Making and Meaning in the American Landscape

Inness, George. *The Lackawanna Valley*, 1856

Landscape Architecture 2367: Syllabus: Spring Semester 2014

**Lectures:** Tuesday and Thursday 2:20 p.m. - 3:40 p.m.
Knowlton Hall 250

**Instructors**

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Course Overview

The word “Landscape,” from the German *landschaft* and the Old English *landscape*, connotes both a place of dwelling and a place that has been and is continually shaped by the act of dwelling. The etymology of the word then suggests that landscapes are shaped, they are made rather than “natural.” Sometimes this making occurs directly, as when a forest is cleared for a housing development. Sometimes this making occurs indirectly, as when a set of cultural ideas culminate in the identification of a piece of land as “wilderness” -- forever preserving it against a more direct act of shaping. We all come to our landscape both directly and indirectly; we dwell in this landscape and therefore we cannot help but shape it; moreover we each bring a set of normative cultural ideas and beliefs with us which guide us in the shaping of that landscape.

The American Landscape as we know it today, both profound and banal, can thus be read as a palimpsest of the ideas and beliefs of the people that have shaped and reshaped it over the course of the last five hundred years -- and continue to shape it today. This course investigates those ideas and systems of belief in order to engender a more profound understanding of and appreciation for the American Landscape, but also in order to problematize our own deep seated “cultural baggage” (our own assumptions, ideas and beliefs) and the effect that they have had, and continue to have on our national landscape.

Course Goals

**Cultures and Ideas**
Students evaluate significant cultural phenomena and ideas in order to develop capacities for aesthetic and historical response and judgment; and interpretation and evaluation.

**Writing and Communication Level II**
Students are skilled in written communication and expression, reading, critical thinking, oral expression and visual expression.

Course Learning Objectives

1) To enable students to read the contemporary landscape as a palimpsest of social, cultural, economic, and technological ideas and forces.

2) To enable students to recognize key figures, events, laws, and ideas that have contributed to the contemporary form of the American landscape.

3) To foster an appreciation for the complexities and contradictions implicit within the American Landscape and within our own belief systems and mythologies concerning that landscape.
4) To encourage students to take a critical and informed stance on contemporary and future events that will continue to shape the American Landscape.

Culture and Ideas GEC objectives

1) To enable students analyze and interpret major forms of human thought, culture, and expression. This is accomplished through readings and assignments and lectures that analyze and interpret cultural artifacts from classical texts and works of art to built landscapes.

2) To enable students to evaluate how ideas influence the character of human beliefs, the perception of reality, and the norms which guide human behavior. In writing assignments and lectures students are asked to understand major forms of thought that influence the built form of our national landscape, and which continue to shape the way we consider and act upon our landscape today.

Writing and Communication Level II objectives

1) Through critical analysis, discussion, and writing, students demonstrate the ability to read carefully and express ideas effectively. Students read, analyze, write about and discuss a series of essays throughout the semester. Several essays act as prompts for larger writing assignments.

2) Students apply written, oral, and visual communication skills and conventions of academic discourse to the challenges of Landscape Architecture. Students write and engage with visual communication within a broad range of formats that are typical with contemporary design discourse. These range from analysis papers and position papers, to photo essays and multi-media blog posts. Students are given the opportunity to share their work orally through recitation readings and an in-class debate.

3) Students access and use information critically and analytically. Students are asked to access a broad range of historical and contemporary information and to analyze and critically consider its ideas and its impact on the built landscape of the United States.

Course Structure

This course meets for two 80 minute lectures per week which are lead by the professor and one 55 minute recitation per week lead by either the professor or a graduate teaching assistant. Lectures and recitations are a required component of the course for all students. Lectures are given in a standard format and encourage student questions and participation. Each lecture focuses on a specific topic within the American Landscape. Recitations are small, discussion based, workshops where students engage in discussion of
course readings, writing assignments, and group assignments.

The structure of the course is based on garden historian John Dixon-Hunt’s scholarship around the idea of the three natures: wilderness, middle landscape, and garden/city. We will explore each of these “natures” as it relates to our cultural conception of the American Landscape. Moreover, the course is divided into three units, each addressing a specific nature.

Carmen Use:
Course content (syllabi, readings, and assignment prompts) are available via the course Carmen site (www.carmen.osu.edu). This material will remain available throughout the course. Students should feel free to consult it regularly if questions arise or if they feel it necessary to review certain readings or assignments. Grades for each assignment and exam will be posted on Carmen. Lecture slides will be made available via Carmen. Students are expected to take notes in class as not all information is carried by the lecture slides alone. If you miss a class please make arrangements with one of your peers to obtain class notes.

u.osu.edu use:
During the Autumn Semester of 2013 the University launched a new Wordpress based blogging site called u.osu.edu. Within that framework I have created a site entitled “Making and Meaning in the American Landscape: American Nature(s). All assignments in this course will be publicly shared via this site. This is to acknowledge the increasingly public nature of writing and information, and the contemporary forms that writing and visual information often take. This site will enable us to engage contemporary communication as a medium that is often — and particularly in the design fields — both textual (written and spoken) and visual (static and moving). This page will also aid us in undertaking several team assignments and in establishing active peer review networks. Satisfactory completion of this course will require active participation in the life of this site. Participation will take the form of reading discussions, individual and collective assignment posting, and comments and feedback on assignments. Enrollment in this course acknowledges the fact that the writing and assignments posted here will remain visible and accessible by a general University audience. Anyone with an osu.edu email address will be able to access this site for the foreseeable future.

If you need help in accessing or using u.osu.edu please refer to the University’s Office of Distance Education and e-Learning support website and resource center: http://odee.osu.edu/resourcecenter/uosu.

Assignment grades and instructor feedback will remain completely private and will be handled through Carmen.
Textbooks

There is no textbook for this class. Readings in this class are made available for free via Carmen e-reserves.

Reading Responses:
Many readings are posted with a series of discussion prompts -- these are intended to help you to focus on particular questions or aspects in the reading. You should familiarize yourself with the reading prompts before reading the article. After completing the reading you should write a one-page “response” to the reading in answer to the discussion prompts. These responses will be collected in recitation and will constitute a significant portion of you grade.

Suggestions for further reading

Readings from these texts are not included in what you will read via e-reserves, but they are all very good books.


Assignments

In addition to the weekly reading discussions, there are five major assignments in this class.

1: Utopia Analysis Paper (individual). Due: Tuesday 01/21
- Students read and analyze Thomas More’s Utopia in light of readings and lectures on the Humanist thought in Renaissance Europe and it’s impact on depictions and eventual settled form of the U.S.

2: The Machine Garden (individual). Due: 02/20
- Students research a historical technology and then analyze its impacts on the American Landscape in light of readings and lectures on progressivism in the U.S.
3: Persuasive Position (individual). Due: 03/20
- Students read and analyze a dossier of information on a topical question of preservation vs. conservation. Students then write a persuasive editorial espousing and defending their position on the topic.

4: In Search of the Neo-Sublime (group). Due: 04/01
- Groups of students survey the city for places that they define as “neo-sublime.” Each group posts images, a description, and an analysis of their found landscape in light of historical and contemporary readings and discussion on the Sublime.

5: The New Arcadia (group). Due: 04/24
- Groups of students compose a multi-media blog entry documenting the story of the American Landscape from the perspective of the year 2100.

Grades
Each course component is worth a designated number of points as indicated below. At the conclusion of the course, the total number of points each student has earned will be calculated. Grade ranges then will be established in accordance with Faculty Rule 3335-7-21, which defines the University standard for marks. According to the University’s standard, an average grade is in the low “B” range. This means that if your work is average when compared to the work of your peers in the class, you will most likely receive a B-. Course grades are not set to a pre-established curve and every effort is made to adjust the overall class grade range to fairly reflect the outcome of this particular course offering. Grades are established in part on an absolute scale in which you’re evaluated in comparison to our expectations and in part on a comparative scale in which you’re evaluated against your peers. Note, There are bonus points available in this class, but I will not give special extra credit assignments.

Grade Break-down

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Possible Points</th>
<th>Percent of total grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading Responses</td>
<td>120 (15 pts each)</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recitation Participation</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utopia Analysis^</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Machine Garden^</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuasive Position^</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In Search of the Neo-Sublime</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The New Arcadia</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Member Assessment*</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total ........................................... 1000  100.0%

^ You will receive detailed instructor feedback on these two papers. If you are unsatisfied with your grade you may take one of these assignments to the writing center for consultation and
revision. The revised papers will be regraded and will replace your grade on this assignment.

*At the end of the semester you will be assessed (and you will have the chance to assess) the performance of your peers in group situations. These assessments will be weighed by the instructor and a grade will be assigned for your performance in this area. If these assessments reveal non-performance (if you did not participate in group work) your individual grade on group assignment may be revised to reflect that.

Students often ask me how they can get an “A” in my class. While there is no magic answer, one indicator of success in this class, and any class, is regular attendance at and attention to the lectures. Participation in class, keeping up with the readings, and giving thoughtful attention and time to the assignments are ways to ensure that you enjoy and get the most out of the class.

Students who do these things give themselves the best chance at being successful.

**Course Policies**

**Attendance**
Attendance at lectures and recitations is expected. Reading responses will only be accepted in recitation, and therefore serve as a de facto measure of recitation attendance. If you do not attend lecture you will have no idea what is happening in the course -- which, in turn, will adversely affect your grade.

**Technology**
I cannot stop you from using your lap-top and/or your smart phone/ tablet device in class. In many instances I will encourage it. I will however note that I believe the idea of “multi-tasking” is ridiculous. Multi-tasking just means doing two or more things poorly rather than one thing well. Given that my suggestion is to simply pay attention to the lecture and take notes on old fashioned paper. If you’re going to take notes using your electronic device I recommend disconnecting from the internet during class time.

**Late Work**
Because of the public nature of assignments in this course it is very important that your assignments are posted by the designated time. This is to allow your peers and instructors adequate time to read and respond to your work before the next recitation session. Work that is posted late will receive an automatic 5% reduction in the final grade. Late work will receive and additional 15% reduction in the final grade for every 24 hour period that passes with the work un-submitted.

Work may be accepted late and the penalty waived with a doctors note or evidence of extenuating circumstances. Please speak with your recitation instructor before the due date if you are concerned about finishing your work on time.
Incomplete
If you experience an extenuating circumstance during the semester -- and you have notified the instructor of these circumstances -- and are unable to finish the semester you may be granted an Incomplete for the course. An Incomplete can only be given if you have been able to complete a majority (over 50%) of the course work as measured against the number of available points prior to 5:00 PM on the final day of classes. Additionally, any remaining course work must be completed by 5:00 PM on the 5th Friday of the following semester. Students unable to meet these requirements should withdraw from the course.

How we will grade your papers:

All assignments in this course are written analyses, arguments, accounts, or projections. Grading of these assignments is necessarily subjective. In an attempt to be as clear as possible about what my expectations for success are, each assignment will come with it’s own brief as well as a grading rubric. We will use the rubric when grading your paper. The brief and rubric will tell you what we would like you to consider in the assignment and what we consider a successful assignment. You are encouraged to use both the prompt and the rubric as a guide when writing your paper.

All assignments will be posted to u.osu.edu under your specific user name. Papers can be copied directly from Word, formatting and all using the “copy from word” function. You should take advantage of that ability. All students are encouraged to incorporate images (either found or made), recordings and video into their blog entries where appropriate or necessary. All images should be properly cited.

A Note on Plagiarism:

Presenting another person’s work or thoughts as your own constitutes plagiarism. Be sure that you do not plagiarize another person’s work. You need to cite ideas, not just quotes. Ideas drawn from books, magazines, scholarly articles, television shows, documentaries, the internet, interviews, lectures, maps, images, photographs, drawings, graphs, even random conversations, can and should be cited. I realize that this can be confusing and I am not out to get you. So, if you have questions about whether you need to cite something please see me or your recitation instructor. Plagiarism is considered academic misconduct. Academic misconduct will trigger procedures specified in the University’s Code of Conduct.

All citation should be done using the Chicago Manual of Style. If you are unsure of proper Chicago Author-Date format please check the library’s excellent resource on citation at:

http://library.osu.edu/help/research-strategies/cite-references/chicago-author-date/

Course Evaluations
As with all OSU courses, students are encouraged to complete an on-line Student Evaluation of Instructor (SEI) before the end of the semester. I routinely learn a great deal from SEI evaluations, and I encourage you to take the time to give me thoughtful feedback. Your feedback helps me to improve this course for future students. Please note that the SEI evaluation is for the primary instructor for the course (Professor Boswell). Each recitation instructor will provide an evaluation form that will give you a chance to evaluate the recitation structure and instructor performance in the recitation. In order to incentivise participation in the SEI process, the instructor will give ten additional bonus points to the class if at least 80% of the class completes an SEI evaluation.

**Student Conduct**

It is the responsibility of the Committee on Academic Misconduct to investigate or establish procedures for the investigation of all reported cases of student academic misconduct. The term “academic misconduct” includes all forms of student academic misconduct wherever committed; illustrated by, but not limited to, cases of plagiarism and dishonest practices in connection with examinations. Instructors shall report all instances of alleged academic misconduct to the committee (Faculty Rule 3335-5-487). For additional information, see the Code of Student Conduct [http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/](http://studentlife.osu.edu/csc/).

Students are required to adhere to all codes and academic policies of The Ohio State University and the Knowlton School of Architecture. In particular, plagiarism (the use of the ideas, words or works of intellectual content of another person as if they are one’s own or without crediting the source) is strictly forbidden.

The Student Code of Conduct ([http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp](http://studentaffairs.osu.edu/resource_csc.asp)) defines academic misconduct as: any activity that tends to compromise the academic integrity of the university, or subvert the educational process. All students are required to review the code and understand the implications of a code violation. If there is any suspicion of academic misconduct, the faculty member/instructor will report the alleged violation to the section head and the Committee on Academic Misconduct ([http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/home.html](http://oaa.osu.edu/coam/home.html)) for investigation and any further action.

Sexual Harassment: O.S.U.’s Sexual Harassment policy, which applies to all faculty, staff, and students, includes lewd remarks and inappropriate comments made in the studio environment, classroom, and computer labs as well as the “display of inappropriate sexually oriented materials in a location where others can see it.” Students can file a complaint by contacting Student Judicial Affairs at 292-0748. Sanctions include reprimand, suspension, and dismissal from the University.

**Disability Services**
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/.