

## **THE LAY OF THE LAND**

Fall 2009, Parsons The New School for Design  
6764-PUPH-4300-A  
Tuesday 9-11:40am  
6 E. 16<sup>th</sup> St., Room 1008

Leslie Grant  
grantl@newschool.edu  
Office Hours: by appointment

### **Description:**

“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.” John Brinckerhoff Jackson

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.

As a seminar-style lecture course, students will be expected to complete assigned readings, 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.

### **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  
Activities - lecture, discussion of conceptual issues, field trips and critique.  
Assignments - photography projects, readings, a class research presentation.

**Course Objectives:** A critical understanding of issues in landscape photography

**Required Reading:** All readings will be posted on Blackboard and are also available at Parsons Gimbel Library or NYU Bobst Library.

**Grading:** Attendance and participation (20%), completion of readings (10%), three photo assignments (30%) and a photo based final project including a proposal and class research presentation (40%)

Please be respectful during this course. Attend class on time, be prepared for each class, listen while others are speaking, and turn off your cell phones. I reserve the right to ask any student to leave the classroom if they do not abide by these standards of behavior.

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

### 9/1 Introduction: Defining the genre

Read and discuss in class: Meining, D. W. "Introduction," from *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*. (New York: Oxford U. Press, 1979).

Field trip to the Highline, in class videos

#### **Readings:**

\*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. Bring a print out of the reading to aid your discussion.

- Corner, James. "Eidetic Landscapes and New Practices." in *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).

#### **Assignments:**

Bring past work to share in class.

Write a one-two page reflection on a landscape that stands out in your memory, or that effected you in some way. Typed, printed, stapled.

### 9/8 Landscape Studies: Contemporary Theories

Review in class videos

Look at past student work

#### **Reading:**

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

#### **Assignments:**

Choose a historical landscape photograph that you like, and bring a copy to next class. Think about why it was made, what it means, how we can consider it today.

### 9/15 Briefly, A History of US Landscape Photography

Student-led discussion of historical images

#### **Reading:**

- 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).

### 9/22 Issues in Photography & Contemporary Practice I

Review work-in-progress for 1<sup>st</sup> assignment

#### **Assignment:**

1<sup>st</sup> photo assignment due in the next class (10/6) for critique.

### 9/29 No Class (Monday make-up day)

### 10/6 Critique

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

**Assignment:**

Start researching and thinking about your final project. Come to next class with a list of ideas, references, inspirations (images, texts, articles, novels, poems, movies, etc.) to share in class.

**10/13** Contemporary Practice II: Mappings  
Discuss ideas for final project

**Reading:**

- Rimanelli, David. "On Hanna Liden." In *Artforum*, January 2006.
- TBD

**Assignment:**

Proposal for final project due in next class.

**10/20** Contemporary Practice III: Alternative Practices  
\*Proposal for final project due

**Assignment:**

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

**10/27** Critique  
\*2<sup>nd</sup> photo assignment

**11/3** Field Trip: Exhibition Visit TBD

**11/10** Individual meetings

**Assignment:**

3<sup>rd</sup> photo assignment due in the next class for critique.

**11/17** Critique  
\*3<sup>rd</sup> photo assignment

**Assignment:**

Research presentations due next class.

**11/24** Student research presentations

**12/1** Guest Lecture: TBD  
Critique of final project work-in-progress

**12/8** Final Critique

**12/15** Final Critique

### **Three Photography Assignments**

These three shooting assignments correspond with three types of landscape near or within NYC, based on scale and context. You will travel to each type of site and photograph. Examples are given below, but you may pick your three sites based on your own research.

Your final project will include a photography project and a class research presentation. You may choose one of the sites you photographed for the three assignments, or pick a new one.

#### **The three landscape types:**

1. A state park-like environment -- as relates to traditional landscape photography, presenting “natural” nature  
eg. Any state park (<http://nysparks.state.ny.us/>), Fresh Kills in Staten Island, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge in Brooklyn, etc.
2. A city park - a “natural” looking environment within an urban context, one that can mostly avoid the context because of size  
eg. Central or Prospect Park, Riverside Park, the Cloisters, a beach, a farm, etc.
3. A city garden - an interior space in an office building, plaza, a garden in a private residence or public space which has been designed as such, a leftover piece of land that is still “natural” to some degree, where the context cannot be ignored  
eg. The Ford Foundation atrium garden, The World Financial Center Winter Garden, Broadway Alley, Time Landscape, a garden or series of private gardens, rooftop gardens, greenhouses, etc.

#### **Readings: (some short additions may be made throughout the semester)**

- 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. “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).
- Rimanelli, David. “On Hanna Liden.” In *Artforum*, January 2006.
- Snyder, Joel. “Territorial Photography.” *Landscape and Power*. Ed. W. J. T. Mitchell. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

#### **Selected 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).
- Brechin, Gray and Dawson, Robert. *Farewell, Promised Land: Waking from the California Dream*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
- Burtynsky, Edward. *Manufactured Landscapes: The Photographs of Edward Burtynsky*. (New Haven: Yale University Press; Ottawa: National Gallery of Canada, 2003).
- Center for Land Use Interpretation: [www.clui.org](http://www.clui.org)
- 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).
- Else/where: Mapping New Cartographies of Networks and Territories*. Abrams, Janet and Hall, Peter, Eds. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Design Institute, 2006).
- 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).
- Harmon, Katherine. *You Are Here: Personal geographies and Other Maps of the Imagination*. (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004).
- 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*. (Stauton, VA: Center for American Places, 2005).
- Kwon, Miwon. *One Place After Another: Site-specific Art and Locational Identity*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002).

Kurland, Justine. Selected works.  
*Landscape and Power*. Ed. W. J. T. Mitchell. (Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1994).

Le, An-My. *Small Wars*. (New York: Aperture, 2005).

Liden, Hanna. Selected works.

Lorenz, Marie. Selected projects, including *Tide and Current Taxi* (2005-ongoing).  
*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).

*Overlook: Exploring the Internal Fringes of America with The Center For Land Use Interpretation*. (New York: Metropolis Books/D.A.P. /Metropolis Magazine, 2006).

Phelps, Brent. *The Lewis and Clark Trail Photographic Survey*.

Riley, Duke. Selected projects, including *After the Battle of Brooklyn* (2007), *Those About to Die Salute You* (2009).

Rimanelli, David. "On Hanna Liden." In *Artforum*, January 2006.

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).

Soth, Alec. *Niagara*. (Gottingen: Steidl, 2006).

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).

*Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*. Cronon, William Ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1995).

*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 Gilford Press, 1992).