

Comparative Studies 3646
Cultures, Natures, Technologies
Instructor ; email: ; Office:
Meeting times ; Room number

TEXTS

Coursepack of articles and On-line videos

Course Description and Goals:

The purpose of this course is to examine various cultural approaches to the uses of technology and their relation to conceptions of nature and culture. In the course we will analyze cultures of technology and nature, including the transformation of nature through technology and cultural understanding of the “environment” as a specific space of social and technical practices and discourse. We will also discuss the development of “environmentalism” as a cultural, political and technological practice. Some of the issues examined will be notions of “technological progress,” “low-tech” and “high tech” solutions to problems—cultural, natural and technical. We will examine how decisions about sustainability and efficiency are made and made differently across different cultural and natural landscapes. After a brief introduction to the key terms and how they are mutually constitutive and how differing notions of nature inform and are informed by cultures and technologies we will dedicate the remainder of the course to three “case studies”: Using Nature: Agriculture and Genetically Modified Organisms Cross-culturally; Transforming Nature: Dams and Canals; Defining Nature: Wilderness Preservation and National Parks.

GE Expected Learning Outcomes: Arts and Humanities: Cultures and Ideas Course:

1. Students develop abilities to analyze, appreciate, and interpret major forms of human thought and expression.
2. Students develop abilities to understand how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms that guide human behavior.

Students with disabilities that have been certified by the Office for Disability Services will be appropriately accommodated, and should inform the instructor as soon as possible of their needs. The Office for Disability Services is located in 150 Pomerene Hall, 1760 Neil Avenue; telephone 292-3307, TDD 292-0901; <http://www.ods.ohio-state.edu/> .

Overview of Course

Introduction: Culture-Nature-Technology: how are they defined, who defines them, and what kinds of work do these definitions do?

Agriculture and Genetic Modification: Exploration of various forms of agriculture (high input intensive/low input intensive, agroecology, intensive production, bioprospecting) and different cultural views on genetically modified organisms, patenting life forms in different technical and environmental cultures as well as global, cosmopolitan technical culture.

Dams and Canals: Human interventions into natural river systems across time. How are dams planned and executed? What is the role of “scale” in projects involving “big” engineering and “big” interventions into landscapes, both natural and cultural.

Parks and Wilderness: How do decisions about the boundaries and value of particular lands get made? Who makes the decisions and how do those decisions affect cultures and the uses of technologies of the people who live in and around these designated areas?

Course Requirements:

Participation IN-CLASS

Your presence and punctuality will be rewarded.

In order to foster class participation, regular attendance and accountability for assigned readings, on most if not all class meetings there will be in-class writing. These will be neither extensive nor time-consuming, but they will reward you for your attention to the readings. Some in-class essays will be shared with your classmates or the whole class.

In-class writing assignments will relate to that day's assigned reading or relate that day's readings to previous class discussions and/or readings. They will be graded Pass/Fail.

After **two** missed classes your participation grade will be negatively affected by absences or missed in-class writings except in the case of **serious** medical or family emergency. In-class writings missed by lateness cannot be made up.

Formal Papers

Summary and Analysis of Unit Papers: 3 total at 5 double-spaced typed pages. These papers will demonstrate you have read and understood the various articles and analyzed the relevant issues as they relate to culture, nature, technology.

Presentation and Group Led Discussion of Topic

Group Collaborative Presentation of Related Topic not covered by whole class. The topic will be generated in class and approved by me. Some examples: Case studies could include various forms of agriculture not covered (green revolution, industrial organic, locavore, etc.; uses of cost/benefit analysis and the "precautionary principle" in cultures to approach environmental issues; formation of park systems globally and the IMF; responses to climate threats and the integration of economic development with nature in various cultural conflicts; water issues; diseases and technologies of travel, "invasive species," and global trade.

Exam

Final essay exam: a 6-page consideration of the main theoretical questions confronting the study of the relation between culture, nature, and technology. To be designed in class with questions integrating all 4 units. FINAL GRADES (OSU standard grading scheme used)

In-Class (in-class writings, participation, quizzes,)	15%
Group Presentation	10%
Unit Papers	45%
Final Exam (take-home)	30%

Academic Misconduct

You are expected to know, understand and adhere to the Student Code of Academic Conduct. A paper that is plagiarized-- i.e. maliciously documented or without proper attribution-- may result in a hearing before the academic misconduct committee. If you have **any doubts** about whether you have properly documented and attributed the ideas and words of others in your work, feel free to consult me. If you do not know the code of academic conduct, see web site: http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp

Reading Schedule

Week One:

Aug. 22: Introduction Transcendentalism and Materialism, 19th c. views of nature and technology, and excerpts from documentary The Future of Food

Week Two:

Aug. 27: Marx's Nature: excerpts from *Grundrisse and Capital*

"Nature builds no machines, no locomotives, railways, electric telegraphs, self-acting mules, etc. These are product of human industry; natural material transformed into organs of the human will over nature, or of human participation in nature. They are *organs of the human brain, created by the human hand*; the power of knowledge, objectified. " *the Grundrisse (1857-58, 285, Marx-Engels Reader, ed. Tucker. 2nd ed.)*

Aug. 29: Thoreau's Nature: "Where I lived and What I lived for," *Walden, 60-73, 1854.*

Week Three:

Whose Nature? Whose Culture? Whose Technologies?

Sept. 3: Labor Day

Sept. 5: Warwick Anderson, "The Natures of Culture: Environment and Race in the Colonial Tropics" *Nature and the Global South*, Greenough and Tsing, Duke UP, 2003.

Week Four:

Sept. 10: Donna Haraway: "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, NYCity, 1908-1936", *haraway reader, 151-195.*

Sept. 12: David Hess, "Cosmopolitan Technologies, Native Peoples and Resistance Struggles," 211-249, *Science and Tecnology in a Multicultural World.*

UNIT ONE: AgriCulture

Week Five:

Farmers and their farms

Sept. 17: Michael Pollan, "Big Organic," OD, 134-184.

Sept. 19: MP, " Grass: 13 ways of looking at a pasture", OD,185-207.

Week Six:

Sept. 24: Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, "Agrarian Allegory and Global Futures" *Nature in the Global South*, Duke 2003, 124-169.

Sept. 26: Amita Baviskar, "Tribal Politics and Discourses of Indian Environmentalism" *Nature in the Global South*, Duke 2003, 289-318.

Week Seven:

Seeds and Ownership/ Patents and Bioprospecting

Oct. 1: Vandana Shiva, "Wheat Biopiracy" <http://www.countercurrents.org/en-shiva270404.htm>, The Neem Tree, a case of biopiracy, <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/pir-ch.htm>

Oct. 3: Cori Hayden, "Neoliberalism's Nature" and "Market Research: When local knowledge is Public Knowledge", 48-

Paper One due October 7th by midnight on Carmen

Unit 3: Dams and Canals

Week Eight:

Oct. 8: Charles C. Mann, "Amazonia", *1491: New Revelations of the Americas before Columbus*, 315-349, Knopf, 2005

Oct. 10: Hugh Raffles: "In the Flow of the Becoming" 44-74, *In Amazonia*, Princeton UP, 2002

Week Nine:

Oct. 15: Red Flag Canal: "A history of water famine and "Channeling the Waters of the Changho River" 1974, Chinese Foreign Press

Oct. 17: Li Heming, Paul Waley, Phil Rees, *Reservoir Resettlement in China: past experience and the Three Gorges Dam*

Week Ten 11:

Oct. 22: : "Restoring Yosemite's Twin" *Science*, vol314, 27 Oct. 2006.
American Experience: Hoover Dam, PBS

Oct. 24: The James Bay Project and the Cree, CBC digital archives.
http://archives.cbc.ca/society/native_issues/topics/94/ and Kayapo, Protectors fo the Amzaon, Conservation International. Youtube, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrAkd8Ee5so>

Paper two due October 28th by midnight on Carmen

Unit Three: Parks and Wilderness**Week Eleven: Terra Nullus?**

Oct. 29: Raffles, "The Dream life of Ecology", 150-179. *In Amazonia*

Oct. 31: Charles C. Mann, "*The Artificial Wilderness*" 1491, 350-68.

Week Twelve:

Nov. 5: William Cronon, "The trouble with wilderness: or getting back to the wrong nature"

Nov. 7: Repairing Mountains, Restoration, Ecology and Wilderness in Twentieth-Century Utah

Week Thirteen:

Nov. 12th: Veterans day

Nov. 14: Let the Line be drawn now: wilderness, conservation and the exclusion of Aboriginal people from Banff National Park in Canada.

Week Fourteen:

Nov. 19 Susan Opatow and Amara Brook, "Identity and exclusion in rangeland conflict" *Identity and the natural environment: the psychological significance of nature.* 2003, MIT press.

Paper Three Due Nov. 20th by midnight on Carmen

Nov. 21: Thanksgiving Recess

Week Fifteen:

Nov. 26: Groups present

Nov. 28" Groups present

Week Sixteen:

Dec. 3: Groups present/ Exam Questions handed out.

Exam Due Dec. 7th by midnight on Carmen.