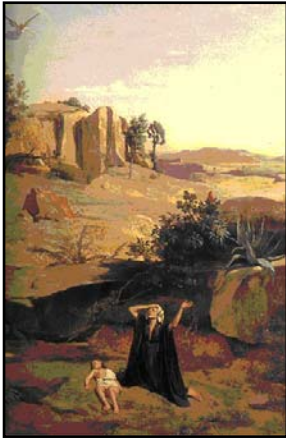
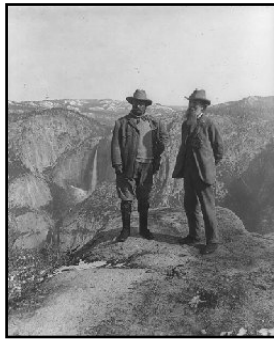


GEOG 4/562: HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY VIEWS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Prof. Peter Walker, Fall 2006, Mon/Wed 2:00-3:20 204 Chapman Hall



“It has always been part of the human experience to live in a culture of wilderness. There has been no wilderness without some kind of human presence for several hundred thousand years. Nature is not a place to visit, it is home - and within that home territory there are more familiar and less familiar places. Often these are areas that are difficult and remote, but all are known and even named.” — Gary Snyder



“To protect the nature that is all around us, we must think long and hard about the nature we carry inside our heads”—

William Cronon

Reverence...

(Roosevelt and Muir at Yosemite)

*...Contradiction
(GMC “Yukon”)*



Ideas about nature matter because they influence how we interact with the environment—whether we protect the environment, or degrade it. This course examines the ways Western (and specifically American) culture has viewed the environment historically and up to the present. From Biblical ideas of dominion over nature to modern consumer cultures to Gaia and Earth Goddesses, cultural perceptions of nature have changed dramatically over time, and continue to change today—in ways that will have profound impacts on the environment. This course provides an overview of the history of these ideas, with emphasis on contemporary American cultural beliefs. Readings will concentrate on the increasing awareness of the human role in transforming the environment from the 18th Century, the emergence of the field of ecology and new ecological ways of interpreting the human relationship with the environment, and the complex ways that Americans view and interact with nature today.

This is a reading-intensive course, and students should be prepared to spend at least three to four hours preparing for each class (about 60-80 pages of reading per class). Students should not enroll in this course if they are unable to meet this requirement. Students must come to each class with a short, written response to each day’s readings. Classroom time will be devoted largely to student-led discussions of readings. Grades will reflect the degree to which each student comes prepared and makes an effort to contribute to classroom discussions. For each class period a team of students will take turns leading discussion. There are no exams. A 15-page final paper will apply concepts and readings from the course to examine how and why ideas of nature matter in the contemporary world. Grades will be assigned as follows: reading responses 40%; attendance and participation 20%; term paper 40%. Graduate students will be graded separately and must meet with Prof. Walker to determine specific requirements based on individual needs.

Four books and selected readings are required for this class and are available at the UO Bookstore now:

- Cronon, William *Changes in the Land*, 20th Anniversary Edition 2003
- Nash, Roderick *Wilderness in the American Mind*, 4th Edition 2001
- Worster, Donald *Nature’s Economy*, 2nd Edition, 1994
- William Robbins 2004, *Landscapes Of Conflict: The Oregon Story, 1940-2000*
- Other selected readings will be available on the Blackboard Web site for the course.

Sept 25 Introduction: why ideas of nature matter

Part I: Why ideas of nature matter

Sept 27 Cronon, *Changes in the Land* Chs. 1, 2 (skim), 3, 4 (on the taming of nature)

Oct 2 Cronon, *Changes in the Land* Chs. 5, 6, 7 (on nature as commodity)

Oct 4 Cronon, *Changes in the Land* Ch. 8 (the contradictions of capitalism & nature); & Roderick Nash, *Wilderness & the American Mind*, Introduction, Prologue, & Chs. 1-2 (pp. xi-43) (on the philosophical roots of the conquest of nature)

Part II: The roots of modern ideas of nature

Oct 9 Glacken, *Traces on the Rhodian Shore*, pp. 12-33 (Blackboard); Coates, Chapter 2-3 (on ancient Greek and Roman ideas of nature) (Blackboard)

Oct 11 White, 'The historical roots of our ecological crisis' (the view of nature in early Christian thought) (Blackboard); Worster, *Nature's Economy*, Ch. 1 (on the conflict between ancient and emerging 'modern' views of nature)

Part III: Modernization: 'nature', 'resources', & 'environment'

Oct 16 Merchant, *Radical Ecology* Ch. 2 (on 'modernization', the scientific revolution, and ideas of nature) (Blackboard); Worster, *Nature's Economy*, Ch. 2 (on the modernism and the transformation of 'nature' into 'resource' and 'environment')

Oct 18 Worster, *Nature's Economy*, Chs. 6, 8, 9 (on Darwin and the 'fall' of nature)

Part IV: Reassessing nature: the romantic period

Oct 23 Nash, *Wilderness & the American Mind*, Chs. 3-4 (on wilderness romanticism & critique of modernism); Grove, 'Origins of Western Environmentalism' (on the colonial roots of conservationism) (Blackboard)

Oct 25 Worster, *Nature's Economy*, Chs. 3-5 (on Thoreau's 'romantic ecology'); Worster 2005 "John Muir and the modern passion for nature" (on Muir) (Blackboard)

Part V: Preservation, conservation & the emergence of scientific ecology

Oct 30 Nash, *Wilderness & the American Mind*, Chs. 6, 7, 9, 10 (on wilderness preservation)

Nov 1 Worster, *Nature's Economy*, Ch. 10, 11, 12 (on the emergence of scientific ecology)

Nov 6 Worster, *Nature's Economy*, Chs. 13, 14 (on applications of ecological science)

Part VI: Contemporary perspectives and critiques

- Nov 8 Nash, *Wilderness & the American Mind*, Ch. 16 (on the impact of Western wilderness romanticism abroad); Guha (Blackboard), 'Radical American environmentalism and wilderness preservation: a Third World Critique'
- Nov 13 Price, Ch. 1 (on 'missed connections' in wilderness thought), & Price, Ch. 4 ('Nature at the mall'—the commodification of wilderness philosophy) (Blackboard)
- Nov 15 Cronon, 'The Trouble with Wilderness' (Blackboard); Schellenberger & Nordhaus 'The Death of environmentalism" (Blackboard)

Part VII: Ideas of nature in Oregon

- Nov 20 Robbins, *Landscapes of Conflict* Foreword, Preface, Prologue, Chs. 1-2
- Nov 22 Robbins, *Landscapes of Conflict* Chs. 3-4
- Nov 27 Robbins, *Landscapes of Conflict* Chs. 5-6
- Nov 29 Robbins, *Landscapes of Conflict* Chs. 8-9 and Epilogue

Reserve readings (available on Blackboard under "Course Documents"):

- Coates, Peter A. 1998. *Nature: western attitudes since ancient times*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Cronon, William. 1996. The Trouble with Wilderness: or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature. *Environmental History* 1 (1):7-28.
- Glacken, Clarence J. 1967. *Traces on the Rhodian shore: nature and culture in Western thought from ancient times to the end of the eighteenth century*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Grove, Richard H. 1992. Origins of Western environmentalism. *Scientific American* July: 42-27.
- Guha, Ramachandra. 1989. Radical American environmentalism and wilderness preservation: a Third World critique. *Environmental Ethics* 11:71-83.
- Merchant, Carolyn. 1992. *Radical ecology: the search for a liveable world*. New York: Routledge..
- Price, Jennifer. 1999. *Flight maps: adventures with nature in modern America*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Basic Books, Ch. 1 Missed Connections: The Passenger Pigeon Extinction
- Price, Jennifer. 1999. *Flight maps: adventures with nature in modern America*. 1st ed. New York, NY: Basic Books, Ch. 4 Looking for Nature at the Mall: A Field Guide to the Nature Company
- Schellenberger, Michael, and Ted Nordhaus. 2004. The Death of Environmentalism.
- White, Lynn. 1967. The historical roots of our ecological crisis. *Science* 155 (3767):1203-1207
- Worster, Donald. 2005. John Muir and the modern passion for nature. *Environmental History* 10 (1):8-19.