

FOLK\ENGL\ENVS 575-640  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMAGINARIES

Fall 2009

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Thursday 6-8:40 Wms 305  
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"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 20<sup>th</sup> 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:**

David Abram. 1996. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World*.

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

Mary Hufford. 1992. *Chaseworld: Foxhunting and Storytelling in New Jersey's Pine Barrens*.

Charles Taylor. 2004. *Modern Social Imaginaries*.

These books have been ordered through Penn Book Center, near Samson and 34<sup>th</sup> 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

Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, pp. 1-48.

Abram, "The Ecology of Magic," *The Spell of the Sensuous*, pp. 3-29.

Hyde, "Some Food We Could Not Eat," *The Gift*, pp. 3-24.

Clark and Holquist, "Discourse in Life and Art," *Mikhail Bakhtin*, pp. 197-211.

Bell, "Deep Fecology: Mikhail Bakhtin and the Call of Nature," *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism*, pp. 65-84.

View Agnes Varda's *The Gleaners and I* (on reserve)

#### Further reading:

Uexkull, "Introduction to *Umwelt*," *Semiotica* 134:107-110.

Watts and Peet, "Liberation Ecologies and Environmental Imaginaries," *Liberation Ecologies*, 260-269.

### 3) September 24 : Organic and Mechanistic Cosmologies in Conflict

Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, pp. 49-100.

Merchant, "Farm, Fen, and Forest: European Ecology in Transition," "The World an Organism," and "The Mechanical Order," *The Death of Nature*, pp. 42-68, 99-126, 192-215.

Hyde, "The Labour of Gratitude," *The Gift*, pp. 40-55.

Davis, "The City and the Park," *Spectacular Nature*, pp. 40-76.

View *Saltmen of Tibet* (on reserve)

#### Further reading:

Cantwell, "Enclosures, Gardens, and the Festival Market: The Ogre in the Tale." *Ethnomimesis* pp. 32-48.

### 4) October 1: Discourse\Locality\Identity

Hufford, "Introduction," "The World of the Chase," and "Ritual Moorings," in *Chaseworld*, pp. 1-78

Thomas, "Natural History and Vulgar Errors," in *Man and the Natural World*, pp. 51-91.

Appadurai, "The Production of Locality," *Modernity at Large*, pp. 178-204.

**Further reading:**

Schutz, "Transcendences and Multiple Realities," in *On Phenomenology and Social Relations*, pp. 245-262.

**5) October 8: Critical Regionalism**

Taylor, Betsy, "Public Folklore, Nation-Building, and Regional Others." *Indian Folklore Research Journal*. 1 (2): 1-27.

Frampton, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance." In *The Anti-Aesthetic*, ed. Foster.

Shuman, "Dismantling Local Culture," *Western Folklore*, pp.

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

**Further reading:**

Herr, Cheryl, "Introduction." *Critical Regionalism and Cultural Studies*. Pp. 1-26.

Hufford, "'One Reason God Made Trees:' The Form and Ecology of the Barnegat Bay Sneakbox," In *Sense of Place: American Regional Cultures*, eds. Allen and Schlereth, pp. 40-57.

Jones, "Regionalization: A Rhetorical Strategy." *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 13:105-120.

Tzonis and Lefaivre. "Critical Regionalism." In *Critical Regionalism*, ed. Amourgis, pp. 3-23.

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

Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*. Read pp. 83 – end, with particular attention to Taylor's discussion of time, temporality, and secularity in the modern social imaginary.

Holloway and Kneal, "Mikhail Bakhtin: Dialogics of Space." In *Thinking Space*, ed. Crang and Thrift, pp. 71-88.

Arendt. "The Public and the Private Realm," in *The Human Condition* pp. 50-67.

O'Neill, "Time's Body: Vico on the Love of Language and Institution," in *Giambattista Vico's Science of Humanity*, eds. Tagliacozzo and Verene, pp. 333-340.

**Further reading:**

S. Stewart, "The Gigantic," *On Longing*, pp. 70-103.

Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and Chronotope in the Novel," *The Dialogic Imagination*, pp. 84-258.

Fraser, "The Extended Umwelt Principle: Umwelt and the Nature of Time," *Semiotica* 134: 263-273.

**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**

Douglas, "The Two Bodies," in *Natural Symbols*, pp. 69-87.

Gilbert, "Resurrecting the Body: Has Postmodernism had any Effect on Biology?" *Science in Context*, 8:563-578.

Hufford, "Carnival Time in the Kingdom of Coal," *Social Identities* (in press).

Poovey, "Making a Social Body," in *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation 1830-1864*.

**Further reading:**

Salamon, "'The Place Where Life Hides Away: Merleau-Ponty, Fanon, and the Location of Bodily Being," *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 27:96-112.

Noyes, "Façade performance in Catalonia," *Southern Folklore* 52:97-120.

**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.

K. Stewart, "Nostalgia: A Polemic," *Cultural Anthropology* 3: 227-241.

Hufford, "Interrupting the Monologue: Folklore, Ethnography and Critical Regionalism," pp. 62-77.

<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/faculty/mhufford/Interrupting.pdf>

View: *Stranger with a Camera* (on reserve)

**Further reading:**

Langer, "Merleau-Ponty and Deep Ecology." In *Ontology and Alterity in Merleau-Ponty*. pp. 115-129.

James, William, "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings." In *William James: The Essential Writings*, pp. 326-342.

Nesbitt and Weiner, "Conflicting Environmental Imaginaries and the Politics of Nature in Central Appalachia," *Geoforum* 1-17.

## THE CULTIVATION OF THINKING SYSTEMS

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

McDermott, "Deprivation and Celebration: Suggestions for an Aesthetic Ecology," in *The Culture of Experience* pp. 82-98.

Cantwell, "If Beale Street Could Talk: A Reflection on Musical Meaning," *If Beale Street Could Talk: Music, Community, Culture*, pp. 3-25

S.Stewart, "Ceci Tuera Cela: Graffiti as Crime and Art," *Crimes of Writing* pp. 206-233.

Roemer, "Photocopy Lore and the Naturalization of the Corporate Body," *Journal of American Folklore*, 107: 121-138.

Abram, "Animism and the Alphabet," *The Spell of the Sensuous*, pp. 93-136.

Film: *Style Wars* (on reserve)

**Further reading:**

Dewey, "The Live Creature," "The Live Creature and Ethereal Things," and "Having an Experience," in *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, ed. John McDermott, pp. 525-573.

Bakhtin, "The Grotesque Image of the Body and Its Sources," *Rabelais and His World*, pp. 303-367.

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

Basso. "Wisdom Sits in Places: Notes on a Western Apache Landscape," in *Senses of Place*, ed. Feld and Basso, pp. 53-90.

Dorst, "Looking at Looking," and "Monumental Optics: The Visual Management of Devil's Tower." *Looking West*, pp. 96-116 and 191-215.

Hufford, "The Chaseworld Anchored in Stories," *Chaseworld*, pp. 145-173.

Folch-Sera, "Place, Voice, Space: Mikhail Bakhtin's Dialogical Landscape." *Environment and Planning D* 8:255-274.

**Further reading:**

Merleau-Ponty, "The Intertwining: The Chiasm," *The Visible and the Invisible*, pp. 130-155.

Potteiger and Purinton. "Beginning" and "The Nature of Landscape Narrative." *Landscape Narratives: Design Practices for Telling Stories* pp. 3-70.

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

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

Crumley, "From Garden to Globe: Linking Time and Space with Meaning and Memory." [http://anthropology.unc.edu/french/papers/garden\\_to\\_globe.html](http://anthropology.unc.edu/french/papers/garden_to_globe.html)

Hufford, "Knowing Ginseng: The Social Life of an Appalachian Root." *Cahiers de Litterature Orale*. 53-54:265-292.

Gardiner, "Ecology and Carnival: Traces of a 'Green' Sociology in the Writings of M. M. Bakhtin," *Theory and Society* 22: 765-812.

Stametz, Paul. 2005. "The Mycelial Mind." In *Mycelium Running: How Mushrooms Can Help Save the World*. Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, pp. 1-50.

Uexkull, Jakob von. "An Introduction to Umwelt" and "The New Concept of Umwelt: A Link Between Science and the Humanities." *Semiotica* 134: 107-123.

Link to Tending the Commons:

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cmnshtml/>

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

**Further reading:**

Hufford, "Molly Mooching on Bradley Mountain: The Aesthetic Ecology of an Appalachian Morel," *Gastronomica* 6 (2):49-56.

<http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/faculty/mhufford/MollyMooching.pdf>  
Hynes, "Introduction," and "Philadelphia: A City of Neighborhoods," in *A Patch of Eden*, pp. vii-xvii and 71-116.

**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

Sciorra, "Return to the Future: Puerto Rican Vernacular Architecture in New York City," in *Re-presenting the City*, ed. King, pp. 60-90.

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>

Camitta, "The Folklorist and the Highway," *The Conservation of Culture*, pp. 206-216

View: *Crosstown* (on reserve)

**December 17: Final papers due**



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