

UNST 124g fall 2011

niche construction on the North American prairie

1 introduction

Here you are asked to write an expository essay. This type of essay requires you to investigate an idea, evaluate evidence, discuss the idea in light of that evidence, and come to your own novel conclusion concerning that idea in a clear and concise manner. The essay must include a clear thesis statement, body paragraphs in which evidence is presented and discussed, clear and logical transitions between paragraphs, and a conclusion that does not simply restate the thesis but reflects upon it in light of the evidence. You will rely on primary and additional sources to support your analysis. These must of course be cited correctly, using APA style.

You are required to produce a full draft of your essay for review in mentor session February 15th.

2 assignment

Rowley-Conwy and Layton (2011) assert that “[t]he modern farming environment or ‘artificial steppe’ is perhaps the ultimate form of niche construction by humans.” The first chapters of *The Worst Hard Time* (Egan, 2006) review the transformation of the high plains from an older prairie condition to a different, agricultural prairie condition. How do the present-day ecosystems of the southern high plains reflect human niche construction? Be sure to think about the pre-20th century history of the north American prairie (for example, Mann (2002)).

3 references

Egan, T. (2006). *The Worst Hard Time: The Untold Story of Those Who Survived the Great American Dust Bowl*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Mann, Charles. (2002, March). 1491. *Atlantic Monthly*, 41-53. Retrieved from <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2002/03/1491/2445>.

Rowley-Conwy, P. and Layton, R. (2011). Foraging and farming as niche construction: stable and unstable adaptations. *Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B*, 366, 849-862.