



COMPARATIVE FOREST HISTORIES OF THE GLOBAL NORTH

This PhD course on “Comparative Forest Histories of the Global North”, taught by Professor Nancy Langston, offers students international and interdisciplinary perspectives on the history of boreal forests. We encourage students from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds to participate; the course will be particularly relevant for students in history, ecology, archaeology, and forestry.

Date	April 15 – 19, 2013
Place	Umeå University, Sweden
Credit	7,5 CTS



Department of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies
Umeå Studies in Science, Technology, and Environment (USSTE)
<http://www.idesam.umu.se/english/education/doctoralstudies/>

Course Description

Stretching across Canada, parts of the continental United States, Scandinavia, and Siberia, boreal forests are at the center of intense conflicts over global warming, clearcutting, indigenous land rights, and community forestry. In Canada, for example, less than eight percent of the boreal forest is protected from development, while more than half has been recently opened for harvest. Across the globe, intensive forestry projects are extracting enormous quantities of pulp for paper, even as indigenous groups are organizing for an increased role in forest management.

During much of the 20th century, during the development of scientific forest management, boreal forests were often portrayed as naturally unhealthy forests, impoverished by their climates, soils, and disturbance regimes. Boreal forests exist in places with extremely cold winters and short growing seasons, and they grow on nutrient-deprived, poorly-drained soils. Intensive management, foresters believed, might be able to rescue these forests from their own natural unhealthiness, bringing them into a more modern and vigorous condition. In the past two decades, ecologists and environmentalists have challenged these views of boreal forest health, while introducing new metaphors of health and vulnerability into the conversation. Ecologists now argue that boreal forests are worth protecting because they make up one of the world's significant carbon reservoirs, storing carbon rather than immediately releasing it into the atmosphere. As fire intensities increase, much of this carbon may be released into the atmosphere, affecting the health of human and natural communities throughout the globe.

This post-graduate seminar will examine the forest histories of northern regions, focusing on Canada, the United States, and Scandinavia. The interpretative framework for this course will be environmental history, which explores the links between nature, culture, and politics. The ecological context for these regions is quite similar, but the social and political contexts of forest changes have been quite different. Questions will include: Who has historically had access to boreal forest resources? How did that access change with the development of forest industries, scientific forest management, hydropower development, concern about climate change, and indigenous community forestry? Whose meanings of the forest have defined the use of the forests, rivers and animals, and how has that changed? How does the modern language of crisis affect communities and forests in various boreal regions?



Practical Information



Professor Nancy Langston

Instructor: Professor Nancy Langston (www.nancylangston.net) is the King Carl XVI Gustaf Visiting Professor of Environmental Science in the Department of Historical, Philosophical and Religious Studies at Umeå University. She is part of Umeå Studies in Science, Technology, and Environment (USSTE), an interdisciplinary research group at the Faculty of Arts. Originally trained as a biologist, Professor Langston has become one of the leading scholars within the field of environmental history, having served as president of the American Society for Environmental History and currently serving as editor of the flagship journal of the field, *Environmental History*. Her books include *Toxic Bodies: Hormone Disruptors and the Legacy of DES* (Yale University Press, 2010), *Where Land and Water Meet: A Western Landscape Transformed* (University of Washington Press, 2003), and *Forest Dreams, Forest Nightmares* (University of Washington Press, 1995). Her current research examines boreal histories in the Lake Superior watershed of North America; see www.sustaininglakesuperior.com for more details.

During the course, the participants will read key texts, participate in discussions, attend lectures, and go on field trips and excursions. Students will be expected to come to the seminar with 2 brief essays written on specific readings and lead discussions on those readings. A research paper (8 to 10 pages) or similar website will be due on May 10. The course is primarily intended for PhD students, though advanced MA students and recent postdocs may also apply. We will accept a maximum of 20 participants.

If you wish to participate, send a short application to Professor Erland Mårald, erland.marald@idehist.umu.se by January 31, outlining your academic background and what you wish to get out of the course. More detailed course information will be sent to those accepted.



Department of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies
Umeå Studies in Science, Technology, and Environment (USSTE)
<http://www.idesam.umu.se/english/education/doctoralstudies/>