"Environmental imaginaries" names the contending discourses that order society around processes of development and change. Public controversies over development are often staged as struggles between collectively-wrought worlds, or “imaginaries,” that relate us in particular ways to our surroundings. Throughout the 20th century, European phenomenologists and American pragmatists tackled the infamous Cartesian dualisms upholding the separation of nature from society and art from industry. By the end of that century the phenomenological idea of the “social imaginary” had gained currency among social theorists as a way to understand the relationship between the world as lived and experienced and the world as “objectively” recoverable through scientific methods. In the 1990s geographers Michael Watts and Richard Peet coined the term “environmental imaginaries” to focus attention on human relationships to the “natural” world as an overlooked dimension of modern social imaginaries.

The study of environmental imaginaries opens onto a “third space” along the divide between the humanities and social and natural sciences. Traversing that divide, we will explore how it is that Mikhail Bakhtin’s ecological poetics and John Dewey’s aesthetic ecologies can productively complicate and dismantle the Cartesian legacy of institutionally entrenched dualisms. We will be asking how these dualisms are reproduced, enacted, and materialized in such diverse sites as Appalachian strip mines, Sea World, nature centers, Universities, environmental policy, and public hearings on development proposals. We will examine critically the reproduction of narratives that subjugate alternative environmental imaginaries along lines of class, race, and gender. What are the possibilities for changing these narratives and where are those possibilities realized? How are alternative ways of knowing and being sustained through naming practices, narratives, and other speech genres, as well as yardscapes, protest rallies, spontaneous shrines and other forms of public celebration and display?

Weaving together theories and case studies with your own experiences, observations, and written reflections, this seminar will familiarize you with the poetics and politics of modern environmental imaginaries. At stake is nothing less than place, identity, and the nature of human being.
Course Texts:

Tony Bennett, et al. 2005. *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society.*

These books have been ordered through Penn Book Center, near Samson and 34th Streets. All other readings will be downloadable from the course blackboard site. Films and hard copies of the readings will be on reserve in the Rosengarten reading room.

Work for the Course:

1) Participation: Do all of the required readings and post short written responses and exercises, as assigned, to the blackboard discussion page. Written exercises will take the form of responses to prompts I will post in advance. Participate actively in class discussion.

2) Gleanings from everyday life: Over the course of the semester, bring in six “exhibits” encountered in your everyday life. Be prepared to relate your exhibit to something raised in the readings. The “exhibit” can be a newspaper clipping, an artifact or a photograph of an artifact, a story you heard, an event you witnessed. Be prepared to connect your exhibit to class discussion.

3) Term Project: – Explore a modern environmental imaginary, through a study of one genre of production. This genre could be public art, cinema, a novel, a landscape element, a contested space such as the Barnes Gallery, a spontaneous public display, or the imaginary of an organization such as Spiral Q, Scribe Video, Philadelphia Mural Arts, or narrative in such modern spaces as nature centers and community planning meetings, architecture, landscapes and so forth. You will need at least three events or “texts” demonstrating both variation and consistency across productions. Using analytical tools and concepts from the course readings, describe the imaginary that is conjured. Guidelines for the proposal (due October 19) and the paper will be posted to the course blackboard by October 1. Please see me by Friday, October 12 to discuss your topic.

Submit both hard and electronic versions. The electronic version should be either a word document attached to an e-mail, or, if multi-media are used and the file is larger than 10 megabytes, you may submit it on a cd or dvd to my mailbox in Bennett Hall.
Schedule of Topics and Readings

1) September 10: Introduction
   Overview of questions, issues, resources and work for this seminar.

2) September 17: Ecologics, Politics, and Poetics
   Clark and Holquist, “Discourse in Life and Art,” Mikhail Bakhtin, pp. 197-211.
   View Agnes Varda’s The Gleaners and I (on reserve)

   Further reading:

3) September 24: Organic and Mechanistic Cosmologies in Conflict
   Taylor, Modern Social Imaginaries, pp. 49-100.
   View Saltmen of Tibet (on reserve)

   Further reading:

4) October 1: Discourse \ Locality \ Identity


**Further reading:**

**5) October 8: Critical Regionalism**


Hufford, from *Chaseworld*, “Inscribing the Stage and Its Players,” “Making the Dogs,” and “Inscribing the Fox,” pp. 79-144.

**Further reading:**


**6) October 15: Time’s Body and Public Space**


Further reading:
Bakhtin, “Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel,” The Dialogic Imagination, pp. 84-258.

October 22: NO CLASS
***Please schedule an appointment with me by Tuesday of this week, October 20, regarding your ideas for a term project.***
Submit draft project proposals electronically by Friday, October 23.

ARTICULATIONS

7) October 29: Collective Embodiment and Spatialized Hierarchies
Gilbert, “Resurrecting the Body: Has Postmodernism had any Effect on Biology?” Science in Context, 8:563-578.

Further reading:

8) November 5: Regional Discursive Formations: Appalachia
Bauman, “Folklore,” in Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments, pp. 29-40.
Allen Batteau – “A Poetic for Appalachia,” In The Invention of Appalachia, pp. 1 – 18.

http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/faculty/mhufford/Interrupting.pdf
View:  *Stranger with a Camera* (on reserve)

**Further reading:**


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**THE CULTIVATION OF THINKING SYSTEMS**

9) **November 12: Aesthetic Ecologies\Ecological Poetics**


Film: *Style Wars* (on reserve)

**Further reading:**


10) **November 19: Narrative, Landscape, and Cultural Ownership**


Folch-Sera, “Place, Voice, Space: Mikhail Bakhtin’s Dialogical Landscape.” Environment and Planning D 8:255-274.

**Further reading:**


**November 26** Thanksgiving **No Class**

11) December 3: Taking the More-than-Human Other: Umwelten, Earth Tending, and Radical Alterity


Link to Tending the Commons: [http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cmnsh.html](http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cmnsh.html)

View: The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill (on reserve)

**Further reading:**
12) December 10: Backtalking Fungibility: Public Art and Cultural Policy
Berman, “Modernism in New York,” All that is Solid Melts into Air, pp. 287 – 348
Zeitlin, “Conserving Our Cities’ Endangered Spaces,” in Conserving Culture, pp. 215-228

Link to casita website: http://www.italianrap.com/casitas.html

Hufford and Miller, Piecing Together the Fragments
http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/fragments.pdf


View: Crosstown (on reserve)

December 17: Final papers due
Bibliography


http://anthropology.unc.edu/french/papers/garden_to_globe.html#citation


Vintage Books.


