

<http://ecovisualculture.wordpress.com/>

Landscape, Visual Culture and Ecology

LCS 375

Earth, soil, dirt, property, view, landscape: our language belies the many associations we have with land. Rural land has been invested with mythic presence and has seemed to promise authentic, immediate experience to the viewer ever since the Renaissance. In our current moment of ecological crisis, studying the visual culture of landscape and ecology has become ever more pertinent. This course offers critical and historical background to our present ecological condition and offers models of hope and change. We will chart a trajectory of landscape and modern experience that will examine the place of landscape, nature and human subjectivity in Western art up to the present day. Traditional theories of the picturesque, sublime, pastoral, and beautiful as well as recent cultural studies of tourism, nostalgia, nationalism, gender and ecological awareness will inform a critical examination of landscape as a wide genre: from academic painting to performance and land-based contemporary environmental art.

Course Goals:

- Explore key themes in modern and contemporary art practice to make connections between past and present attitudes to nature.
- Engage in interdisciplinary learning through processes of critical analysis, careful looking and deliberate description.
- Strengthen writing and presentation skills for the expression of critical and creative inquiry.
- Develop a formal and critical vocabulary relevant to the history of landscape representation.
- Describe our ecological connections to the world around us through careful and mindful attention.
- Create using conceptual art processes and work collaboratively.

Learning Outcomes / Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Employ a range of critical methods, conceptual models and theoretical approaches to landscape representation and ecological art.
- Interpret, analyze, historicize and critique landscape and ecological art in appropriate terminology, in order to describe its production of attitudes, meanings and social messages.
- Compare cultural meanings of “nature,” “ecology” and “landscape.”
- **Degree Fulfillment:** This course is a *300-level* elective in the LCS major, minor and concentration. It is an analytical/theoretical course for the Creative and Applied Arts Concentration.
- **Course Requirements:** The student bears all responsibility for announcements, assignments or materials covered in his or her absence. All requirements must be met in order to pass the course. Other than the preparation of readings for class, these include: attendance, blogging and well-informed in-class participation (20%) three short essays (15%); midterm (20%); presentation and polished write-up (20%); final take-home exam (25%).

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Ongoing **Micro-landscape** project. You will choose a place for intense ecological attentiveness. During the course of the semester you will make frequent visits to note its changes from September into December. There are no special requirements for your choice: it may be a built environment, a natural space, a park, garden, abandoned corner or lot, or a crevice in a stone wall. Best is a spot close to your everyday travels that you have passed for some time without paying much regard to its ecological changes. The area can be as small as a concrete planter by a take-out restaurant or as large as a tree and its environs. Attention should be paid to human influence and neglect, nonhuman forces (weather, sunlight, microclimates, pollution, decay, gentrification), and the animal or plant life that visits or inhabits it. Over the course of the semester, at least every other week, you will submit your observations for your micro-landscape for the blog page. A synthesis of your observations will form part of the final exam.

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In scheduled **presentations** (always on a Tuesday), each student will be responsible for introducing **one image** related to the week's themes using the readings assigned for that week in addition to creatively collecting together other sources in order to synthesize knowledge about it. It is suggested that you work with Prof. Coughlin and/or Maura Keating, using the reserve shelf for this course, academic databases and wider public searches.

--Each student will work to "read" an image, using the readings assigned for that week. You will choose an image type or theme (or artist) from a list I will provide, find strong comparative images to work with, and use the readings to discuss the images.

--This assignment requires each student to practice critical reading and visual creativity. Importantly, this is practice in preparing and delivering strong, **visually compelling**, oral presentations. You must think about ways of involving your audience, connecting to previous discussions and opening up discussion (i.e. not a final slide that reads "Questions?").

-- Read all of the assigned articles, book chapters, etc. carefully for your week. You will be expected to understand and convey their basic meanings. Know when they were written and where it was originally published. Check pronunciation of unfamiliar words and names. Use the name of the author of the particular essays you are discussing (know how to pronounce names and know genders of authors). Consult Prof. Coughlin in advance of your presentation (optional), i.e. NOT at the last minute.

--**Prepare a visually intelligent presentation** and email it **the night before** you present to mcoughli@bryant.edu, formatted in powerpoint or keynote.

-- Be very wary about using **clip art**. For your slides, **Use a neutral gray or black background. No preformatted templates** with silly light beams, wavy designs, etc. These are designed to make boring statistics look interesting. Your images are the focus, and they should stand on their own.

--Do not simply read from your notes but be prepared. This is not a summary or a "book report": you need to approach this project critically and creatively. **No boring bulletpoints**. Consider your use of images and text carefully: make your point visually. You can make a short video or take photographs to make your point. Use original photography, art, pop culture, embedded video, etc. Search ArtStor for images (get there via blackboard). No need to dress up in a tie or suit or heels **but be creative with your images**.

--Your images should work strategically as you apply them to your argument to demonstrate key issues from the reading.

--Before you finalize your presentation, ask yourself **why** you chose those particular images. What were their original sources (painting, film, video, analog photograph, ad, print, stock photo, poster, digital image?)

--Do they merely *illustrate* an author's appearance? Was an image just the first thing that came up in a keyword search? If this is the case, rethink it.

--Make sure the images are of a good projection quality (over 100k) and not distorted.

--If you do not show up on the scheduled day of your presentation, you will lose half of the credit for the assignment. You will not be reminded of the date you have chosen.

--Your initial presentation may be reconsidered, edited, remixed, etc., including video links and other digital resources. Once you have edited your final version, email the text of it to mcoughli@bryant.edu in a word doc. This write up must include: a correct MLA citation of the readings that you reference, your name and the date of the presentation. It must be proofread for grammar, syntax and spelling. Also send your images as jpg attachments so that I can insert them to the blog. Do not send the images in a word document or in a pdf as it is time consuming to extract them. It is **due one week after you present** and it will be posted on the class blog < <http://ecovisualculture.wordpress.com/>> where it will become part of an ongoing conversation with your classmates.

--Be creative by enriching your presentation with digital resources: links, embedded videos, comparisons, parodies, hi definition images from google art project, video links.

--On the blog, you should be reading, and commenting on your classmates' work. I will post the most interesting highlights from students' work. Comments count toward **participation**, but insincere or inappropriate comments will not be posted. Should it happen, plagiarized work will dramatically lower your grade. You will receive a zero for the assignment and it will erode, if not demolish, your participation credit.

Weekly Reading Assignments are listed beneath the meeting date of each class. You are expected to have read these pages prior to the week's class. The texts complement -- but do not necessarily repeat-- information from the lectures. Expect to spend at least three hours per week on the reading. The texts are brief but often dense. Spend time absorbing the argument and bring your questions to class. Working on reading difficult texts is a crucial part of the course.

Taking notes in class: This is one of the best ways to do well on the graded work for this class. Many of the images that we discuss in class will come up on the tests. I do not post my lecture notes on line, but I do provide the images from each class. These do not include notes: that is your job. Neither these digital images nor the texts are substitutes for attending class. I will not summarize missed classes for students. Catching up on what you miss is your responsibility. The syllabus and any significant materials and/or websites will be available at the course's blackboard site.

Your actions are the key to **success in this class** (aka how to get an A)

- 1.) coming to class having completed the assigned readings
- 2.) maintaining a curious and engaged attitude in class
- 3.) taking careful notes in class and from the readings
- 4.) planning ahead and engaging with the process of writing.

Required Materials (*copies are on reserve at the library*)

Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (2004)

Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art* (2000)

Amanda Boetzkes, *Ethics of Earth Art* (2010) optional (inexpensive and useful for projects)

All other readings will be available on Blackboard. The list may be modified later in the semester.

CLASS SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

Sept 2/4 **Week 1: Overview: Nature / Culture**

Andrews, chapters 1-2

Garrard Ch. 1-3 "Beginnings: Pollution"; "Positions" and "Pastoral"

As you read, make a list of key terms in these chapters. Bring book to class. Pick out examples of good writing or sentences you do not understand.

By next week, you need to SELECT AND PHOTOGRAPH your Micro-landscape.

Sept 9/ 11 **Week 2: Framing the Landscape: Pastoral, rustic, sublime, primitive**

Andrews, chapters 3-5

Garrard Ch. 6 "Wilderness"

Novak, *Nature and Culture, American landscape and painting, 1825-1875* (1980) excerpt pdf.

Pohl, *Framing America: A Social History Of American Art.* pdfs.

Spirn, *Language of Landscape*, intro, pdf.

Dean and Millar, *Art Works : Place* (intro), pdf

Sign up for ARTSTOR. Bring laptops Tuesday.

- **Due Tues Sept 16th** Short blog essay #1: **PLACE**. Describe an actual place that is important to you (different from your micro-landscape) and consider the following in your description: Why are you attached to this landscape? What does it say about you/ how have you been affected by it? Is this a place that has been the subject of representation by you or other artists? Do tourists visit it? Is it a unique kind of place? How does your favorite landscape relate to the various landscape representations that Andrews and our other authors discuss? **Use and cite the readings as tools** (or comparisons) to make your argument and to demonstrate your familiarity with them. Selections from the short papers will be posted on the blog by Prof. Coughlin.

Sept 16/18 **Week 3: Selling the View: Tourism's Visual Consumption of Land and Seascapes**

Herbert, *Monet on the Normandy Coast: Tourism and Painting 1867-1886.* (1994) pdf

Carson, *The Edge of the Sea.* pdf.

Rose, "Looking at landscape: The uneasy pleasures of power" pdf

Gillis, *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History.* (2012) pdf.

Sept 23 / 25 **Week 4: Centers, Peripheries, Margins, Outskirts, Suburbs, Wastelands**

Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West* chapters 2, 4, pdf.

Deutsch, "Uneven development: the spaces of public art in New York City," pdf

Spirn, *Daring to Look : Dorothea Lange's Photographs and Reports from the Field* pdf

Dean and Millar, *Art Works : Place, 'Urban'* pdf

Short Blog Essay #2 BINARIES. In what kinds of places do the categories of urban and rural break down? In other words where does 'nature' invade or punctuate the urban? (Where does the city crop up in the rural world? What form does it take?) Are these spaces interesting / ugly / awkward/ unusual / unrepresentable / unstable? What causes you to make these aesthetic judgments? How do these places fit within the culture that produced them? Use examples of actual places and your own experiences and observations of them OR represented landscapes from the reading.

Sept 30 / Oct 2 **Week 5 Place, Nostalgia, and Modern Nationalism**

Udall, Carr, O'Keeffe, Kahlo: *Places of Their Own* (2000). Excerpt. pdf
Silverman "Van Gogh's Sower and Gauguin's *Vision after the Sermon*" pdf
Heaney, "The Sense of Place," in *Preoccupations* (1980) pdf
Roth, "Returning to Nostalgia" *Home and its Dislocations in 19th-century France*. pdf

Oct 7/9 **Week 6 Site Specific & Conceptual Landscapes of 60s and 70s**

Andrews, chapter 9
Art in the Land : A Critical Anthology of Environmental Art. Ed. Sonfist (1983) pdf.
Beardsley, "Earthworks: the Landscape after Modernism" 110-117. pdf
Boettger. *Earthworks : art and the landscape of the sixties* (2002) pdf.
Coughlin "Landed" Book review. pdf
Video Clip: Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*

Review for midterm TBA this week.

Oct 14 **Week 7 Midterm** (no class Thursday)

The midterm will consist of identification and comparison of images and essays.
A study guide will be handed out in advance with a list of images and themes.

Oct 21 / 23 **Week 8 ECOFEMINISM and Maintenance art**

Introduction to Boetzkes, *Ethics of Earth Art*
Andrews ch. 7 "Landscape and politics"
Ortner, "Is female to male as nature is to culture?" (1974) pdf
"Manifesto for Maintenance: A Conversation With Mierle Laderman Ukeles" pdf
Wertheim, "After the Revolution, Who's Going to Pick up the Garbage?" pdf
Blocker "Ana Mendieta and the Politics of the Venus Negra." pdf
Film clips from Agnes Varda, *The Gleaners and I* (2001)
Cheryll Glotfelty "What is Ecocriticism?" link

Oct 28 / 30 **Week 9 Waste, Beauty and Disgust**

Scarry, *On Beauty*. excerpt.
Smithson, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic New Jersey" (1967) link
Coughlin, "Inevitable Grottoes: Modern Painting and Wasted Space" (2009) pdf
Cohen *Filth*, introduction, pdf
"Visualizing Waste: Klaus Pichler's Gorgeous, Rotting Food" link
Batchelor, *Chromophobia* excerpt. Pdf.

Short Blog Essay # 3 WASTE. After completing this week's readings, watch at least two of the following films (streaming links or DVDs). Write an approx 1000 word essay that compares the films' visual treatment of the themes of beauty, waste, entropy and disgust. Use concepts from the readings as critical tools. A detailed assignment will be handed out for this essay.

Plastic Shores, (2011) web link.

Thomas Riedelsheimer, Andy Goldsworthy, *Rivers & Tides* (2001) (streams on amazon prime)

Vic Muniz, *Wasteland* (2010) (Netflix)

Nov 4/ 6 **Week 10 Human / Non-human Networks**

Garrard, Chapter 6, "Dwelling" Ch. 7 "Animals."
Berger *On Looking*, and *Another Way of Telling*. pdfs.
Bennett "The Agency of Assemblages" pdf
Morton, *The Ecological Thought*, 1-20.

Nov 11 /13 **Week 11 Global Capitalism / Eco-DISASTER**

Dean and Millar, "Heterotopias and Non-Places" pdf
Sekula, "Fish Story" pdf
Garrard, Chapter 5 "Apocalypse"
Morton, "The End of the World" from *Hyperobjects* (2013) pdf
Solnit, *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster*, pdf.
TED Talk: Camille Seaman, *The Last Iceberg*

Nov 18/ 20 **Week 12 Art and Community Activism**

Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (1997) excerpt.
Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context*, excerpt.
Thompson, *Living as Form: Socially Engaged Art from 1991-2011*, selections
Stimson and Sholette, *Collectivism After Modernism* (intro) pdf
Boettger "Good Works: The Impetus of Ethics" (2013)

Nov 25 / **Week 13 Interventions**

In the last weeks of the semester we will workshop critical writings and concepts for eco-art interventions, using some of the following readings and others that will be added to blackboard. This will be a culmination of the semester's writing and discussions. The polished pieces will be part of the final exam grade and will be posted on the blog.

Meyer, "Situating Modern Landscape Architecture" (1992)
Lippard *The Lure of the Local: Senses of place in a multicentered society* (1997) Ch. 5.
Kwon, "The (Un)sitings of Community" (2002)
Heartney "Ecopolitics/Ecopoetry: Helen and Newton Harrison's Environmental Talking Cure" (1995)
Purves, *What We Want Is Free: Generosity And Exchange In Recent Art* (2004)
Garrard, Chapter 8 "Futures: The Earth"

Dec 2/4 **Week 14** **Radical Hope / Agency and Interventions**

- Dec. 2 Presentations and discussion.
- Dec. 4 Writing workshop in library seminar room.

Dec 9/ 11 **Week 15** **Radical Hope / Agency and Interventions**

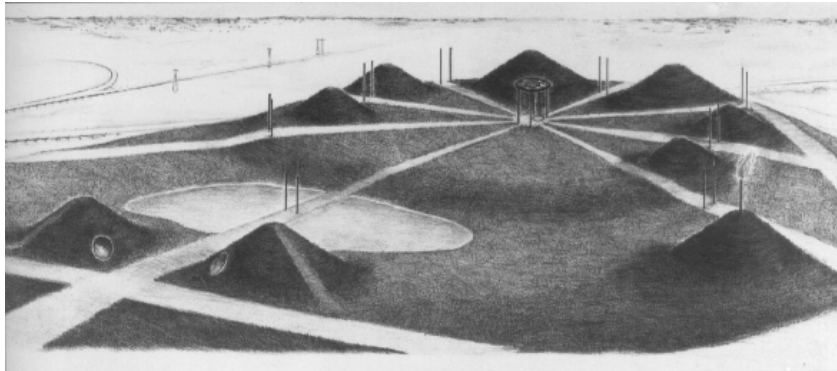
- Dec 9 Writing workshop in library seminar room.
- Dec. 11 Discussion and review in the classroom.

Final Exam due **Saturday, Dec 13, 2014** 10:00 am to 12:30 pm

A synthesis of your micro-landscape project will be handed in as a portion of the final.

Grading Scale:

A:	93-100	C+:	78-79
A-:	90-92	C:	73-77
B+:	88-89	C-:	70-72
B:	83-87	D+:	68-69
B-:	80-82	D:	60-67
		F:	Below 60



Nancy Holt, *Sky Mound Rendering: Sun-viewing area with pond and star-viewing mounds*, 1985. Graphite on paper, 23 1/2 x 47 1/2 inches.