



A brief examination of cosmologies, or worldviews, will provide a framework through which students can explore the roles of science and technologies in environmental issues – how nature is defined, related to, and studied in various cultures and over time. For instance, the dominant cosmology in the modern West of the world as a planet orbiting the sun and originating from the ‘big bang’ emerges from studies in modern physics. Much of the West’s knowledge of the Earth, as taught in schools and universities, is based upon scientific understandings of the world, from biology, chemistry, physics and so on. It is thus important to examine contributions and critiques of science and technology, and to recognize their influences upon the formation of concepts, values and beliefs of nature and the environment.

The latter part of the course examines particular representations of nature and their influence on the relationships humans have with nature and other animals in present day society. Feminist critiques of Western science will be emphasized, for example, to examine ethical and political dimensions of the classification of plants and animals in taxonomy and practices of detached objectivity. They will also be employed to unpack traditional and contemporary notions of nature, such as ‘mother nature.’ Works of science fiction will provide an imaginative, narrative space in which to examine visions of nature in the future, as well as to analyze current dominant assumptions expressed in Western society.

### **Course Objectives**

1. to provide an overview of the history of ideas of nature in the West and across diverse cultures;
2. to provide a critical examination of how ‘nature’ comes to be defined by Western scientific and technological theories and practices;
3. to provide an understanding of the role of language in how humans value, perceive and relate to nature;
4. to provide a feminist analysis of the politics of ‘nature’ – how it gets defined, by whom and for whom.

### **Organization of the Course**

The course will be conducted in a seminar format. It is essentially a discussion-based course. Each seminar will consist of an interactive lecture, which includes formal presentations by the Instructor throughout which questions, comments and discussion will be encouraged and facilitated. Lectures will be supplemented with audio and visual materials (including materials from websites, powerpoint presentations, video and film clips). Also, there may occasionally be small group exercises related to the themes of the lecture and readings. All seminars are based on the readings for that date. Participating in these discussions and a familiarity with the required readings are central to success in this course. Readings listed under a particular date are assigned for class discussion **for that date**.

### **Evaluation**

The grade for the course will be based on the following percentages:

Take-Home Exam 1:	25%
Take-Home Exam 2:	35%
Participation:	10%
Quiz:	30%

### **Take-home Exams (60%)**

Students must write two take-home exams, worth 25% and 35%. Each exam will answer questions provided by the Instructor. Students must use course materials, including the required readings and videos shown in

class in their answers. Each exam will be 1500 words maximum for Undergraduates and 3000 words maximum for Graduates, and should be typed/word processed in 12-point font. Detailed instructions will be distributed in class. DUE October 19<sup>th</sup> and December 7<sup>th</sup>.

**Participation (10%)**

As a seminar course, a substantial proportion of your mark will be based on your interaction with your peers as well as your instructor. The goal of this course is to encourage a collaborative and creative working and learning environment—your engaged participation is therefore a vital component to its success. Participating in discussions will be difficult if the readings are not done ahead of time. They are integral to each seminar including presentations, discussions, and small group assignments. You will be expected to demonstrate your knowledge and critical assessment of class readings, thoughtfulness regarding issues raised in readings, and to draw connections between theoretical ideas and specific issues in all of these venues. This means coming to class prepared, having done the required readings and actively engaging in various activities including class discussions, asking questions during informal presentations/lectures, and taking part in small group and individual in-class exercises. This also means actively respecting your peers and contributing positively to the group dynamic, for example, by being courteous and respectful of others, not dominating conversations and discussions, allowing others to speak and be heard.

**Final Quiz (30%)**

The final quiz will take place in the last class on December 7, 2009 and will cover all materials and lectures throughout the course. Further details will be discussed in class.

**Required Reading**

The following books are required reading for the course:

- 1) Wilson, Alex. 1991. *The Culture of Nature: North American Landscape from Disney to the Exxon Valdez*. Toronto: Between The Lines.
- 2) Atwood, Margaret. 2003. *Oryx and Crake*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Ltd

**Additional Required Readings for Graduate Students**

Required supplemental readings are listed in the syllabus where relevant. If you would like further suggestions for a topic you are interested in, please ask the Instructor.

**Schedule of Topics and Readings**

The following list of lecture topics and readings is subject to change. Remember that the readings listed under each date are assigned for that week and will be discussed in the seminar on that date.

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**August 31** **Introduction to Culture and Nature**

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**September 7** **Labor Day, College Closed**

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**September 14** **What is Nature?**

*Required Readings:*

Introduction, *The Culture of Nature*, pp. 11-17

*Graduate Additional Readings:*

Bennet, Jane & Chaloupka, William. 1993. "Introduction: TV Dinners and the Organic Brunch." In *In The Nature of Things: Language, Politics, and The Environment*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (pp. vii-xvi).

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**September 21** **Cosmology and Nature**

*Required Readings:*

Chapter 5: Technological Utopias: World's Fairs and Theme Parks, pp. 157-190

Ingold, Tim. 1993. "Globes and Spheres: The Topology of Environmentalism." In *Environmentalism: The View from Anthropology*. London: Routledge (pp. 31-42).

*Graduate Additional Readings:*

King, Thomas. 2003. "'You'll Never Believe What Happened' Is Always a Great Way to Start." In *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative*. Toronto: House of Anansi Press. (pp. 1-29).

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**TUESDAY September 29** **Mechanical Nature and the Alphabet**

*Required Readings:*

Merchant, Carolyn. 1980. "Mechanism as Power." In *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers (pp. 216-235).

Abram, David. 1996. "Animism and the Alphabet." In *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in the More-Than-Human World*. New York: Pantheon Books. (pp. 93-135).

*Graduate Additional Readings:*

Lewis, Clive Staples. 1964. "The Heavens" (pp. 92-121) & "Epilogue" (pp. 216-223). In *The Discarded Image*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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**October 5** **M/Other Nature: Unpacking Nature as Feminine**

*Required Readings:*

Merchant, Carolyn. 1980. "Introduction: Women and Ecology." In *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers (pp. xix-xxiv).

Alaimo, Stacey. 2000. "Playing Nature: Postmodern Natures in Contemporary Feminist Fiction." In *Undomesticated Ground: Recasting Nature as Feminist Space*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press. (pp. 133-170).

*Graduate Additional Readings:*

Bennet, Jane. 1993. "Primate Visions and Alter-Tales" In *In The Nature of Things: Language, Politics, and The Environment*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

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**WEDNESDAY, October 14** **Voices of Nature, Dreamtime, and Storied Earth**

*Required Readings:*

Abram, David. 1999. "A More-Than-Human-World." In Weston (ed) *An Invitation to Environmental Philosophy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (pp. 17-42).

Silko, Leslie Marmon. 1996. "Language and Literature From a Pueblo Indian Perspective." In *Yellow Woman and the Beauty of the Spirit*. New York: Touchstone. (pp. 48-59).

*Graduate Additional Readings:*

Abram, David. 1996. "The Storied Earth." In *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in the More-Than-Human World*. New York: Pantheon Books. (pp. 154-163).

Kane, Sean. 1994. "Prologue." In *Wisdom of the Mythtellers*. Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press. (pp. 10-25).

**October 19** **Observing Nature: Objectification and Politics of 'Looking'**

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*Required Readings:*

Chapter 4: Looking at the Non-Human: Nature Movies and TV, pp. 117-155.

Haraway, Donna. 1989. "Introduction: The Persistence of Vision" In *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science*. New York: Routledge. (pp. 1-15).

*Graduate Additional Readings:*

Evernden, Neil. 1993. "The Despotism of the Eye." In *The Natural Alien: Humankind and Environment*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (pp. 83-102).

**EXAM 1 DUE**

**October 26** **Spectacular Nature: Representations of Nature in Tourism**

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*Required Readings:*

Chapter 7: From Reserve to Microenvironment: Nature Parks and Zoos, pp. 223-255

*Graduate Additional Readings:*

Desmond, Jane. 1999. "In/Out-of/In-Fake-Situ: Three Case Studies." In *Staging Tourism: Bodies on Display from Waikiki to Sea World*. Chicago: Chicago University Press. (pp. 176-216)

Davis, Susan. 1997. "Another World: Theme Parks and Nature." In *Spectacular Nature: Corporate Culture and the Sea World Experience*. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press. (pp. 19-39).

**November 2** **FIELDTRIP: American Museum of Natural History**

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**November 9** **Natural History and the Study of Nature**

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*Required Readings:*

Chapter 2: Nature Education and Promotion, pp. 53-87.

**November 16** **Ordering Nature: Constructing the North American Landscape**

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*Required Readings:*

Chapter 1: The View from the Road: Recreation and Tourism, pp. 19-51

Chapter 3: Nature at Home: A Social Ecology of Postwar Landscape Design, pp. 88-115.

**November 23** **Urban Nature: Problems and Possibilities**

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*Required Readings:*

Chapter 6: City and Country, pp. 193-220

Sabloff, Annabell. 2001. "Prologue: The Pasture in the Metropolis" & "Introduction: Nature and the City." In *Reordering the Natural World: Humans and Animals in the City*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. (pp. 3-15).

*Graduate Additional Readings:*

Wolch, Jennifer. 1998. "Zoopolis." In *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands*. New York: Verso. (pp. 119-138).

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**November 30** **Posthumanism, Biotechnology, and the End of Nature?**

*Required Readings:*

Atwood, Margaret. 2003. *Oryx and Crake*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, Ltd.

*Graduate Additional Readings:*

Hartouni, Valerie. 1993. "Brave New World in the Discourses of Reproductive and Genetic Technologies." In *In The Nature of Things: Language, Politics, and The Environment*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Shapiro, Michael. 1993. "'Manning' the Frontiers: The Politics of (Human) Nature in *Blade Runner*." In *In The Nature of Things: Language, Politics, and The Environment*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Braun, Bruce. 2004. Querying Posthumanisms. *Geoforum* 35: 269-273.

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**December 7** **The Future of Nature and Culture**

*Required Readings:*

Chapter 8: On the Frontiers of Capital: Nuclear Plants and Other Environmental Architectures, pp. 257-291.

**EXAM 2 DUE**

**QUIZ – IN CLASS**

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**NOTE: Additions for Graduate Syllabus GEOG 703.08**

Additional required readings are assigned for graduate students throughout the course. Graduate students will be expected to summarize and introduce select additional readings to the class when assigned by the Instructor.

Graduate students are expected to write more in-depth and longer Take-Home Exam essays and to draw upon the additional required readings as references.

**Attendance, Grading and Lateness Policies:**

As stated earlier, the participation of each student is vital to the whole learning community. Students must be present to participate, thus attendance will be taken for every class and fieldtrip. Consideration on compassionate grounds will be given to students who must miss a class due to extenuating, personal circumstances and/or medical reasons.

Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, the assignments must be received by the Instructor on the due date specified for the assignment. Assignments must be handed in directly to the Instructor.

In the interests of fairness, scores will drop **5%** for each day after the due date that an assignment is turned in, except for excused medical reasons when supported by written documentation (e.g., a doctor's letter). **No late assignments will be accepted more than one week late.**

**Academic Honesty:**

Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures. Plagiarism, dishonest, or cheating in any portion of the work required for this course will be punished to the full extent allowed according to Hunter College regulations.