

GGE 302: Cultural Geography – Fall 2009

8:00-8:30 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, Advanced Sci and Tech Hall 309

Prof. Stentor Danielson

Office: Advanced Technology and Science Hall, Room 327 (enter through the Geography main office, Room 319, and go straight back then take a right)

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Office hours: Official office hours are Monday 1-2 pm, Thursday 10-noon, and Friday 10-noon. My door is generally always open when I am in the office, and I welcome students anytime I'm in.

About this class

All human activity is cultural – shaped by learned patterns of meaning and practice. And all cultural activity is geographical – it happens in particular places and across particular spaces. In this course, we will explore how culture is shaped by the places it comes from and moves into, and how it shapes those places.

This class is built around two key concepts: the cultural landscape, and activity spaces. A *cultural landscape* is a landscape that has been physically modified and/or interpreted by cultural beings. An *activity space* is the section of the Earth – and thus the set of landscapes – relevant to a person's life.

Outcomes

By the end of this course, a successful student will be able to:

- Define and identify examples of key contemporary social science terms, including culture, nature, symbolism, perception, objectivity, situatedness, gender, livelihood, power, identity, social structure, inequality, representation, marginalization, de- and re-territorialization, and social construction.
- Explain how cultures are maintained and changed.
- Analyze the formation and change of cultural landscapes and their relationship to natural landscapes.
- Appreciate differences in cultural perspectives with respect to geographical topics.
- Critically evaluate “scientific” and “non-scientific” claims about the world.
- Identify the consequences of various forms of human diversity (such as gender, disability, and ethnicity) for people's lives and their environments, and how particular landscapes and environments create or ameliorate inequality and suffering.
- Describe how cultural landscapes shape and are shaped by political-economic forces, particularly capitalism.
- Describe the causes and consequences of the movement of cultures and people between places.
- Analyze the representation of landscapes and space in art, literature, and film.
- Explain the role of particular places in establishing individual and group identity and memory.

This course addresses the following departmental outcomes:

- Each graduate will demonstrate an understanding of features and patterns of the human

environment. (4.2)

- Each graduate will demonstrate an understanding of the major spatial features and patterns in the cultural environment such as language, religion, and agriculture and economic, political, and demographic regions. (4.7)
- Each graduate will demonstrate an understanding of the major processes such as settlement, migration, trade, technological development, diffusion, and landscape transformation that shape cultural patterns. (4.8)
- Each graduate shall develop the ability to respect and integrate diverse worldviews in problem-solving frameworks. (1.5)
- Each graduate will deliver oral presentations, demonstrating the ability to effectively communicate discipline-specific concepts. (1.1)
- Each graduate will write scholarly papers using acceptable format and organization with proper citations to appropriate literature. (1.2)
- Each graduate will demonstrate professionalism and integrity in his/her academic conduct. (1.4)
- Each graduate will demonstrate the ability to develop valid research questions and hypotheses. (2.1)
- Each graduate will demonstrate the ability to apply proper techniques for data acquisition and interpretation in a problem-solving context. (2.2)
- Each graduate will demonstrate the ability to solve open-ended problems using scientific methodology. (2.3)
- Each graduate will develop the ability to make informed, scientifically-based decisions regarding environmental issues. (2.4)

And the following university-wide outcomes:

- Communication: Communicate effectively in speech and in writing, using appropriate information sources, presentation formats, and technologies. (1)
- Critical Thinking and Problem Solving: Locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information and ideas from multiple perspectives--mathematical, scientific, and humanistic. Apply this information literacy to contemporary challenges. (2)
- Values and Ethics: Demonstrate an understanding of how the values of personal integrity, cooperative action, and respect for diversity influence one's own behavior and the individual and group behavior of others. (3)
- Social Awareness and Civic Responsibility: Use knowledge of evolving human institutions and of diverse cultural and historical perspectives to interact effectively in a variety of social and political contexts. (4)
- Global Interdependence: Act with an understanding of the cultural, socio-economic, and biological interdependence of planetary life. (5)
- Personal Development: Demonstrate intellectual curiosity, as well as a commitment to wellness, and to emotional and spiritual growth. (6)
- Professional Proficiency: Apply knowledge and skills to meet professional competencies within a specific discipline. (8)

Assignments

General assignments policies

All written assignments must be handed in at the beginning of class on the day they're due.

Assignments will be docked one +/- grade (e.g. from a B+ to a B) for each 24 hours or part thereof they are late, unless a documented unforeseeable excuse is provided. Since you have the entire semester's schedule now, please plan your time so as to complete all assignments early, so that you are prepared if something unexpected happens. Written assignments may be printed double-sided or on old paper (i.e. paper that has had something else printed on the other side). Late assignments may be dropped off at my office or submitted by email in .doc, .docx, or .odt (OpenOffice.org -- a free program equivalent to MS Office) format. But be aware that the assignment does not count as handed in until I can read it (so the clock keeps ticking if your file is corrupted, or isn't attached to the email, etc.).

Word limits are meant to give you a sense of how comprehensive the paper ought to be, not as strict rules. If you have something important to say, say it. If you don't, don't waste your time (and mine) by padding the word count.

All information you acquire from sources other than your own creativity must be appropriately cited. I prefer APA style (see the library website for details), but any complete and consistent citation format is acceptable. I expect students to exercise critical judgment in evaluating sources, both from the internet and from the library. If you have any questions about sources or citations, please talk to me before the due date – I would rather have you do it right than lose points for doing it wrong.

1. *Symbolic Landscape: Due Oct. 2*

Select a landscape that you're familiar with (the more mundane and taken-for-granted, the better!). Using the book *Reinventing Eden* as a guide, think about the symbolism of that landscape. What do the various aspects of that landscape represent to the people who live there? Is there an overarching metaphor that organizes the landscape? How does this symbolic understanding shape inhabitants' activity spaces and the physical alterations they make to the landscape? Write an essay of 1500-2000 words describing your landscape and the answers to the above questions.

2. *Cultural Diffusion: Due Oct. 30*

Select a feature of your own culture. Using the library and internet, research the origins and path of that feature. Where did it come from? How did it get to you? How has it changed as it moved between places? How did it change the places and people it encountered? (Focus on the cultural trait, not the particular object that is an instance of it – e.g. tell me about how tomatoes were domesticated by the Aztecs, not about how your particular tomatoes were picked in California.) Write an essay of 1500-2000 words describing your answers to the above questions.

3. *Landscapes on Film: Due Nov. 20*

Choose a work of film that you think makes interesting use of landscape – it may be a movie, a TV show episode, or a web-only video, and it may be live-action or animated. The work or section of a longer work that you focus on should be 8-12 minutes long, and be freely and legally available for me to watch (e.g. on YouTube.com or Hulu.com, or in the university library, or you may loan me your personal DVD of it). Consider how the landscape appears in the film, and investigate how the film was created and what choices the film-makers made in portraying the landscape. Write a short essay (1500-2000 words) that addresses the following questions:

1. What is the role that the landscape plays in this film? Is it simply a backdrop, or could it be considered an actor in its own right?

2. Does the film's use of landscape reveal anything about the film-makers' culture or assumptions that the film maker may not be aware of?
3. How does the film's use of landscape illustrate, complicate, or challenge one or more of the themes we discussed earlier in the class?
4. If you were to re-make this film, how – if at all – would you handle the landscape differently?

4. Place Promotion: Due on Dec. 14

I will assign members of the class to groups of 3-4 students. Each group should imagine that Slippery Rock is under consideration as a site for a major international event (your choice of event). Your task is to design a strategy for the town to present itself to the event's organizing committee, and to potential attendees if and when Slippery Rock is selected. Each group will present its plan in class on Dec. 14. Your presentation should consist of two parts: 1) the “pitch,” that is, what you would present to the organizing committee and tourists, and 2) a more reflective and self-critical section that takes us “behind the scenes” of your plan to highlight the choices you made and their potential effects.

As you create your place promotion plan, think about the following questions:

- 1) How is your plan selective in its use of existing elements of Slippery Rock's landscape? What does it highlight, and what does it leave out?
- 2) How might the existing residents of Slippery Rock react to the image of their home that you plan to promote?
- 3) How might your plan require the physical or social modification of Slippery Rock's landscape, in order to better conform to the image being sold?
- 4) What might be the longer-term repercussions of emphasizing this particular construction of the landscape, after the event is long over?

Your presentation should last no more than 15 minutes. Time spent dealing with technical problems count against your presentation time, so it is advisable to come to class early and test out your audiovisual elements.

5. Final exam: TBA

The final exam will be held during the time slot that the university assigns to this class. It will be a combination of short answer and essay questions covering all reading and class discussion material from the semester.

Grading

The final grade for this class will consist of:

- 20% Symbolic Landscape assignment
- 20% Cultural Diffusion assignment
- 20% Landscapes on Film assignment
- 20% Place Promotion group assignment
- 20% Final exam

Attendance and Preparation

Cultural geography is a complex subject, and no manageable set of readings can cover all of the information that I think is important to highlight on each topic. I expect all students to attend

every class, because class lectures and discussions will be key to learning the material. While attendance is not factored into your grade, priority for outside-of-class help (such as office hours) will be given to those students who attend class regularly. You should come prepared to talk about the readings. I will frequently pose problems for you to investigate between classes. While these problems are not factored into your grade, I expect you to put in substantial time working on them so that we can have a productive class when we reconvene.

I assume that all members of this class are adults who have chosen to take this class because you are interested in learning about cultural geography. Therefore, behavior that is disruptive to your own learning or that of others will not be tolerated, and you will be asked to leave. Such behavior includes: eating, smoking, sleeping, working on work for other classes or personal business, talking about topics other than cultural geography, and the use of non-approved electronic devices (iPods, laptops, cell phones, etc. – all cell phones must be *turned off* when you enter the class and remain off until you leave).

Special Needs

Your ability to master the class material should not be hindered by anything other than your own effort. If you have a disability, health issue, outside responsibility, or other concern that may affect your ability to succeed in this class, do not hesitate to contact me or the university's Office for Students with Disabilities (738-4877, linda.quidone@sru.edu, 122 Bailey Library), and we will work together to find an accommodation for you.

Changes

While I do not expect much to change about this syllabus, I reserve the right to make changes and will notify students of them in class and/or by email.

Readings

There are three books for this class, plus a collection of shorter readings. The books are available through the campus bookstore, or from an online seller such as powells.com or amazon.com. Most of the readings are available through the library's electronic reserve system (these are marked [E-Reserve]), as well as a few in paper form (marked [Reserve]) and a few online (URL given after the citation). You are expected to have thoughtfully read each week's readings by the beginning of the week. Many weeks have fairly large reading loads, so plan ahead and don't wait until the weekend before to start reading.

Merchant, Carolyn. 2003. *Reinventing Eden: the fate of nature in Western culture*. New York: Routledge.

Robbins, Paul 2007. *Lawn People: how grasses, weeds, and chemicals make us who we are*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Washington, Sylvia Hood. 2005. *Packing them in: an archaeology of environmental racism in Chicago, 1865-1954*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

One good strategy for thoughtful reading is called the “yes, no, hmm” method. That is, after finishing the article you should come up with at least one important thing you think the author got right (“yes”), one thing the author got wrong (“no”), and one thing the author said that prompted you to think more deeply and go beyond the text (“hmm”). I expect all students to participate in class discussions, so thinking about the reading in this way will ensure that you have something to contribute.

I reserve the right to add graded response papers to the class if it becomes apparent from class discussions that a substantial number of students are not doing the reading, or not doing it thoughtfully.

Blackboard

I will use the Blackboard system to distribute assignments, and to send messages about the class. Students should make sure that they are able to log in to the class's Blackboard site as well as the electronic reserves for this class on the library website. It is your responsibility to contact ITS or the library if you have a problem. You are also responsible for checking your SRU email account daily, as I will be sending class emails through Blackboard to those addresses.

Academic Honesty

Cheating (any method for getting the correct answers other than knowing the material yourself) and plagiarism (representing others' work as your own) will not be tolerated, and I will be alert for signs of both. In your papers, any idea that you take from any person other than yourself must be properly cited, and any words or phrases that you take from others must be clearly marked as quotations. You may discuss ideas with your classmates, or get help proofreading, but all of the writing must be your own. On the first instance of cheating or plagiarism, you will receive a zero for that assignment. On the second instance, you will receive a zero for the course. Review the section in your Student Handbook on Academic Honesty for a more detailed explanation of the university's procedures for handling cheating and plagiarism.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

Week 1, Aug. 31–Sept. 4: What is culture? Meaning, practice, and inquiry

What is culture? How do people learn cultures?

Bohannon, L. (1971). Shakespeare in the bush. In J. Spradley & D. McCurdy (Eds.), *Conformity and conflict: readings in cultural anthropology*. Boston: Little Brown and Co.
http://law.ubalt.edu/downloads/law_downloads/IRC_Shakespeare_in_the_Bush.pdf

Ingold, T. (2000). *The perception of the environment: essays on livelihood, dwelling and skill*. New York: Routledge. Chapter 1. [E-Reserve]

Week 2, Sept. 9–11: The idea of landscape

What is a landscape? What is the human relationship to the landscape?

Robertson, Iain, and Penny Richards. 2003. Introduction. In *Studying cultural landscapes*, ed. Iain Robertson and Richards, 1-18. London: Arnold. [Reserve]

Thompson, M. (1997). Security and solidarity: an anti-reductionist framework for thinking about the relationship between us and the rest of nature. *Geographical Journal*, 163(2), 141-149. [E-Reserve]

Week 3, Sept. 14–18: Landscape as symbol

How do cultures organize their understanding of the landscape?

Merchant, Carolyn. 2003. *Reinventing Eden: the fate of nature in Western culture*. New York: Routledge.

Week 4, Sept. 21–23: Landscape as science

Can science give us an objective representation of the landscape?

Davis, Jeffrey Sasha. 2005. "Is it really safe? That's what we want to know": science, stories, and dangerous places. *Professional Geographer* 57, no. 2: 213-221. [E-Reserve]

Fairhead, James, and Melissa Leach. 1996. Rethinking the forest-savanna mosaic: colonial science and its relics in west Africa. In *The lie of the land: challenging received wisdom on the African environment*, ed. M. Leach and R. Mearns, 105-121. Oxford: The International African Institute. [E-Reserve]

Wynne, B. (1989). Sheepfarming after Chernobyl: a case study in communicating scientific information. *Environment*, 31(2), 10-15, 33-39. [E-Reserve]

No class on Friday because of the departmental retreat

Week 5, Sept. 28–Oct. 2: Gendered landscapes, gendering landscapes

How are landscapes given gender attributes? How do landscapes reproduce, or subvert, people's gender roles?

Carney, J. A., & Watts, M. (1991). Disciplining women? Rice, mechanization, and the evolution of Mandinka gender relations in Senegambia. *Signs*, 16(4), 651-681. [E-Reserve]

Rome, Adam. (2006). "Political hermaphrodites": gender and environmental reform in progressive America. *Environmental History* 11, no. 3. <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/eh/11.3/rome.html>.

Starkweather, Sarah (2007). Gender, perceptions of safety and strategic responses among Ohio University students. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 14(3): 355-370. [E-Reserve]

Symbolic Landscape assignment due on Friday.

Week 6, Oct. 5–9: Landscapes of livelihood

How do landscapes organize, and how are they organized by, people's way of making a living?

Boyer, K. (1998). Place and the politics of virtue: clerical work, corporate anxiety, and changing meanings of public womanhood in early twentieth-century Montreal. *Gender, Place, and Culture*, 5, 261-276. [E-Reserve]

Shiva, Vandana. (2005). Poverty and globalization. Reith Lecture. http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/static/events/reith_2000/lecture5.stm.

Walker, P. A., & Fortmann, L. (2003). Whose landscape? a political ecology of the "exurban" Sierra. *Cultural Geographies*, 10, 469-491. [E-Reserve]

Week 7, Oct. 14–16: Landscapes of movement

What happens when people, ideas, and practices move between places?

- Androutsopoulos, J. & Scholz, A. (2003). Spaghetti funk: Appropriations of hip-hop culture and rap music in Europe. *Popular Music and Society*, 26: 463-497. [E-Reserve]
- Schmook, B., & Radel, C. (2008). International labor migration from a tropical development frontier: globalizing households and an incipient forest transition: the southern Yucatán case. *Human Ecology*, 36(6). [E-Reserve]
- Pilcher, Jeffrey M. (2001). Tex-Mex, Cal-Mex, New Mex, or whose Mex? Notes on the historical geography of Southwestern cuisine. *Journal of the Southwest*, 43(4): 659-680. [E-Reserve]

Week 8, Oct. 19–23: Landscapes of capitalism

How has the capitalist economic system created new landscapes, and created the people to live in them?

- Robbins, P. (2007). *Lawn People: How grasses, weeds, and chemicals make us who we are*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Week 9, Oct. 26–30: Landscapes of home, landscapes of fear

How do landscapes become welcoming or non-welcoming for people?

- Che, D. (2005). Constructing a prison in the forest: conflicts over nature, paradise, and identity. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 95(4), 809-831. [E-Reserve]
- Johnson, Cassandra Y., and J. M. Bowker. (2004). African-American wildland memories. *Environmental Ethics* 26: 57-75. [E-Reserve]
- Hansen, N. & Philo, C. (2007). The normality of doing things differently: Bodies, spaces and disability geography. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 98(4): 493-506. [E-Reserve]
- Tuan, Yi-Fu. (1974). *Topophilia: a study of environmental perception, attitudes, and values*. New York: Columbia University Press, Chapter 8. [E-Reserve]

Cultural Diffusion assignment due on Friday.

Week 10, Nov. 2–6: Representations of landscapes

How are landscapes represented in art, literature, and film? What role do those representations play in the cultures that make them?

- Horton, A. (2003). Reel landscapes: cinematic environments documented and created. In I. Robertson & P. Richards (Eds.), *Studying cultural landscapes* (pp. 71-92). London: Arnold. [Reserve]
- Charlesworth, A. (2003). Landscapes of the Holocaust: Schindler, authentic history and the lie of the landscape. In I. Robertson & P. Richards (Eds.), *Studying cultural landscapes* (pp. 93-107). London: Arnold. [Reserve]
- Tolkien, J.R.R. (1954) *The Two Towers*, Chapter 4, selected scenes (from the beginning of the chapter through the end of the story of the Entwives) [E-Reserve]

Week 11, Nov. 9–13: Landscapes of “nature”

Is there such a thing as a “natural landscape”?

- Denevan, W. M. (1992). The pristine myth: the landscape of the Americas in 1492. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 82(3), 369-385. [E-Reserve]
- Vale, T. R. (2002). The pre-European landscape of the United States: pristine or humanized? In *Fire, native peoples, and the natural landscape* (pp. 1-39). Washington DC: Island Press. [E-Reserve]
- Saberwal, Vasant K. 1996. Pastoral politics: Gaddi grazing, degradation, and biodiversity conservation in Himchal Pradesh, India. *Conservation Biology* 10, no. 3: 741-749. [E-Reserve]

Week 12, Nov. 16–20: Landscape promotion

How do people construct images of their landscapes in order to influence outsiders?

- Bell, Claudia. (2007). Local claims to fame: rural identity assertion in New Zealand. *Space and Culture*, 10(1): 129-132. [E-Reserve]
- Erickson, Bill and Marion Roberts. (1997). Marketing local identity. *Journal of Urban Design*, (2)1. [E-Reserve]
- McCallum, Katherine, Amy Spencer, and Elvin Wyly. (2005). The city as an image-creation machine: a critical analysis of Vancouver's Olympic bid. *Association of Pacific Coast Geographers Yearbook* 67: 24-46. [E-Reserve]
- Stevenson, Deborah, David Rowe, and Kevin Markwell. (2005). Explorations in 'event ecology': the case of the International Gay Games. *Social Identities*, 11(5): 447-465. [E-Reserve]

Landscapes on Film group project due on Nov. 20.

Week 13, Nov. 23–Dec. 4: Landscapes of history

How are landscapes reshaped over time? How well is that history remembered?

- Washington, Sylvia Hood. 2005. *Packing them in: an archaeology of environmental racism in Chicago, 1865-1954*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Week 14, Dec. 7-11: Landscapes of remembrance

How do societies use landscapes to commemorate important events? How do they decide what to commemorate and how to present it?

- Alderman, Derek H. (2000). A street fit for a King: Naming places and commemoration in the American South. *Professional Geographer* 52 (4): 672-684. [E-Reserve]
- Gough, P. (2000). From heroes' groves to parks of peace: landscapes of remembrance, protest and peace. *Landscape Research*, 25(2), 213-228. [E-Reserve]
- Series of links to newspaper articles about the new WWII memorial in Washington DC.* [Blackboard]

Week 15, Dec. 14: Presentations for Place Promotion projects

Final Exam 8-10 a.m. on Dec. 16.

General essay and presentation grading rubric:

Item	A	B	C	D	F
Relevance 20%	Gives a complete, thoughtful, and integrated answer to all questions in the assignment	Addresses all questions, but gives insufficient depth to some, fails to link them together	Addresses all questions in a perfunctory way, omits some questions or adds irrelevant digressions	Veers significantly from the assigned topic	Essay is on a completely irrelevant topic
Use of concepts 20%	Demonstrates complete mastery of key cultural geography ideas	Makes good use of relevant ideas from cultural geography	Is able to use cultural geography ideas, but may miss relevant ones or use them in a shallow or somewhat mistaken way	Significant misuse of cultural geography ideas	Absence of relevant cultural geography ideas, or pervasive failure to understand them
Use of information and sources 20%	All arguments fully supported by information that is relevant and obtained from reliable sources	Adequate use of information and sources relevant to the argument	Signs of inattention to source quality, some information presented irrelevant or missing but necessary	Failure to distinguish reliable and unreliable sources, “kitchen sink” approach to research results	Large gaps in research and irrelevant digressions, use of manifestly unreliable sources
Citations 10%	All information cited in a clear and consistent manner	Citations may be partially incomplete	Significant inconsistencies in citation style, important points not cited	Pervasive failure to cite sources or to cite them in an understandable way	Citations absent or impossible to follow
Grammar and writing/speaking 10%	Impeccable grammar and writing style that is enjoyable to read and appropriate to the subject matter	Generally consistent grammar and an easy to understand writing style	Significant grammar mistakes and writing style that is stilted or inappropriate	Rampant grammar mistakes and awkward writing that make it difficult to follow the argument	Pervasive grammar mistakes and clear lack of care about the readability of the text
Insight 20%	Raises new ideas that enter new ground in cultural geography and/or strongly stimulate my own thinking	Reaches deep and substantive conclusions that go beyond the class material	Draws conclusions consistent with the class material, or further insights which are significantly flawed	Contains original ideas that are shallow or clearly incorrect	Lacks any original ideas