

## LESS TRANSPARENT

### EXAMPLE K: ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

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#### AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY

##### Visual Assignment

**SHARED READING:** James Morton Turner, *The Promise of Wilderness: America: Environmental Politics Since 1964* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013)

**ASSIGNMENT:** Create a “visual narrative” consisting of approximately 3-6 images with one-paragraph captions and list of sources. You should also include a “mind map,” as discussed, explaining the evolutions of thought, culture, politics under review. Imagine this will be part of an exhibit open to leading scholars of the field but also a general audience and undergraduate students.

Due March 17 in class.



## MORE TRANSPARENT

### **EXAMPLE K: AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY**

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#### **Visual Assignment:**

#### **How to Read Photographs for Environmental History Research**

**Due:** December 12, 2017, 11:59 PM

**Purpose:** The purpose of this assignment is to provide an opportunity for you to do some primary research in environmental history and use your insights about the field and its methods to craft a new interpretation of topic of importance to students of the field.

**Skills:** Learn and practice the techniques of visual analysis and deep reading of photographs that support research in the field of environmental history. Learn how to use more familiar primary sources such as maps and documents to support deep reading of photographs. Learn how to better explain historic context with images as part of the evidence for argument and analysis. Understand how reading historic photographs enhances ability of environmental historians to study cultural landscapes over time.

**Knowledge:** By doing this assignment you will better understand interactions of nature and culture over time. More specifically you will gain insights into the environmental history of Southern Nevada and the American Southwest.

#### **Tasks:**

1. Carefully survey the **Landscapes of Southern Nevada digital collection** (link below) and note photographs that you wish to study in more depth.
2. Survey the primary documents and historic maps included in the collection.
3. Choose an individual image to analyze
4. Search for one related primary document in the collection and one related historic map that will aid your analysis of your image.
5. Decide what broader environmental history topic, theme or research area these three sources might support. For example, land use, resource conservation, water, etc....
6. Use the Library of Congress Photo Analysis worksheet (attached) to guide your deep reading of your photograph keeping in mind that you are using these sources to better understand an environmental history research topic, theme or issue.
7. Based on your analysis and notes from the worksheet write a concise but detailed analysis of your photograph. Then explain how this photographic primary source expands our knowledge of your chosen environmental history topic.
8. Submit your completed (500-800 word) analysis with your photograph for review by your peers.
9. Review the submissions of your classmates
10. Participate in discussion of assignment results.



### Criteria for Success:

- Adequate assignments will include clear responses to all parts of the assignment.
- Excellent assignments will be complete, with careful analysis of the photograph and insightful use of the photograph as a source to understand an environmental history topic, theme or issue.
- Review and discussion will be supportive and focused on making improvements to your peers' work and your own.

### Resources:

- Noted Environmental Historian William Cronon built a wonderful site to help students engaging in this type of research:  
<http://www.williamcronon.net/researching/images.htm>
- The classic book on the subject is, Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1989)
- My own effort at visual analysis of historic photographs is, "Rereading the Nature of Atomic Doom Towns," *Environmental History* 17:3 (July, 2012): 635-647 (attached)
- **Photos, Documents and Maps for the Assignment: *The Historic Landscapes of Nevada Collection***
  - Read about this collection here:  
<http://digital.library.unlv.edu/collections/historic-landscape>
  - Access Images for download and use here:  
<http://d.library.unlv.edu/cdm/search/searchterm/st.%20thomas/field/all/mode/all/conn/and>
  - Photo Worksheet.pdf

