

ARTH758
NATURE, CULTURE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT: AMERICAN LANDSCAPE AND PAINTING, 1825-1875
UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND— SPRING 2010
PROFESSOR RENÉE ATER
MONDAY, 3:00-5:40 PM



George Inness, *The Lackawanna Valley*, c. 1856, oil on canvas, 33 7/8 x 50 3/16 in., National Gallery of Art

This graduate seminar introduces students to major issues related to American landscape and painting by exploring the scholarship of Rebecca Bedell, Albert Boime, Angela Miller, Barbara Novak, and William Truettner. We will examine the concept of nineteenth-century American landscape and painting through the lens of nature, culture, and the environment and consider the ways in which the interpretation of the American landscape and painting has shifted over time. We also will read selected texts that address the environment, technology, and notions of American wilderness during the nineteenth century including the work of William Cronon, Leo Marx, Roderick Nash, and Ted Steinberg. The seminar is reading-intensive—often with 300 pages of reading per week—so keeping up with assignments and participating in class discussions is an essential requirement.

Last semester, I asked my undergraduate students to write a paper on American landscape painting and the issue of sustainability, defined as the ability to provide for the needs of the current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs. They selected a painting they could see first hand from either the National Gallery of Art or SAAM. For the assignment, they wrote a visual analysis and had to consider the following question: How were artists of the nineteenth century concerned with or indifferent to environmental issues and what we now call sustainability? My interest in sustainability is a personal concern related to the difficult environmental issues we face living in the early twenty-first century and a professional interest connected to how to teach sustainability as a concept pertinent to the history of art. In May 2009, I participated in the Chesapeake Project: Integrating Sustainability Across the Curriculum. The Chesapeake Project is “a learning community of University of Maryland faculty who are finding unique ways of teaching about sustainability across

the disciplines to prepare students to find solutions to the world's most challenging problems." I hope that this graduate seminar will continue the conversation that began in the fall.

One mandatory trip is planned as part of the seminar. We will visit the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia to view the exhibition, *Public Treasures/Private Visions: Hudson River School Masterworks from the Metropolitan Museum of Art and Private Collections*. We will discuss the possibilities of a trip to the New York Historical Society in New York City to see *Nature and the American Vision: The Hudson River School at the New-York Historical Society*.

OFFICE LOCATION

My office is located in the Art/Sociology Building on the 4th floor, Room 4216.

OFFICE HOURS

I have office hours on Tuesday from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm and by appointment. I will be on campus Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays.

TELEPHONE AND EMAIL

You can reach me through email at rater@umd.edu. My office number is 301-405-1490, although I only check voice mail when I am on campus.

I. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Class participation

Class participation is essential for the success of the seminar. Every student in the class is responsible for completing the week's reading assignment before the class meeting. Although individual students will be assigned to lead discussion of selected texts, everyone in the class will participate in discussion. Please come prepared with questions/responses/ideas regarding the week's readings. In addition to the readings on reserve in the Art Library, other readings may be assigned through the semester.

B. Discussion leader

Each week, one member of the seminar will be assigned to lead class discussion. The discussion leader is required to guide a discussion of the readings and issues related to the topic of the day. Please provide a list of pertinent questions and circulate these the day before class (Sunday evening). The discussion leader should provide background information on the author(s) and also prepare a PowerPoint presentation as a way of leading discussion.

C. Presentation with abstract and bibliography

Each student is required to present a paper that is 25 minutes in length (12 pages). I will hand out a full description of the research paper on February 8. You must have your paper topic selected by **March 8**.

All students must submit to me an *abstract* and *one-page bibliography* of their topic by **April 5**. I will disseminate the abstracts to seminar participants via ELMS/Blackboard.

The presentation is **not** your final paper. In your presentation, you may choose to address a single point or a few points that your paper will expand upon. The presentation is governed by the necessity to engage your audience with visual material and your written paper is not under the same constraints. In short, while your presentation treats the same material that your final paper does, the presentation is not the same medium of expression, and it should therefore be treated independently, so far as its form is concerned.

D. Research paper

Each student will write a research paper (25 pages) that expands on your presentation. The written paper must incorporate any critique or suggestions from the professor or seminar participants. Papers are due on **May 17**.

II. COURSE GRADES

Class participation and discussion leader: 20%

Presentation: 30%

Final Paper: 50%

A. Evaluation Criteria for Presentation

Presentations will be evaluated on the following criteria: the quality of the abstract; the strength and persuasiveness of your argument; the cogency and clarity of your delivery; the relevance of your illustrations; and your response to the questions your presentation raises.

B. Evaluation Criteria for Written Paper

Written papers will be evaluated on the following criteria: the thesis; the strength and persuasiveness of the argument; the choice of sources and their use; your contribution to the problem; and the organization of the paper as a whole, its correct documentation, and other aspects of good scholarly writing.

III. COURSE TEXTS

All books for the course are on reserve in the Art Library. Articles can be accessed through the course reserve list in ELMS or in the database JSTOR. **Note:** We will read approximately 300 pages per week—most of the readings are straightforward. A few are more difficult. Please plan accordingly so that our discussions will be fruitful.

You may want to purchase the following texts:

- ♦ Novak, Barbara. *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825-1875*. 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. (\$32.00)
 - ♦ Bedell, Rebecca. *The Anatomy of Nature: Geology and American Landscape Painting, 1825-1875*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. (\$45.00)
 - ♦ Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. 1964, Reprint. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. (\$13.00)
 - ♦ Steinberg, Ted. *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. (\$35.00)
 - ♦ Turner, Frederick Jackson Turner. *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. 1893. Reprint. London: Penguin Books—Great Ideas, 2008. (\$10.00)
-
-

IV. COURSE SYLLABUS

Week 1: February 1

Introduction

Reading:

- ♦ Andrews, Malcolm. *Landscape and Western Art*. (Oxford History of Art). Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
-

Week 2: February 8

SNOW DAY—No Class

Week 3: February 15

The Idea of "God in Nature"

Reading:

- ♦ Novak, Barbara. *Nature and Culture: American Landscape and Painting, 1825-1875*. 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
 - ♦ Nash, Roderick Frazier. *Wilderness and the American Mind*. 4th edition. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. pages 1-95.
-

Week 4: February 22

The Pastoral Ideal and Technology

Class Reading:

- ♦ Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. 1964, Reprint. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. pages 3-226.
 - ♦ Wallach, Alan. "Thomas Cole's *River in the Catskills* as Antipastoral." *Art Bulletin* 84, no. 2 (June, 2002): 334-50. (JSTOR)
 - ♦ Cikovsky, Nicolai, Jr. "George Inness and the Hudson River School: *The Lackawanna Valley*." *American Art Journal* 2, no. 2 (Autumn, 1970): 36-57. (JSTOR)
-

Week 5: March 1

The Scenic Panorama and Manifest Destiny

Class Reading:

- ♦ Boime, Albert. *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting, c. 1830-1865*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.
 - ♦ Steinberg, Ted. *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. pages 3-71 and 116-169.
-

Week 6: March 8
Landscape and the Formation of American Cultural Identity

Class Reading:

- ♦ Miller, Angela. *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993.
 - ♦ Lewis, Peirce F. Lewis. "The Northeast and the Making of American Geographical Habits." In *The Making of the American Landscape*, edited by Michael P. Conzen. New York: Routledge, 1994. pages 80-103. (PDF)
-

Week 7: Spring Break, March 15-19

Week 8: March 22
The Alliance Between Geology and Landscape Painting

Class Reading:

- ♦ Bedell, Rebecca. *The Anatomy of Nature: Geology and American Landscape Painting, 1825-1875*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
 - ♦ Hallam, Anthony. *Great Geological Controversies*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. (TBA)
-

Week 9: March 29
Tourism and the Catskills

Class Reading:

- ♦ Meyers, Kenneth. *The Catskills: Painters, Writers, and Tourists in the Mountains, 1820-1895*. Yonkers, NY: The Hudson River Museum of Westchester, 1987.
 - ♦ Stradling, David. *Making Mountains: New York City and the Catskills*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007. pages. 1-108.
 - ♦ Wallach, Alan. "Making a Picture of the View from Mount Holyoke." In *American Iconology: New Approaches to Nineteenth-Century Art and Literature*, edited by David C. Miller. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993. pages 80-91. (PDF)
-

Week 10: April 5
Discovery, Erasure, Invention: Landscape and the American West

Class Reading:

- ♦ Prown, Jules David, et al. *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West*. New Haven and London: Yale University Art Gallery, 1992.
 - ♦ Turner, Frederick Jackson. *The Significance of the Frontier in American History*. 1893. Reprint. London: Penguin Books—Great Ideas, 2008.
 - ♦ Cronon, William, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, "Becoming West: Toward a New Meaning for Western History." In *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*, edited by William Cronon. New York: W. W. Norton, 1992. pages 3-27. (PDF)
-

Week 11: April 12
Picturing Progress and Westward Expansion

Class Reading:

- ♦ Truettner, William H., ed. *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991.
 - ♦ Cronon, William. "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." In *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, edited by William Cronon. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996. pages 69-90. (PDF)
 - ♦ Limerick, Patricia. *Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1987. pages 17-32. (PDF)
-

Week 12: April 19
Presentations (2)

Week 13: April 26
Presentation (2)

Week 14: May 3
Presentations (2)

Week 15: May 10
Presentation (1)

Presentation and Research Paper

For the presentation and research paper, you are to select a 19th-century painting or work on paper of a landscape familiar to you and whose title indicates that the scene is a specific location. Please pick an artwork that you can visit and see in person at a museum, historical society, or house museum. You must choose a landscape depicting a view of Maryland, Virginia, or Washington, DC. You must physically go to this location to witness the scene. If you wish, you may write about a place you know well from your home or travels in the United States, however, you must revisit this place for the research paper.

Based on our readings from the semester, you are to consider how the artist presented your particular scene and how this place came to have the shape, qualities, and associations it has today. You should think of this paper as an exercise in art historical, geographical, and environmental interpretations. Your paper is about careful visual analysis and interpretation, historical research, and "reading" a physical landscape.

Besides the collections of the National Gallery of Art, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Corcoran Gallery of Art, you may want to check out art work at the National Museum of American History, the Historical Society of Washington, DC, the Maryland Historical Society, the Virginia Historical Society, local historical houses, or a museum from your home town. For example, the Maryland Historical Society has a website with a digital collection of their painting collection.

http://www.marylandartsource.org/collections/collection_index_00000001.html

Be sure to examine archival documents, old photographs, and maps in relation to your landscape and painting or work on paper. The Library of Congress, ArchivesUM and Special Collections at the University of Maryland, and the National Archives will be invaluable resources for your project.

The Library of Congress's American Memory website has an extensive collection of photographs, brochures, and early histories related to this area titled "The Capital and the Bay: Narratives of Washington and the Chesapeake Bay Region, ca. 1600-1925."

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/lhcbhtml/lhcbhome.html>

The Library of Congress's American Memory website is a wonderful source of digital documents: it also has a collection of panoramic maps from 1847-1929, panoramic photographs from 1851-1991, and American environmental photographs, 1891-1936.

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/pmhtml/panhome.html>
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/panoramic_photo/
<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/collections/ecology/>

In the Special Collections of the University of Maryland, you will find The Maryland Map Collection, a collection of over 2,500 maps depicting Maryland, the Chesapeake Bay, and the surrounding region. Special Collections also houses the National Trust Library Historic Postcard Collection.

<http://www.lib.umd.edu/sapps/mdmap/>
<http://www.lib.umd.edu/digital/ntlpostcards.jsp>

Reading to consider besides your research

William Cronon, "Kennecott Journey: The Paths Out of Town," in *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*, edited by William Cronon, George Miles, Jay Gitlin (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1992), 28-51.

Nora J. Mitchell, "Considering the Authenticity of Cultural Landscapes." *Association for Preservation Technology International (APT) Bulletin*, 39, no. 2/3 (2008): 25-31.

NOTE: This project is influenced by the teaching and scholarship of Professor William Cronon. He teaches an undergraduate and graduate course on American environmental history at the University of Wisconsin and has his students write a "place paper." His lectures for the undergraduate course are available through his website and may be useful to you. <http://www.williamcronon.net/courses/460.htm>

ARTH758**Course Reserves**

Bedell, Rebecca. *The Anatomy of Nature: Geology and American Landscape Painting, 1825-1875*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. ND1351.5.B43 2001

Boime, Albert. *The Magisterial Gaze: Manifest Destiny and American Landscape Painting, c. 1830-1865*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991. ND1351.5.B65 1991

Cikovsky, Nicolai, Jr. "George Inness and the Hudson River School: the Lackawanna Valley." *American Art Journal* 2, no. 2 (1970): 36-57. PDF

Cikovsky, Nicolai. "The Ravages of the Axe: The Meaning of the Tree Stump in Nineteenth-Century American Art." *Art Bulletin* 61, 4 (December, 1979): 611-626. PDF

Conzen, Michael, ed. *The Making of the American Landscape*. New York: Routledge, 1994. GF501.M35 1990

Cronon, William. *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England*. 20th Anniversary Edition. New York: Hill and Wang, 2003. GF504.N45 C76 1983

Cronon, William, George Miles, and Jay Gitlin, editors. *Under an Open Sky: Rethinking America's Western Past*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1992. F591.U53 1992

Cronon, William, ed. *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1996. GE195.U53 1995

Davidson, Gail. *Frederic Church, Winslow Homer, Thomas Moran: Tourism and the American Landscape*. New York: Bulfinch Press, 2006. N8214.5.U6 F74 2006 Folio

Davis, John. *The Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. N8214.5.I75 D38 1996

Doezema, Marianne and Elizabeth Milroy, eds. *Reading American Art*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998. N6505.R4 1998

Hallam, Anthony. *Great Geological Controversies*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989. QE11.H35 1989

Harvey, Eleanor Jones. *The Painted Sketch: American Impressions from Nature, 1830-1880*. Dallas: Dallas Museum of Art in Association with H. N. Abrams, 1998. ND1351.5.H27 1998 Folio

Howat, John K. *American Paradise: The World of the Hudson River School*. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987. ND1351.5.A49 1987 Folio

Marx, Leo. *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*. 2000, Reprint. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964. E169.1.M35 2000

McCoubrey, John W. *American Art, 1700-1960: Sources and Documents*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1965. N6505.M26 1965

Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery," pp. 98-110.

Asher B. Durand, "Letters on Landscape Painting," pp. 110-115

McKibben, Bill, ed. *American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau*. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 2008. PS169.E25 A44 2008

- McGrath, Robert L. "The Tree and the Stump: Hieroglyphics of the Sacred Forest." *Journal of Forest History* 33, no. 3 (January, 1989): 60-69. PDF
- McShine, Kynaston, ed. *The Natural Paradise: Painting in America, 1800-1950*. New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1976. ND1351.5.N48 1976
- Meyers, Kenneth. *The Catskills: Painters, Writers, and Tourists in the Mountains, 1820-1895*. Yonkers, NY: The Hudson River Museum of Westchester, 1987. NX510.N46 M94 1988
- Miller, Angela. *The Empire of the Eye: Landscape Representation and American Cultural Politics, 1825-1875*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993. ND1351.5.M53 1993
- Mills, Stephen. *The American Landscape*. Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997. E169.12.M546 1997
- Nash, Roderick Frazier. *Wilderness and the American Mind*. 4th edition. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001. E169.1.N37 2001
- Novak, Barbara. *American Painting of the Nineteenth Century: Realism, Idealism, and the American Experience*. 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. ND210.N68 2007
- _____. *Nature and Culture: American Landscape Painting, 1825-1875*. 3rd edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007. ND1351.5.N68 2007
- Prown, Jules David, et al. *Discovered Lands, Invented Pasts: Transforming Visions of the American West*. New Haven and London: Yale University Art Gallery, 1992. N8214.5.U6D57 1992
- Rainey, Sue. *Creating Picturesque America: Monument to the Natural and Cultural Landscape*. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1994. E168.R135 1994
- Schneider, Richard J. *Thoreau's Sense of Place: Essays in American Environmental Writing*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2000. PS3057.N3 T46 2000
- Simpson, John Warfield. *Visions of Paradise: Glimpses of Our Landscape's Legacy*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999. GF504.W35 S56 1999
- Steinberg, Ted. *Down to Earth: Nature's Role in American History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. GF27.S85 2002
- Stradling, David. *Making Mountains: New York City and the Catskills*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007. F127.C3 S77 2007
- Truettner, William H., ed. *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier, 1820-1920*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991. F596.W493 1991
- Wallach, Alan. "Thomas Cole's River in the Catskills as Antipastoral." *Art Bulletin* 84, no. 2 (June, 2002): 334-50. PDF
- Warren, Louis S. *American Environmental History*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003. GF503.A445 2003
- Wilmerding, John. *American Light: The Luminist Movement, 1850-1875*. Princeton: Princeton University Press; Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1989. ND1351.5.A46
- Wilton, Andrew and Tim Barringer. *American Sublime: Landscape Painting in the United States, 1820-1880*. ND1351.5.W55 2002 Folio

Worster, Donald. *Nature's Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. QH540.8.W67 1994