understand one type of public land without considering its relationship to others, Wilson presents National Parks, National Forests, Bureau of Land Management Lands, and the National Wilderness Preservation System (of rivers and trails) as separate, though interlocking chapters. As such, students gain a historical narrative of each institution while also being provided opportunities to learn about the complexities associated with different notions of nature and economic development, particularly as contestations arise between agency missions and public perceptions or even between the public land institutions themselves.

Runte's *National Parks* focuses more narrowly on one type of America's public land system, and it is certainly one that resonates with the students. Many have visited National Parks in the past, or have a number of future visits on their travel wish lists. Moreover, these trips are often made with family members and thus create stirring memories. Students often enthusiastically bring their knowledge back to family conversations while learning about the history of National Parks, and Runte covers the origins of the National Park Service all the way to twenty-first-century additions. A revised fourth edition of the book was prepared and published in support of Ken Burns' award-winning documentary, *The National Parks: America's Best Idea*, and segments from Burns' documentary allow for a variety of pacing in the course while providing for visual

learners. In addition, by arranging the segments in an order following the readings, students' previous knowledge is reactivated, providing a second opportunity of learning.

In addition to case studies by Pyne (of the Grand Canyon) and Wondrack (of wildlife in Yellowstone Park), we also read multiple academic articles on Glacier National Park. Three of these articles were published by *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, and an additional article, Mark David Spence's "Crown of the Continent, Backbone of the World: The American Wilderness Ideal and Blackfeet Exclusion from Glacier National Park," was published in *Environmental History*.<sup>9</sup> The readings allowed students to learn multiple aspects about Glacier National Park, and also provided an opportunity to compare journals. For example, *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, although certainly qualifying as peer-reviewed, used many more photographs.<sup>10</sup> This provided an interesting conversation on academic journals and readerships. Spence's article served as a sample from the *Environmental History* journal, providing further insight into the important theme of Native American displacement at the expense of public lands and the creation of National Parks within those public lands. Spence's monograph, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (1999), could provide another possible book selection for the course, and at the very least should be cited in class.<sup>11</sup>

### **Social Scientist Approach**

The use of carefully selected articles, monographs, and even video clips provides the essential context information, helping to illuminate the documents under analysis while working on "historical thinking skills" that are a part of the social scientist approach to history. The social scientist approach to history teaching is not new, as pointed out by Sam Wineburg, Frederick Drake, and others as they have reviewed the history of history teaching. Without a doubt, however, the new millennium has brought about an increased focus on the *doing of history*, or practicing historical thinking skills such as sourcing, contextualization, and corroboration. Though the majority of scholarly focus has been on the K-12 level, a number of key observations carry over to the college classroom, including Patricia Cleary and David Neumann's observation that

“teaching with primary sources raises pedagogical problems that few proponents of their use acknowledge: the inappropriate, superficial, or decontextualized reading of documents.”<sup>12</sup> Without a doubt, the use of primary materials is a part of college history teaching and assessment. Considering Cleary and Neumann’s observation, however, we must ask: are we always intentional in making sure the context of traditional history lines up with the tasks associated with historical thinking?

Using the course theme of parks and public lands provides a multitude of opportunities to work with primary source materials. At a stand-alone level, the Homestead Act of 1862, the Lacey Act of 1894, the Antiquities Act of 1906, or the National Park Service Organic Act of 1916 may be used as primary source materials. All can be parsed to emphasize the skill of “close reading,” while also emphasizing their respective historical contextualization. Beyond analysis of single documents, a variety of digital sources are bundled on the web in contained units of study, allowing students to work with multiple documents at a time, often around central questions. Two examples include the Library of Congress Research Guide, “Northwest Ordinance: Primary Documents in American History,” and the *Journal of American History*’s “Teaching the *JAH*” spotlight on James Morton Turner’s article, “‘The Specter of Environmentalism’: Wilderness, Environmental Politics, and the Evolution of the New Right.”<sup>13</sup> The latter website includes dozens of primary sources, organized around five exercises. Students additionally can practice their historical thinking skills in a range of documents relating to Gifford Pinchot, John Muir, and Theodore Roosevelt, to Richard Nixon, James G. Watt, and Congressional testimonies of the Sagebrush Rebellion.

Additional digitized materials provide further opportunity to use primary sources in the “Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands” course. In studying primary sources in the digital realm, Michael Eamon has warned, “The mere digitising of images without context, or indeed without any interpretation just adds to the background noise of the World Wide Web, especially in an educational setting.”<sup>14</sup> In addition, Eamon pointed out that metacrawlers, which combine multiple prominent search engines, often failed to penetrate institutional databases containing millions of artifacts, documents, and digital objects, while also contributing to poor research skills. The Library

of Congress Chronicling America digitized newspaper collection and the HathiTrust Digital Library provide two institutional databases that open up a number of possibilities for this course. For example, an instructor could select individual and highly structured use of documents as materials, or the institutional databases to illustrate the skill of corroboration, or simply share the thrill of the research hunt. The following illustrative examples from each database are just the tip of the iceberg.

Chronicling America provides access to digitized historic newspapers through a web interface. The project, which features newspapers originally published between 1789 and 1922, is produced by the National Digital Newspapers Program, a partnership between the Library of Congress and the National Endowment for the Humanities. One example, popular with the students in my class, is the debate between John Muir and Gifford Pinchot over Hetch Hetchy in Yosemite National Park. Secondary sources can be used to provide the overall context and narrative of the debate, thus highlighting opposing viewpoints.<sup>15</sup> Using Chronicling America, students have immediate access to dozens of additional primary sources, primarily for West Coast newspapers. In this case, they might read the editorial, "John Muir, Hetch Hetchy and 32,876 Voters," published on November 28, 1913 in *The San Francisco Call*, where Muir is quoted as stating "A few enterprising politicians, up to all sorts of big business...have been plotting and planning for the last ten years to get possession of Hetch Hetchy valley for a reservoir." Despite repeated denials from secretaries of the interior and defeats in Congress, Muir pointed out their strategy of "pleading dire necessity for the colossal grab."<sup>16</sup> Or they might find the 1908 front-page political campaign advertisement, "Look at Your Water Bill—and Vote for Hetch Hetchy," which includes an editorial cartoon of a giant creature labeled as the water company handing over what is literally an enormous bill to a tied-up woman labeled as "San Francisco."<sup>17</sup>

In their own words, "The mission of HathiTrust is to contribute to research, scholarship, and the common good by collaboratively collecting, organizing, preserving, communicating, and sharing the record of human knowledge."<sup>18</sup> Beginning in 2008 out of the University of California system, the project grew to include access to millions of documents and books from the public domain as additional institutions of higher learning signed on, thus digitizing sources from

many of the largest Research I university libraries. In addition to the University of California, Berkeley, this includes Harvard University and the University of Michigan. Although students will be missing the experience of ducking through musty stacks to retrieve those pre-1925 gems, HathiTrust opens up a great deal of material to them. For example, searching the phrases “See America First” and “Seeing America First” yields Heber M. Wells’ 1906 publication, *See Europe if You Will, But See America First*; Mary Roberts Rinehart’s 1916 publication, *Through Glacier Park: Seeing America First*; and Orville O. Hiestand and George H. Picken’s 1922 publication, *See America First*.<sup>19</sup> In addition to showing patterns over time, these sources may be used in close reading for their individual qualities. For example, Rinehart’s book includes a nuanced reflection on place names in which she notes the irony of replacing original native names for landscapes and markers with names honoring scientists, geographers, politicians, or businessmen taking an increasing interest in the West.

In addition to gleaning information on the See America First movement, students found a deal of success using HathiTrust to find sources detailing the first transportation systems to and in Yellowstone National Park, the work of early conservationists in the National Park system, and the more recent materials related to the reintroduction of wolves into Yellowstone. The latter case study includes open-source materials in the form of reports and opinion pieces, neither of which are restricted by the 1925 copyright mark limiting books made available through HathiTrust.

### **Social Meliorist Approach**

In *Engagement in Teaching History* (2009), Frederick Drake and Lynn Nelson remind readers, “Social meliorists embraced the civic purpose of education while calling for a new curriculum and teaching methods organized around decision making and scientific inquiry.”<sup>20</sup> Of the approaches to teaching history, Schul argues that the social meliorist approach is the least likely to be used by history teachers today, writing, “The reasons may be somewhat complex, but one of them involves the fact that social meliorism requires the teacher to be intellectually agile, constantly aware of current events, and possess thorough knowledge of the past.”<sup>21</sup> Schul admits that this is a difficult task, one that “positions history students to think reflectively



with special attention paid to contemporary civic issues.”<sup>22</sup> As Schul points out, it is time-consuming since the teacher must prepare for the planned curriculum, yet also continuously read, respond to, and incorporate new material as it appears in the news. In the semester during which this article was written, the clothing company Patagonia had launched a staunch defense of the 1906 Antiquities Act, a judge had responded to the possibility of de-listing grizzly bears in the greater Yellowstone area while referring to the Endangered Species Act, and the federal government opened to mining interests public lands of the Superior National Forest that are in the watershed of the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness, discarding the tradition of scientific studies in the process.<sup>23</sup>

Though challenging and time-consuming, the social meliorist section of the pedagogical triangle provides the perfect opportunity to link the context of the past to civic issues of the present, simultaneously practicing the recognition of multiple viewpoints and civic dialogue important to the Stewardship of Public Lands project. For example, while teaching “Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands” over two years, multiple civic issues appeared in the news corresponding to each of the chapter categories covered in Part II of Wilson’s *America’s Public Lands* (National Parks, National Forests, National Wildlife Refuges, Bureau of Land Management Lands, and National Wilderness Preservation System: Wild and Scenic Rivers and National Scenic Trails).

Over the past few years, dozens of controversies have sprung up concerning the National Park Service. The crux of the issues are twofold, involving access and meaning. Access often hinges around the National Park Service Act of 1916, in which Section 1 of the Act notes the “purpose is to conserve the scenery and natural and historic objects and wild life therein and to provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for the enjoyment of future generations.”<sup>24</sup> The tension in this goal quickly becomes apparent as my classes have studied the snowmobile controversy in Yellowstone National Park. Although the controversy has quieted in recent years, the case study provides a great opportunity to merge historical context with current practice of civic dialogue, complete with policy and multiple points of view.<sup>25</sup>

More current, though following in a similar vein, are recent land use controversies in Yellowstone National Park involving a bill that would

open all waterways in the park to recreational paddling in the summer and the push by fat tire bike enthusiasts to gain access to the park as part of the winter use management plan. On both issues, students are confronted with dozens of opinion and editorial pieces and a range of individual and institutional actors. For example, after the paddling bill first surfaced, a number of print and digital media outlets provided side-by-side opinion pieces with titles like “A Little Paddling Won’t Hurt the Yellowstone Experience” and “Paddling Bill is Bad News for Yellowstone and Grand Teton Parks.”<sup>26</sup> Students are also challenged to identify positions of organizations such as American Whitewater and the Greater Yellowstone Coalition, politicians, and the National Park Service. The multitude of constituent groups and, thus, multiple viewpoints also becomes apparent when studying the bison controversy in the greater Yellowstone ecosystem area.

Beyond Yellowstone, controversies have sprung up around increasing protection of America’s monuments and National Parks holdings under the Barack Obama Presidency. While in office, President Obama designated or expanded nineteen national monuments through the Antiquities Act. This is compared to three for the George W. Bush Presidency and one under the Bill Clinton Presidency. President Obama’s number was the highest registered since the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidency and thus provided a great opportunity to discuss the Antiquities Act, along with the powers of Congress and the Presidency. In addition, one of President Obama’s final acts was to turn 87,500 acres of Maine’s woods into the nation’s newest federal park. The headline “Obama Designates National Monument in Maine, to Dismay of Some” in *The New York Times* underscored the controversy associated with the act at both the local versus national level and within the national level.<sup>27</sup> The context of the story also illustrated the complexities of multiple stakeholders, as Burt’s Bees founder Roxanne Quimby bought and accumulated land in Maine, shutting it off to local hunters and snowmobile enthusiasts before donating the land to the federal government.

Over the two semesters of teaching “Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands,” three additional public debates occurred, illustrative of the complexities of America’s public lands system. The Bundy occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon gained national attention, with local ranchers trying to make a point against the notion of federal control, echoing the Sagebrush

Rebellion during the Ronald Reagan Presidency.<sup>28</sup> Controversy surrounding a remote stretch of the southern Utah landscape known as Bears Ears provided additional nuance to the local rancher versus federal control debate when one considers the importance of the area to local tribal members. Tribal members, including Navajos, Zunis, Hopis, Utes, and Mountain Utes, proposed preservation of the region along the lines of a new model of joint management with the federal government.<sup>29</sup> Finally, a proposed bill in Congress that would open federally designated wilderness where “mechanical support” has been banned since Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Wilderness Act of 1964 challenges students on multiple levels. It is easy enough for them to understand the basic differences between the conservative authors of the bill and conservationists—however, nuance again comes into play when considering interest groups such as the International Mountain Bicycling Association and the Sustainable Trails Coalition, both conservation-minded yet interested in a generational shift in thinking regarding wilderness access and use, albeit in a sustainable manner.<sup>30</sup>

The disputes listed above ticked all of the boxes in the social meliorist list. A keyword search in the *The New York Times* alone reveals a constant appearance of current events related to federal land issues. The complexity of the controversies required professor and students alike to be intellectually agile, while each of the events were rooted in historical context, providing wonderful opportunities to study the Antiquities Act or the Wilderness Act in an organic rather than static setting. The fact that my course coincided with the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the National Park Service opened still more opportunities to link the past with the present and future.

### **Beyond the Pedagogical Triangle: Historiography and Research Opportunities**

Beyond activities that fit the three points of pedagogical triangulation, the “Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands” course offers opportunities for students to explore the concept of historiography, be introduced to the concept of public history, and conduct and present original research. For example, two early topics initiate students to the concept of historiography—the Northwest Ordinance and the Morrill Act (or Land-Grant College Act).

### *Historiography via the Northwest Ordinance*

First, very early in the course, students learn about the origins of America's public lands policy, a policy tied closely to the Northwest Ordinance, adopted by the Confederation Congress on July 13, 1787. Using the Library of Congress Research Guide, "Northwest Ordinance: Primary Documents in American History," students have access to a set of primary sources related to the historical act.<sup>31</sup> While these primary sources give another opportunity to practice the skills related to the social scientist approach described above, the suggested print resources also offer the opportunity for the instructor to illustrate the concept of historiography at a beginner level. The bibliography includes an article published by John M. Merriam in 1888 and a book published by Jay A. Barrett in 1891. Next in the chronological order is a book published by Merrill Jensen in 1950, followed by three publications from the 1980s: a book by Peter S. Onuf (1987), and edited books by Robert M. Taylor Jr. (1987) and Frederick D. Williams (1989). The instructor may use this self-contained bibliography to show how many times historians addressed the subject, along with changes to approach over time—particularly Robert Alexander's unambiguously titled *The Northwest Ordinance: Constitutional Politics and the Theft of Native Land* (2017). The more recent edited volumes provide multiple approaches to the subject, and by underscoring the date of publication, the instructor can reveal how some subjects receive attention during anniversary years. Time permitting, students could be assigned various readings out of the edited books and report back on the thesis or main ideas of the articles. This activity may be extended by using R. Douglas Hurt's historiographic review, "Historians and the Northwest Ordinance," published in 1989 in *The Western Historical Quarterly*.<sup>32</sup>

### *Historiography via the Morrill Act*

Review of the Morrill Act of 1862 presents a second opportunity to review the concept of historiography. The Library of Congress provides an overview of the Morrill Act, complete with primary sources and a short bibliography.<sup>33</sup> Once again emphasizing the significance of publication dates and the influence of anniversary years, students can be pointed to 1962's *The Origins of the Land-*

*Grant Colleges and State Universities* by Allan Nevins. More recently, 2012 brought additional reflection to the significance of the Morrill Act. Rachel Lederman DiPietro's student essay, "History of the History of the Morrill Land Grant Act," published online by her professor in 2013, brings students up to date on the more recent literature.<sup>34</sup> DiPietro, a student herself, presents a succinct summary, comparing and contrasting Edward D. Eddy's *Colleges for Our Land and Time: The Land-Grant Idea in American Education* (1957) and Allan Nevins' *The State Universities and Democracy* (1962), as well as the more recent 2012 collection of essays edited by Daniel Mark Fogel and Elizabeth Malson-Huddle commemorating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the act.

A review of publications related to the history and role of the National Park Service provides opportunities to introduce students to the purpose of public history and relevant disciplined-based institutions. For example, in 2011, the Organization of American Historians sponsored the publication of *Imperiled Promise: The State of History in the National Park Service*, co-authored by Anne Mitchell Whisnant, Marla R. Miller, Gary B. Nash, and David Thelen.<sup>35</sup> The study came at the request of the chief historian's office of the National Park Service and included sub-sections underscoring the traits and importance of public history such as The History/ Interpretation Divide; Technology and the Practice of History; Productive and Enduring Partnerships for History; Stewardship and Interpretation of Agency History; and Civic Engagement, History, and Interpretation. Easily accessible online, pertinent parts of the publication can be read and discussed in class to open a discussion on the role and possibilities of public history.<sup>36</sup>

### *Original Research via Individual Student Interests*

Original research opportunities are also plentiful in the "Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands" course. Through two times teaching the course, my students have produced original research papers on early transportation into "Wonderland" (Yellowstone), the Indians of All Tribes' Occupation of Alcatraz Island, the Muir-Pinchot debate on Hetch Hetchy, the creation of the Korean War Veterans Memorial on the National Mall, the history of wildlife management in Yellowstone National Park, the Sagebrush Rebellion, and the African

Burial Ground National Monument. A student from Louisiana crafted a paper on the Jean Lafitte National Historical Park and Preserve, while a student from South Dakota wrote on the creation and symbolic meaning of the Mount Rushmore National Memorial. Another student chose memories from a family vacation to further explore the history of Theodore Roosevelt National Park in North Dakota, while yet another student's study of public lands and wildlife refuges in Alaska during our spring semester inspired a summer trip to "The Last Frontier" and a request in the fall semester to work on an individual study on Adolph Murie's role in wolf preservation in the Mount McKinley National Park (now Denali National Park and Preserve) and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

In addition to the rich variety of individual projects, each class of "Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands" has worked on a research-based group project aimed at the collaborative creation of a research poster. The poster is then presented at the university's student research day in the spring. During the first edition of the course, the class reviewed the concept of parks at a local level, researching the history of Levee Park in Winona, Minnesota. The class researched old newspapers and reports filed at the historical society, discovering that over a half-dozen groups have attempted to revive the riverfront park that was once the "crown jewel" of Winona's park system. Due to the construction of a concrete dike that followed a destructive flood in 1965, the park is now a shell of its former self. Studying this project, students were able to build a contextual history of the park and analyze the history of the multiple attempts to revitalize the area. As a result, this informed their assessment of current revitalization proposals active in the Winona civic realm.

In the second edition of "Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands," the student group project was based on researching the founding of Glacier National Park. On the surface, it would appear that Minnesota and Montana have little in common. However, when one considers the roles that the Hill Family of St. Paul, Minnesota and the Great Northern Railway played in the promotion of the west, America's National Parks, and Glacier National Park in particular, the subject represents the perfect way to blend regional and national history. The Great Northern Railway Corporate Records, along with the Louis W. Hill Papers, are housed at the Minnesota Historical Society Archives, providing a great opportunity for a local field trip. As an alternative

to on-site visits, students were aided by the fact that many of the records from these two collections pertaining to the founding of Glacier National Park are digitized and easily accessible.<sup>37</sup>

Future versions of the course present additional group research opportunities. For example, students could research the history and contemporary issues associated with the Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge. A bit farther afield, yet important to the state of Minnesota, are the history and contemporary issues associated with the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness. With various topics at various locations, a similar class offered at other institutions would no doubt provide ample locally based research areas.

### Conclusion

This review argues that the theme of America's public lands not only provides an abundant range of informative opportunities for students to build context in the traditional sense of studying history, but also offers the opportunity to develop both inquiry and research skills. During the writing of this conclusion, I wrapped up the third edition of teaching "Sophomore Seminar: Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands." Once again, not only were all three points of pedagogical triangulation represented, but the course also attached directly to public lands in the news, ranging from local and regional applications to national stories.

During the last semester, our class witnessed the debates surrounding how the Donald Trump Presidency took on a decidedly different approach to public lands than the previous administration. As a result, the "traditional history" point of the pedagogical triangle related to context took on new importance as our class studied the history of America's monuments and public lands. As an example, one student took things a step further by selecting the origin and history of the Antiquities Act as his major research project. When a prominent member of the administration questioned the meaning of the Statue of Liberty amidst the immigration debate, yet another opportunity arose to study the context of that particular national monument site.

In addition to the traditional history context point, the inquiry point of the pedagogical triangle was thoroughly represented (and very much connected to the other two points) as students sourced

documents covering a wide range of issues such as the history of fire policy on public lands, the history of conservation study and recreation on public lands, current and former resource use of public lands, and recent de-listing of endangered and threatened wildlife on public lands.

Numerous current events allowed for the social meliorist civic issues point to complete the triangle. The third edition of the course was not far removed from the rancher occupation at the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge, linking present study and recognition of multiple points of view with the contextual origin of the Sagebrush Rebellion. A move to downsize Bears Ears National Monument and Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, among others, elicited response from proponents and opponents alike, with students recognizing the nuances within each group.

During the second week of the course offering, an opinion piece appearing in *The New York Times* titled “Goodbye, Yosemite. Hello, What?” brought the scrutiny of historical place names (already a frequent topic in the news due to attention drawn to Confederate statues and monuments) to the naming of a national park. In the opinion piece, author Daniel Duane reflected upon the possibility for the National Park Service “to dump dozens of place names that are the linguistic equivalents of Confederate statues.”<sup>38</sup> “Yosemite” was one such place name, deriving from the Mariposa Battalion of white men whose goal was to rid the region of native peoples in the mid-nineteenth century. Looking to justify their actions, the Mariposa Battalion referred to the natives as a word sounding something like “Yosemite,” meaning “among them are killers.” The author of the best surviving account of the Mariposa Battalion was Lafayette Bunnell. Although Yosemite National Park seems distant to our students in Winona, Minnesota, much like Bunnell’s actions and account of the Mariposa Battalion’s actions are part of the distant past, the story became much more localized when students realized it was the same Lafayette Bunnell that the Bunnell House just south of town, and just miles from the university, was named after. Bunnell, as it turns out, was one of the town’s “founders” or “pioneers,” and, as such, was often celebrated by the local historical society. This raised the opportunity to ask, “what do such celebrations mean and how are those meanings constructed?” Connecting the dots through Lafayette Bunnell, we brought home the importance of using close



reading, contextualization, and sourcing skills, reading Bunnell's accounts of the Mariposa Battalion, as well as his observations of mid- to late-nineteenth-century Winona County.

Our students also took advantage of a popular cultural history trend of all things Hamilton as we took on our group research project—the history of Paterson, New Jersey and the eventual conception and realization of the Paterson Great Falls National Historical Park. The students found out that Alexander Hamilton originally envisioned Paterson as the hub of American industrial growth. Primary source materials from Hamilton's Society for Establishing Useful Manufactures moved from dry to vibrant and exciting material. Likewise, students were able to chart the rise and fall of industry in Paterson, with many intrigued by a series of pre-World War I labor strikes in the mills. Students were able to grapple with the original vision and argument to make Paterson's falls into a national park, along with the ongoing task of assigning meaning to the park. Students quickly realized the Hamilton phenomenon was a boon to the park, but also realized that the history of Paterson, along with the individual of Hamilton, were both complex. Listening to music from the award-winning *Hamilton: An American Musical* soundtrack while researching added to the class atmosphere.

Future versions of "Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands" promise more opportunities of pedagogical triangulation while underscoring historical thinking and research skills. Using the term "park" broadly, we hope to tap into the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of a local state park. Park employees have already collected more than a hundred oral history interviews and are looking for ways our students can be personally involved in transcriptions or generally connected to the park. We have also yet to tap into the nearby Upper Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge, which could provide a hands-on field trip activity paddling in the refuge's backwaters. Parks and public lands will no doubt also remain an active part of the news cycle, allowing ample opportunities to link historical context to contemporary policy. The possibilities appear as vast as our nation's collection of parks and public lands.

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## Appendix

### Sample Course Outline Sophomore Seminar: Parks, Monuments, and Public Lands

#### Week 1: Introduction to America's Public Lands, including National Parks

- Read and discuss Randall K. Wilson, *America's Public Lands: From Yellowstone to Smokey Bear and Beyond*: Chapter 1: Building the National Commons; Chapter 2: Disposing of the Public Domain; Chapter 3: A Public Land System Emerges.
- Read and discuss Alfred Runte, *National Parks: The American Experience*: Prologue: Paradise Lost; Chapter 1: The American West.

*Goal of the Week: Build historical context.*

#### Week 2: Historiography and Key Literature, Key Finding Aids, and Research Possibilities

- Use the Northwest Ordinance and the Morrill Act to demonstrate primary sources and historiography:

Primary Documents in American History: Morrill Act, Library of Congress, <<https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/morrill.html>>.

Primary Documents in American History: Northwest Ordinance, Library of Congress, <<https://guides.loc.gov/northwest-ordinance>>.

Northwest Ordinance, Washington Library (includes short narrative and bibliography), <<https://www.mountvernon.org/library/digitalhistory/digital-encyclopedia/article/northwest-ordinance/>>.

*Goal of the Week: Introduce and practice working with the concept of historiography; identify and locate primary source materials; introduce possible research ideas.*

#### Week 3: National Parks as Public Lands

- Read and discuss Runte, *National Parks*: Chapter 2: Yellowstone; Chapter 3: Worthless Lands.
- Read and discuss Daniel Duane, “Goodbye, Yosemite. Hello, What?” opinion, *The New York Times*, September 2, 2017.

- Read and discuss Wilson, *America's Public Lands*: case studies in Chapter 4: National Parks.

*Goal of the Week: Build historical context of Yosemite and Yellowstone National Parks; tie each park to a contemporary issue.*

#### **Week 4: Wolf Week**

- Read and discuss Douglas W. Smith and Gary Ferguson, *Decade of the Wolf: Returning the Wild to Yellowstone* and/or Nate Blakeslee, *American Wolf: A True Story of Survival and Obsession in the West*.

*Goal of the Week: Learn context of the Yellowstone wolf reintroduction project; brainstorm primary and secondary sources on the history of wolves in America and wolf reintroduction in Yellowstone; lay out goals of a group research project of the history of the Yellowstone wolf project.*

#### **Week 5: National Refuge System**

- Read and discuss Wilson, *America's Public Lands*: Chapter 6: National Wildlife Refuges.
- History Past and Present: Mini-Presentation on the Horicon National Wildlife Refuge in Wisconsin (related to local social studies requirement) and the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon (occupation in the news).
- Field Trip to Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge.

*Goal of the Week: Learn the contextual history of the National Wildlife Refuges in America; experience field trip.*

#### **Week 6: Group Project Work Week**

*Goal of the Week: Demonstrate progress on components of group research project, including draft of preliminary bibliography.*

#### **Week 7: The March of Monumentalism**

- Read and discuss Runte, *National Parks*: Chapter 4: The March of Monumentalism; Chapter 5: See America First.
- Review primary source documents such as the Lacey Act and Antiquities Act.
- Guest Speaker from the National Park Service Unit: Mississippi National River and Recreation Area.

*Goal of the Week: Move our chronology of the history and development of public lands forward; review key landmark turning points through primary source documents.*

### **Week 8: Glacier National Park and the Connection to Minnesota**

- Read and discuss journal articles related to Glacier National Park as published in *Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, *Environmental History*, and *Geographic Review*.
- Review Minnesota Historical Society online primary source document collection related to the founding of Glacier National Park.

*Goal of the Week: Connect local and regional history to national history; review differences in academic journals.*

### **Week 9: Grand Canyon Week**

- Read and discuss Donald Worster, “Environmental History: The View at the Grand Canyon,” <<https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/hisnps/NPSHistory/environmentalhistory.htm>>.
- Read and discuss Stephen Pyne, *How the Canyon Became Grand: A Short History*.
- Access and review the story of Glen and Bessie Hyde through primary source materials from Arizona State University/Grand Canyon Conservancy site, “Nature, Culture, and History at the Grand Canyon: Hyde River Tragedy,” <<https://grcahistory.org/sites/colorado-river-corridor/hyde-river-tragedy/>>.

*Goal of the Week: Gain context knowledge on the history of the Grand Canyon; review the concept of historiography and historians at work through the careers of Donald Worster and Stephen Pyne; work with primary source materials through a university archival web page.*

### **Week 10: Conservation in Parks and Public Lands**

- Read and discuss Runte, *National Parks*: Chapter 7: Ecology Denied; Chapter 8: Schemers and Standard-Bearers.
- Access and review excerpts from key figures in the conservation movement, including Gifford Pinchot, George Melendez Wright, Marjory Stoneman Douglas, Aldo Leopold, and A. Starker Leopold.

*Goal of the Week: Review primary source materials related to conservationists; access and evaluate primary sources related to Aldo Leopold at the Leopold Archives; review a case study bringing the history of a conservation issue to the present time period.*



**Week 11: Bear Week**

- Read and discuss Alice Wondrack Biel, *Do (Not) Feed the Bears: The Fitful History of Wildlife and Tourists in Yellowstone*.

*Goal of the Week: Apply bear conservation issue to the case study of a national park; link to wolf project.*

**Week 12: National Forests**

- Read and discuss Wilson, *America's Public Lands*: Chapter 5: National Forests.
- Read and discuss Timothy Egan, *The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire that Saved America*.

*Goal of the Week: Learn the history of national forests as a part of America's public lands system; situate Egan's book and PBS special on the Big Burn as popular history.*

**Week 13: Mission 66 to Present**

- Read and discuss Runte, *National Parks*: Chapter 11: Ideals and Controversies of Expansion; Chapter 12: Decision in Alaska; Chapter 13: Into the Twenty-First Century.

*Goal of the Week: Gain context knowledge on the history of national parks from 1945 to present; review points of contention and dialogue through case studies; review application to contemporary issues grounded in history through the snowmobile and rafting controversies in Yellowstone National Park.*

**Week 14: Wild and Scenic Rivers and National Scenic Trails Week**

- Read and discuss Wilson, *America's Public Lands*: Chapter 8: National Wilderness Preservation System.
- Guest Speakers invited to address local trail initiatives on public and private lands.

*Goal of the Week: Learn the context of the national scenic rivers and trails designation; listen to and evaluate multiple stakeholders and points of view in local and state trail initiatives.*

**Week 15: Project Presentations**

*Goal of the Week: Share individual and group presentations.*



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**November 2019**

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