

## **THE LAY OF THE LAND**

Spring 2006, Parsons School of Design  
PUPH 4300 A 5568  
Friday 12-2:40pm  
Room 701, Building D

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Office Hours: by appointment (flexible)

### **Description:**

Contemporary theorists see landscape not in terms of neutral, natural fact but instead as a cultural text that demands interpretation. John Brinckerhoff Jackson explains that, “landscape is not a natural feature of the environment but a synthetic space, a man-made system of spaces superimposed on the face of the land, functioning and evolving not according to natural laws but to serve a community.”

This class is an exploration of the issues surrounding landscape photography, both past and present, including an inquiry into the representational conventions and ideological underpinnings of the genre, a questioning of the validity of a traditional landscape practice, and the consideration of alternative image-making and theoretical models.

As a seminar-style lecture course, students will be expected to complete assigned readings, a research paper, a final photographic project and a class presentation. Students will develop an understanding of their own work in relationship to the issues raised in class. The presentation will incorporate the student’s research back into the classroom. Integration with a previously established interest and/or practice will be encouraged.

### **Course Outline:**

Topics – the history of landscape photography in the United States, contemporary landscape practice, alternative strategies of landscape photography, artists working in the genre, theories of landscape practice and technical support for lighting and color concerns.

Activities - lecture, discussion of conceptual issues, and critique.

Assignments - photography projects, readings, a research paper, a class presentation.

### **Course Objectives:**

Things you should have an understanding of when you complete this course:

A critical understanding of issues in landscape photography, the complex and contested nature of the photographic medium and the correct format for a research paper.

### **Required Reading:**

All readings will be distributed in class and are also on reserve at Gimbel Library, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Building L. See below for specific titles.

### **Grading:**

Evaluation and grading will be based on:

Attendance (15%), participation in class discussions and critiques (5%), completion of readings (15%), three photo assignments related to a photo based final project including a research paper (rough draft and proposal) and a class presentation (65%).

Students are expected to attend classes regularly and promptly. Faculty members are expected to fail any student who is absent for a significant portion of class time – defined as three absences for classes that meet once a week.

*For further information on Parsons School of Design Academic and Attendance Policies, please refer to the Student Handbook.*

## Class Schedule

**1/27** Introduction: Defining the genre

Explain/assign the three photographic assignments and the final project/research paper

**Readings (due for the next class):**

\*You are required to read each assigned article and discuss the readings in class. Please also prepare a few written questions to facilitate this discussion.

- Corner, James. "Introduction: Recovering Landscape as a Critical Cultural Practice," and "Eidetic Landscapes and New Practices." *Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture*. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999).
- Jackson, John Brinckerhoff. "The Word Itself," from *Landscape in Sight: Looking at America*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
- Meining, D. W. "Introduction," from *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

**Assignments:**

\*Throughout the course, each lecture will be followed by a short critique of work in progress. Bring in what you have been working on to get feedback for your project. Some class days are designated as critique only with no lecture – these will be more in depth discussions.

**2/3** Landscape Studies: Contemporary Theories

**Reading (due for the next class):**

- Snyder, Joel. "Territorial Photography." *Landscape and Power*. Ed. W. J. T. Mitchell. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

**2/10** Briefly, A History of US Landscape Photography

**Reading (due for the next class):**

- Bright, Deborah. "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography." *The Contest of Meaning*. Ed. Richard Bolton. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).

**2/17** Issues in Photography & Contemporary Practice I: Landscape photographs

**Assignment:** 1<sup>st</sup> photo assignment due in the next class for critique.

**2/24** Critique

\*1<sup>st</sup> photo assignment due

**3/3** Contemporary Practice II: Mappings, alternative practices

**Assignment:** Proposal for research paper due in next class.

**3/10** Contemporary Practice III: More alternatives

\*Proposal for research paper due

**Assignment:** 2<sup>nd</sup> photo assignment due in the next class for critique.

**3/17** Critique

\*2<sup>nd</sup> photo assignment due

**3/24** **Spring Break**

- 3/31** Critique  
**Assignment:** Bring rough draft of essay to next class
- 4/7** Guest Lecturer: TBA  
 \*Rough draft of essay due
- 4/14** Individual meetings  
**Assignment:** 3<sup>rd</sup> photo assignment due in the next class for critique.
- 4/21** Critique  
 \*3<sup>rd</sup> photo assignment due  
 Sign up for class presentation schedule
- 4/28** Critique  
**Assignment:** Bring final draft of essay to turn in when you have your presentation
- 5/5** Class Presentations & Critique
- 5/12** Class Presentations & Critique

### Readings

- Bright, Deborah. "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography." *The Contest of Meaning*. Ed. Richard Bolton. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).
- Corner, James. "Introduction: Recovering Landscape as a Critical Cultural Practice," and "Eidetic Landscapes and New Practices." *Recovering Landscape: Essays in Contemporary Landscape Architecture*. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999).
- Jackson, John Brinckerhoff. "The Word Itself," from *Landscape in Sight: Looking at America*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).
- Meining, D. W. ed. "Introduction," from *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).
- Snyder, Joel. "Territorial Photography." *Landscape and Power*. Ed. W. J. T. Mitchell. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

### Artist's Projects/ Bibliography

- Adams, Ansel. *Ansel Adams*. (Hastings-on-Hudson: Morgan & Morgan, 1972).
- Adams, Robert. *To Make it Home: Photographs of the American West*. (New York: Aperture; Philadelphia: The Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1989).
- The Altered Landscape*. Poole, Peter E., ed. (Reno: Nevada Museum of Art, 1999).
- Arden, Roy. *Selected Works 1985-2000*. (Oakville, Ontario: Oakville Galleries, 2002).
- Ascher, Kate. *The Works: Anatomy of a City*. (New York: The Penguin Press, 2005).
- Between Home and Heaven: Contemporary American Landscape Photography*. (Washington, DC: National Museum of American Art Smithsonian Institution; Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1992).
- Berger, John and Mohr, Jean. *Another Way of Telling*. (Vintage Books: New York, 1982).
- Burtynsky, Edward. *Manufactured Landscapes: The Photographs of Edward Burtynsky*. (New Haven: Yale University Press; Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2003).
- The Contest of Meaning*. Ed. Richard Bolton. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992).
- Corner, James and Alex MacLean. *Taking Measures Across the American Landscape*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

- Cosgrove, Denis. *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).
- Dawson, Robert, Haslam, Gerald, Johnson, Stephen. *The Great Central Valley: California's Heartland*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
- Deller, Jeremy. *After The Gold Rush*. (Oakland: CCAC, 2002).
- Evens, Terry. *Disarming the Prairie*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).
- Foucault, Michael. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980).
- Goin, Peter. *Humanature*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).
- Goin, Peter. *Nuclear Landscapes*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991).
- Hanson, David T. *Waste Land: Mediations on a Ravaged Landscape*. (New York: Aperture, 1997).
- Heartney, Eleanor. "Ecopolitics/Ecopoetry: Helen and Newton Harrison's Environmentalist Talking Cure." *But is it Art?: The Spirit of Art as Activism*, Ed. Nina Felshin. (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995).
- Horn, Roni. *Another Water*. (Paris: Scalo Verlag, 2000).
- The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the symbolic representation, design and use of past environments*. Ed. Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
- James, Geoffrey. *Running Fence*. (North Vancouver: Presentation House Gallery, 1999).
- Jussim, Estelle and Lindquist-Cook, Elizabeth. *Landscape as Photograph*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
- Kelley, Margot Anne. *Local Treasures: Geocaching Across America*. (Staunton, VA: Center for American Places), publication forthcoming (October 2005, ant.).
- Kwon, Miwon. *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002).
- Landscape and Power*. Ed. W. J. T. Mitchell. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
- Mappings*. Ed. Denis Cosgrove. (London: Reaktion 1999).
- McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. (New York: Routledge, 1995).
- Misrach, Richard. *Bravo 20: The Bombing of The American West*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).
- Misrach, Richard. *Crimes and Splendors: The Desert Cantos of Richard Misrach*. (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1996).
- Naef, Weston. *Era of Exploration: The Rise of Landscape Photography in the American West, 1860-1885*. (New York: The Buffalo Fine Arts Academy, The Albright Knox Art Gallery, The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Rapaport Printing Company, 1975).
- Nickel, Douglas. *Carleton Watkins: The Art of Perception*. (San Francisco: The San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1999).
- Phelps, Brent. *The Lewis and Clark Trail Photographic Survey*.
- Robinson, H. P. *Letters on Landscape Photography*. (New York: Arno Press, 1973).
- Ruscha, Ed. *Ed Ruscha and Photography*. (Gottingen: Steidl; New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, 2004).
- Ruscha, Ed. *Every Building on the Sunset Strip*. Self-published.
- Ruscha, Ed. *Real Estate Opportunities*. (Ed Ruscha, 1970).
- Shibata, Toshio. Japanese Landscapes and American Images series.
- Shore, Stephen. *Uncommon Places*. (New York: Aperture, 1982).
- Soth, Alec. *Sleeping by the Mississippi*. (Gottingen: Steidl, 2004).
- Sternfeld, Joel. *On This Site*. (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1996).
- Tucker, Anne Wilkes. *Crimes and Splendors: The Desert Cantos of Richard Misrach*. (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1996).

Turnbull, David. *Maps Are Territories: Science is an Atlas*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989).

*Visions of America: Landscape as Metaphor in the Late Twentieth Century*. (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1994).

Wells, Liz. *Facing East: Contemporary Landscape Photography from Baltic Areas*. (Exhibition catalogue,; The Gallery at the Arts Institute at Bournemouth, 2004).

Winer, Josh. Selected work, 2004-2005.

Wood, Dennis, *The Power of Maps*. (New York: The Guilford Press, 1992).

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