For the final paper, students should select a topic question that relates to the historical development of technological systems within an environmental context.

One example of this would be to write an industrial history of your hometown. Although many students feel that their town has no industrial history, they soon discover that their town has been strongly shaped by efforts to commandeer water sources (where does the water come from?), land for farming or housing (flat or hilly? Dry or swampy?), materials for building (what is available? Stone? Wood? Clay?), electrification (when was the town electrified and what local circumstances made this an important innovation?) sewer and garbage service (where is it, and why?) and so on.

An industrial history of a town would consider all these things as well as the geography of the town (why is there a town on this spot?); transportation (what are the main roads, railways, waterways, etc that link this town to other places? Why is it linked to some places but not others? Were the links designed to facilitate leisure travel, business, agricultural marketing, or what?)

Finally, such a history would consider how the town makes its living – what kinds of businesses it supports, and how that has changed over time? How have those businesses reflected the peculiarly local resources, constraints, and opportunities? How is this town unique?

Students could also choose to write about an environmental or agricultural topic that includes a technological or industrial component that interests them. Some possibilities include:
• The history of a nature park – could be Yosemite, but could also be a small local or regional park. The latter has more potential for finding primary documents
• The decline or increase of a particular agricultural crop or animal – why did an area stop producing apples, or chickens, or wheat? How did this relate to land use patterns over time?
• Changing regulatory climate – how have rules governing, e.g., pheasant hunting, or trout fishing, changed, and why?
• Changes in zoning – how have zoning rules changed, and/or how has zoning helped to preserve or destroy certain kinds of landscapes?

Papers must be 10-12 pages in length, must use footnotes or endnotes following a standard style manual (e.g. Chicago Manual of Style).

Students MUST use a minimum of five primary source documents; more is better. A primary source is a writing from the time and people under discussion including newspaper and magazine articles about some event or person, personal correspondence, reports and memos, textbooks, photographs and maps, etc. A primary source is NOT writing that comes from a later historian or critic; that is, a primary source is not filtered through someone else; it originates in the story itself.

Students must let me know what their paper idea is by the designated date; we will work together to develop both the primary and the secondary source materials.