

Joanna L. Dyl
Sample syllabus

Beaches, Environment, and Society

(Three week intensive May term course)

Course overview

Beaches represent the border between land and water, and for more than one hundred years, they have also represented popular places for various forms of nature recreation and tourism. The popularity of beaches in turn has led to monumental investments to maintain and even create beaches. Contests over beach access have played out along lines of race, gender, and socioeconomic status. Recreational uses of beaches have often conflicted with other uses, such as drilling for oil, and communities have made choices that have prioritized some uses over others. In the twenty-first century, beaches are threatened by erosion, sea-level rise, pollution, and development.

This course represents an interdisciplinary environmental studies exploration of beaches. We will explore the dynamic character of beaches including their formation and ecology. We will look at the history, economics, and politics behind human uses of beaches, ranging from tourism to oil exploration. And we will study threats to beaches in the past, present, and future. The dynamic character of beaches has often conflicted with the human desire to maintain beaches, and we will explore choices and strategies to preserve and restore beaches and consider ways in which those past choices can inform future decision-making.

After taking this course, students will be able to:

1. Summarize the environmental history of beaches and coastal development;
2. Identify and critically discuss key threats facing beaches today and their public policy implications;
3. Connect classroom knowledge and field experience through experiential learning;
4. Critically read and evaluate a variety of sources ranging from historical documents and government reports to scholarly books and articles and contemporary media;
5. Write papers incorporating and connecting material across environmental studies disciplines.

Assigned readings:

Required book:

- John R. Gillis, *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

This book will be available at the bookstore. It is also available as an e-book from the library for anyone for whom purchasing books is a financial hardship (if you choose this option, make sure that the e-book is readable on your device and that you can access it reliably). Other assigned readings will be available on the web, on Moodle, or through the library website.

Course Format

Classroom sessions will focus on discussion of the readings as well as “document lab” exercises to explore relevant primary sources ranging from historical accounts and photographs to government reports and maps showing sea-level rise. During “document labs,” students will work in groups to pursue guided close and critical reading of primary documents. Discussions will also connect history and past policy dilemmas to current issues. Three day-long field trips to nearby beaches will allow us to connect classroom learning to field experience.

It is essential that you prepare for class by completing the reading and any other assigned exercises. My expectation during May term is that your focus is on this class, and you should be prepared to work beyond the three hours that we meet most days. The success of our discussions depends largely on your careful reading, consistent attendance, and engagement with each other during class.

Attendance is mandatory. You may be able to make up excused absences (those cleared with me in advance and resulting from illness, religious observances, or family emergencies). Arrangements for make-up work should be made with me individually and will usually involve an additional writing assignment. Unexcused absences and absences that are not made up will have a significant impact on your grade. Because so much of our learning takes place in class (including during field trips), you must attend at least seventy-five percent of the course meetings to receive credit.

It is essential that you bring the day’s readings (both books and shorter pieces from Moodle or the web) to each class session so that we can easily reference specific quotes and sections during our discussions. Good discussions also demand basic respect for others and their opinions. Disagreement is fine (even good), but please remember to be courteous and respectful toward your classmates at all times. Respect for the instructor and your classmates also demands that you: 1) be on time to class and all field trip activities; 2) remain silent when others (including the professor) are speaking; 3) refrain from eating during class; 4) minimize disruptions by turning off your cell phone and using your laptop only to take notes and access course materials. As college students, I expect you to behave like courteous adults and will treat you like adults in turn.

For any of you who are uncomfortable with participating in class because of shyness or other concerns, please come and speak to me. Because class participation is a major part of the course – and because the ability to articulate your ideas verbally is an important skill to develop – you will need to work to overcome your discomfort. However, I am

happy to make accommodations to help you feel more comfortable with speaking up or demonstrate that you are participating as a listener even if you are quiet in class.

I encourage all students to take advantage of my office hours. If you are not available during office hours, I am happy to schedule another time to meet with you. Please do not hesitate to ask if you have questions about course material, assignments, your progress, or other topics related to the course or your studies at Redlands.

Assignments

- In-class participation (25 percent)
- In-class “document lab” exercises (20 percent)
- Quiz on beach science (5)
- Journal – Students will write short “journal entries” reflecting on their experiences during the field trips and in the course as a whole (20 percent)
- Two short essays (total 30 percent)

Grading

My intention with graded work is to challenge you and provide you with an honest evaluation of your performance and your progress. Grades in the A-range represent excellent work, those in the B-range reflect good work, and those in the C-range represent satisfactory work. Work that is submitted late will lose 1/3 of a grade for each day it is late (for example, from a B+ to a B), unless I have granted an extension in advance.

GRADING SCALE

4.0	=	A	=	93 – 100 %	2.0	=	C	=	73 – 76 %
3.7	=	A-	=	90 – 92 %	1.7	=	C-	=	70 – 72 %
3.3	=	B+	=	87 – 89 %	1.3	=	D+	=	67 – 69 %
3.0	=	B	=	83 – 86 %	1.0	=	D	=	63 – 66 %
2.7	=	B-	=	80 – 82 %	0.7	=	D-	=	60 – 62 %
2.3	=	C+	=	77 – 79 %	0.0	=	Fail	=	0 – 59 %

I take plagiarism and academic dishonesty very seriously. Academic integrity lies at the foundation of the learning process and is central to the mission of critical inquiry within higher education. It is also, of course, a matter of personal ethics. Cases of plagiarism will result in a failing grade on the assignment and will be reported.

Accommodation Statement

If you have a disability (e.g. attention, health, hearing, learning, mobility, physical, psychiatric, or vision) that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please inform me immediately and register with the Office of Academic Success and Disability Services for disability verification and for determination of reasonable academic accommodations.

Course Schedule

Please note that the course schedule and readings may evolve in response to unforeseen circumstances or pedagogical needs. All updates and changes will be posted on Moodle and discussed in class. You should complete the readings listed for each day prior to that day's class.

Week 1

5/1 Introductions

5/2 Where do beaches come from?

Gary Griggs, Kiki Patsch, and Lauret Savoy, "Understanding the Shoreline," *Living with the Changing California Coast* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 38-74. (Moodle)

5/3 Early human uses of beaches

John R. Gillis, *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History*, 1-98.

Short quiz on Tuesday's "beach science"

Document lab: California Indians

5/4 Settling and transforming coastal lands

Gillis, *The Human Shore*, 99-127.

Anna Marie Hagar, "A Salute to the Port of Los Angeles from Mud Flats to Modern Day Miracle," *California Historical Society Quarterly* 49, no. 4 (Dec. 1970): 329-335. (Moodle)

Document lab: Coastal cities and environmental transformations

Week 2

5/8 The attraction of the shore – tourism and development

Gillis, *The Human Shore*, 128-198.

Document lab: Writing about beaches and shores

5/9 First field trip: Venice Beach

Before the trip, read and watch:

Nathan Masters, "The Lost Canals of Venice of America," KCET.org
<https://www.kcet.org/shows/lost-la/the-lost-canals-of-venice-of-america>

Jacob Hurtwitz-Goodman, "The Defenders of Muscle Beach," Hakai Magazine (July 26, 2016)
<https://www.hakaimagazine.com/video/defenders-muscle-beach>

5/10 Multiple uses – oil and beaches in Los Angeles

Sarah Elkind, "Oil and Water: The Public and the Private on Southern California Beaches, 1920-1950," *How Local Politics Shape Federal Policy: Business, Power, and the Environment in Twentieth-Century Los Angeles* (2011). (Moodle)

Jason P. Theriot, "Introduction" and "The Coastal Erosion Crisis: Wetland Loss and the Oil Field Canal Debate" in *American Energy, Imperiled Coast: Oil and Gas Development in Louisiana's Wetlands* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2014), 1-14, 131-162. (Moodle)

Document lab: Historical photographs

5/11 Oil spills, choices, and disasters: from Santa Barbara to Deepwater Horizon

Kate Wheeling and Max Ufberg, "'The Ocean Is Boiling': The Complete Oral History of the 1969 Santa Barbara Oil Spill," *Pacific Standard*, April 18, 2017.
<https://psmag.com/the-ocean-is-boiling-the-complete-oral-history-of-the-1969-santa-barbara-oil-spill-4e3eac063d8b>

Orrin H. Pilkey and J. Andrew G. Cooper, "Tar Balls and Magic Pipes," in *The Last Beach* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), 107-122. (Moodle)

Film: "Drill, Spill, Repeat"

First journal entry due Friday 5/12

Week 3

5/15 Conflicts over access, ownership, and control

Andrew Kahrl, *The Land Was Ours: African American Beaches from Jim Crow to the Sunbelt South*, excerpts. (Moodle)

Colin Fisher, "African Americans, Outdoor Recreation, and the 1919 Chicago Race Riot," in *"To Love the Wind and the Rain": African Americans and Environmental History*, eds. Dianne D. Glave and Mark Stoll, 63-76. (Moodle)

Angie Frederickson, "The California Coastal Act and Ports: The Unintended Environmental Justice Implications of Preserving California's Coastline," *Coastal Management* 41 (2013): 258-271. (Moodle)

Document lab: Beach access and environmental injustice

5/16 Second field trip: Crystal Cove

First essay due

5/17 Beach "nourishment"

Carl H. Hobbes, "'Erosion and Shore Protection,'" *The Beach Book: Science of the Shore* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 144-160. (Moodle)

Cornelia Dean, "Armor" and "Unnatural Appetite," *Against the Tide: The Battle for America's Beaches* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 36-68, 92-119. (Moodle)

Lily Strelch, "When Beach Nourishment Kills," *Hakai Magazine*, April 20, 2016.
<https://www.hakaimagazine.com/article-short/when-beach-nourishment-kills>

Document lab: Beach replenishment plans

5/18 Third field trip: Huntington Beach and Bolsa Chica Ecological Reserve

Second journal entry due Friday 5/19

Week 4

5/22 Sea level rise and the future of beaches

Justin Gillis, "Flooding of Coast, Caused by Global Warming, Has Already Begun," *New York Times*, September 3, 2016.

http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/04/science/flooding-of-coast-caused-by-global-warming-has-already-begun.html?_r=1

Robert Henson, *The Thinking Person's Guide to Climate Change*, ch. 1-3, 7. (Moodle)

Coral Davenport and Campbell Robertson, "Resettling the First American 'Climate Refugees,'" *New York Times*, May 2, 2016.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/03/us/resettling-the-first-american-climate-refugees.html>

Document lab: Sea level rise projections

5/23 Trash, pollution, and other contemporary threats to beaches

Pilkey and Cooper, "The Plasticsphere: Trash on the Beach," and "The End is Here" in *The Last Beach*, 95-106, 175-198. (Moodle)

"Santa Monica's new back-to-nature beach project has drawn the attention of rare birds. But can beach-goers let them live in peace?" *Los Angeles Times*, May 10, 2017.
<http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-santa-monica-beach-20170510-story.html>

Santa Monica Beach Restoration Pilot Project website:

<http://www.santamonicabay.org/explore/beaches-dunes-bluffs/beach-restoration/santa-monica-beach-restoration-pilot/>

Read about this project as an example of "soft" shore protection.

Final journal entry due

5/24 Study day

5/25 Second essay due