

LA 421/521

Landscape Photography and Environmental Perception

4:00– 5:50 pm TUTH Lillis 182 CRN 18172 (LA 421) 18173 (LA 521) 4 Credits

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University of Oregon – Landscape Architecture – Fall 2013



Ansel Adams, Tetons and the Snake River, 1942, gelatin silver print, 16"x20".



Peter Goin, Helms Gravel Pit, Sparks, Nevada, 1990, chromogenic print, 16" X 20".

This course explores the major movements in Landscape Photography through the lens of cultural perceptions and policies about landscape and environment. From the Survey Photographers (1880-90's), Pictorialists and the Photo-Secession to the New Topographic (1970's) and Altered Landscape (1990's) photographers of the West, all express, reflect and reinforce values and perceptions about landscape, nature and environment.

The course will emphasize the interrelationship between cultural valuation of landscape/nature and how trends in the photographic representation of landscape reinforce, and at times produce these perceptions. The American West will serve as a case study, with landscape photographs from across North America, Asia and Europe contextualizing the discussion.

Soon after the birth and early development of photography (mid to late 1800's), landscapes, especially the American West, were photographed to portray the sublime, different and fantastic. Like explorers in new terrains, photographers collected the extraordinary and different, bringing these photos home to share with an image hungry populace. These photographs shaped the way landscapes were perceived and valued at the time.

As resources become obviously depleted and human populations explode, ideas of stewardship and conservation start to take hold, shifting the photographic representation of landscape from the sublime, to the beautiful and precious. Starting with Ansel Adams and codified by the use of photography by the Sierra Club, the wildlands of the West become places of beauty that are precious, edenic and in need of protection. The middle section of the course will outline this shift and look at the implications of thinking of landscape and nature as separate from the everyday lives of people in "the city".

In the late 20th century a cooler, at times rational, eye is applied to the photographs that depict the impact of humans on the landscape. These photographs show the mundane yet at times devastating impact of growth and resource consumption. The New Topographic Movement begins a new era in landscape photography in the 1970's. Beauty becomes secondary to description of place and use. An emphasis on the interrelationship of humans in landscape is depicted. A kind of photography that returns to the visual convention of the sublime exposes the damage humans continue to do to environmental systems. The notion of environmental protection, not just conservation or stewardship, influences this new photographic

conversation. Humans and landscape are interconnected again and we see a call for change in these photographs. The final section of this course will look at the interrelationship of environmental protection, climate change and the 21st century environmental paradigm with the now “altered view” of landscape photography.

The structure of the course will be lecture based, with a set of assignments that synthesize information presented in the course. Students will engage in peer to peer discussion and critique of assignments. Also, the final assignment asks students to engage in their own photographic process out in the field.

Assignments:

Writing the Image: describing a photograph both visually but also within the cultural context in which it was made.

Contrasting the Image: taking two photos, from two different eras and comparing and contrasting formal aspects of the images in relation to their cultural contexts.

Making the Image: creating a short body of photographic work – 4-8 images that copy the style of one of the featured photographers OR exemplifies one of the environmental views presented.

Graduate students will engage in one additional self defined and proposed project that will involve an additional photographic exploration, or deeper research on one of the themes or photographers presented in class.

Readings:

Reading will be assigned from the following texts. Additional readings will be provided throughout the term.

Graduate students will also read SANDWEISS as a companion to the course. We will discuss this further in class.

American environmental history : an introduction / Carolyn Merchant
New York : Columbia University Press 2007 (MERCHANT I)

Uncommon ground : rethinking the human place in nature / William Cronon, editor
New York : W.W. Norton & Co., 1996 (CRONON)

Optional (discussed in class):

Print the Legend: Photography and the American West / Martha A Sandweiss
New Haven : Yale University Press 2002 (SANDWEISS) *Required for Graduate Students only, optional for undergrads*

The Great New Wilderness Debate / J Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson
Athens, GA : the University of Georgia Press 1998 (CALLICOTT)

Major Problems in American Environmental History / Carolyn Merchant editor
Lexington, Massachusetts : D.C. Heath and Co. 1993 (MERCHANT II)

Nature, Aesthetics, and Environmentalism: From Beauty to Duty /
Allen Carlson and Sheila Lintott editors
New York : Columbia University Press 2008 (CARLSON)

Grading:

Grading will consist of a combination of completing the three assignments and attendance and participation in class.

For Undergraduates

25% Attendance, Participation, keeping up on readings

25% Writing the Image

25% Contrasting the Image

25% Making the Image

For Graduate Students:

25% Attendance, Participation, keeping up on readings

18.75% for each of the 4 assignments (18.75% x 4 = 75%)

Policy Statement on Academic Honesty

All work submitted in this course must be your own and originally produced for this course. The use of sources (ideas, quotations, paraphrases) must be properly acknowledged and documented. Students are encouraged to work together and assist one another, but unless an assignment is specifically assigned as a team project, each student is expected to complete their own work individually. See the UO guide to avoiding plagiarism: <http://libweb.uoregon.edu/guides/plagiarism/students/>. For the consequences of academic dishonesty, refer to the Schedule of Classes published quarterly. Violations will be taken seriously and are noted on student disciplinary records. If you are in doubt as to the requirements or the nature of specific projects in this regard, please do not hesitate to contact the instructors before you complete the project/activity in question.

Information for Students with Disabilities

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. If there are learning or health considerations that may affect your ability to participate fully in this course, please meet with me as soon as possible to discuss possible accommodations. If this is a documented disability, please request that the Counselor for Students with Disabilities send a letter verifying your disability.