

LA 333

Photography and Environmental Values

4:00– 5:50 pm TUTH LA 166 CRN 16646 4 Credits

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University of Oregon • Landscape Architecture • Fall 2016



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.

This course satisfies the Arts and Letters group because it presents issues of landscape representation and valuation from multiple disciplines and from multiple points of view. This course presents research and inquiry not only from landscape architecture and landscape studies, but also geography, environmental science, history, art, political science, American Studies and cultural studies. Students will engage in deeper inquiry of this subject through multiple methods including discussion, research, essays and making photographs.

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 and 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 and essay exams 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 photographs both visually but also within the cultural context in which it was made.

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.

What is Nature? exploring the meaning of nature to you and our culture. Students will take a stance and describe their stance through both words and images.

Essay Exam:

There will be one essay exam given. This will be week 6 this year. The essay exam will ask questions about a photograph or sets of photographs that have been addressed in lectures and how they relate to environmental perception and/or policy. You will need to know the photographer, time period and its relationship to key ideas or events in environmental history.

Short Quizzes:

On occasion short Quizzes will be given in class or over Canvas. These will not be announced ahead of time.

Readings:

Reading will be assigned from the following texts.

Required:

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

Photography Changes Everything / Heiferman
New York: Aperture 2012 (HEIFERMAN)

Living Through the End of Nature : The Future of American Environmentalism / Paul Wapner
Cambridge : The MIT Press 2010 (WAPNER)

Rambunctious Garden : Saving Nature in a Post-Wild World / Emma Marris
New York : Bloomsbury 2011 (MARRIS)

Optional (discussed in class):

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

Print the Legend: Photography and the American West / Martha A Sandweiss
New Haven : Yale University Press 2002 (SANDWEISS)

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)

On Photography / Susan Sontag
New York: Picador USA 1973 (SONTAG)

Criticizing Photographs /Terry Barrett
McGraw-Hill Humanities 2011 5th Ed. (BARRETT)

Grading:

Grading will consist of a combination of grades for the two assignments, the essay exams, and attendance and participation in class.

15% Attendance, Participation, keeping up on readings
20% Essay exam One
20% Writing the Image
20% Making the Image
20% What is nature?
5% Short Quizzes

Electronic devices:

Texting, emailing and/or communicating in any way on a personal electronic device is not allowed during class time. This includes work time in class. This is an unprofessional disruption that takes away from everyone's learning experience. Chronic texting or social media use in class will result in being asked to leave.

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.

Accessible Education

The University of Oregon is working to create inclusive learning environments. Please notify me if there are aspects of the instruction or design of this course that result in disability-related barriers to your participation. You are also encouraged to contact the Accessible Education Center (formerly Disability Services) in 164 Oregon Hall at 541-346-1155 or uoaec@uoregon.edu .

About the Instructor:

Anne C Godfrey is an Instructor in Landscape Architecture and an avid photographer. As a member of the Landscape Architecture Faculty since 2004, Godfrey has created a set of courses that emphasize cross-disciplinary investigation. Though photography is at the core of her interests, she also works with contemporary drawing, psychogeography and positive psychology.

The architectural journal DesignIntelligence named Godfrey as one of the 30 Most Admired Educators of the year for 2014. Godfrey teaches introductory studios at the graduate and undergraduate level, community design studios, competition studios and drawing and photography.

With a BA in American Studies from Carleton College, and a BLA and MLA from the University of Oregon, Godfrey sees everything as interdisciplinary and open for exploration.