

Texts and Ideas: Nature

Core-UA 400.019
Fall 2012
Time TR 3:30-4:45
Location SIL 207

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Teaching Assistants : Yitzchak Schwartz, Joshua Sooter, Rachel Welsh

Course Description: This course aims to familiarize students with some of the ways in which the idea of “nature” has emerged in western culture, from its origins in early creation myths to its current incarnation as a focus of ethical and policy debates. The first half of the course will be devoted to an examination of texts from the “Judeo-Christian” and Hellenic traditions (the two presumed pillars of the “western tradition”) as well as a selection of key seventeenth and eighteenth-century texts. In the second half of the course we will see how many of these ideas were appropriated, reconsidered, and occasionally rejected in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Because we will not have time to examine every aspect of the history of the idea of nature, we will spend most of the semester looking at a set of problems arising out of conflicting ideas about the purpose of nature and the relationship between human beings—both as individuals and social groups—and nature.

Course Requirements:

Reading: All required readings for the week must be done in their entirety before your recitation section meets.

Writing: Midterm exam, final exam, and four short papers (4-5 pages or 1200-1500 words) N.B. The short papers are due on NYU Classes and under no circumstances will extensions be granted or papers accepted by other means. Paper topics will be posted on NYU Classes at least a week in advance of the due date.

Participation: Attendance and participation in all recitation section assignments are required. N.B. Your performance in recitation section counts more than any single assignment; therefore it is in your interests to prepare and participate.

Statistics: Grades break down as follows:
Exams 25% (12.5% each), Short Papers 50% (12.5% each), Section 25%

Electronic Devices Policy: Students who wish to use laptop computers or Tablets may do so **in the back row only**. No other devices (cellular telephones, electronic organizers, cameras, tape recorders etc.) may be used in class. Hearing impaired students who wish to use a recording device may do so, but must present documentation from the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities.

Plagiarism Policy: Plagiarism of any kind will result in an F on the assignment in question. Two-time offenders will fail the course. **N.B. Post facto discoveries of plagiarism will count as your second offense.** For more see the Core Curriculum's statement on plagiarism on the last page of this syllabus.

Readings: (All books are available at the University Bookstore and on reserve at Bobst Library). You may, of course, purchase the books from other vendors, however **please purchase the edition below.**

The Bible Revised Standard Version (Oxford)

Carson, Rachel. Silent Spring (Houghton Mifflin)

Defoe, Daniel. Robinson Crusoe (Penguin Classics)

Foster, Benjamin ed and trans. Gilgamesh (Norton)

Locke, John. Second Treatise on Government (Hackett)

London, Jack. Call of the Wild (Dover)

McPhee, John. Encounters with the Archdruid (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux)

Plato. Timaeus and Critias (Oxford)

Shakespeare. The Tempest (Folger Library/Washington Square Press)

Thoreau, Henry. Walden (Dover)

White, Fred ed. The Essential Muir (Heyday)

White, Richard. The Organic Machine (Hill and Wang)

Lecture and Reading Schedule:

Week 1

9/2 Introduction to the Course: What do we mean when we say "nature"?

Week 2

9/7 Labor Day Holiday

9/9 The Wild and the Tame

Gilgamesh, Tablets 1-8

Week 3

9/14 How Creation Stories Have Shaped Our View of Nature

The Bible, Genesis, chs 1-5

9/16 Nature and Causation

Timaeus, Books 1-12.

Week 4 (First Paper due on NYU Classes by 5PM Friday)

9/21 Nature and Causation II

Timaeus, Books 13-24

Aristotle, selections on NYU Classes

9/23 Unnatural Calamities

Critias, entire

The Bible, Genesis chs. 6-11

Gilgamesh, Tablets 10-11

Week 5

9/28 The Wild and the Tame Revisited I
Shakespeare The Tempest

9/30 The Wild and the Tame Revisited II
Shakespeare, The Tempest (Finish Reading Before Recitation)

Week 6 (Second Paper due on NYU Classes by 5PM Friday)

10/5 Getting Nature to Tell the Truth
Bacon, New Atlantis (NYU Classes)

10/7 From Nature to Property
Second Treatise on Government, CHs I-IX; XVI

Week 7 (MONDAY CLASSES MEET ON TUESDAY)

10/13 Property in Action
Robinson Crusoe, 5-103

10/14 Property and its Discontents
Robinson Crusoe 104-200.

Week 8 (Third Paper due on NYU Classes by 5PM Friday)

10/19 A Political Economy of Nature or a Natural Political Economy?
Robinson Crusoe, 201-349; 456-77.

10/21 Review of First Part of Course

Week 9

10/26 **Midterm Examination**

10/28 Back to the Land, or just Pretending?
Walden, 1-52.

Week 10

11/2 Nature's Economy
Walden 53-64; 100-130

11/4 Knowing Nature, Knowing Yourself
The Essential Muir, Parts 2 and 3

Week 11

11/9 Inventing an American Wilderness Ideal
The Essential Muir Parts 4 and 5

11/11 The Wilderness Ideal and Human Authenticity
The Call of the Wild, entire

Week 12 (Fourth Paper due on NYU Classes 5PM Friday)

11/16 The Wilderness Ideal and its Discontents
Leopold, "Wilderness." (NYU Classes)
Leopold, "Thinking Like a Mountain" (NYU Classes)
Leopold, "Conservation Esthetic" (NYU Classes)
Leopold, "The Land Ethic" (NYU Classes)

Cronon, "The Trouble With Wilderness" (NYU Classes)

11/18 Are Humans Making a New Nature?
Silent Spring, Chs. 1-6

Week 13

11/23 Destroying Nature, Destroying Ourselves
Silent Spring, Chs. 13-17

11/25 **Thanksgiving Holiday**

Week 14

11/30 Can Nature be Saved?
Encounters with the Archdruid, Parts 1 and 2

12/2 Does Nature Have a Future?
Encounters with the Archdruid, Part 3

Week 15 (Fifth Paper due on NYU Classes at 5PM Friday)

12/7 Coexistence or Control?
Earth First Manifesto (NYU Classes)
Laudato Si, *excerpt* (NYU Classes)

12/9 Nature and Technology
The Organic Machine, entire.

Week 16

12/14 Conclusion and Review: Where is Nature Anyway?

Statement on Academic Integrity Core Curriculum, College of Arts and Science

As a student at New York University, you have been admitted to a community of scholars who value free and open inquiry. Our work depends on honest assessment of ideas and their sources; and we expect you, as a member of our community, likewise to maintain the highest integrity in your academic work. Because of the central importance of these values to our intellectual life together, those who fail to maintain them will be subject to severe sanction, which may include dismissal from the University.

Plagiarism consists in presenting ideas and words without acknowledging their source and is an offense against academic integrity. Any of the following acts constitutes a crime of plagiarism.

- Using a phrase, sentence, or passage from another person's work without quotation marks and attribution of the source.
- Paraphrasing words or ideas from another's work without attribution.
- Reporting as your own research or knowledge any data or facts gathered or reported by another person.
- Submitting in your own name papers or reports completed by another.
- Submitting your own original work toward requirements in more than one class without the prior permission of the instructors. Other offenses against academic integrity include the following.
- Collaborating with other students on assignments without the express permission of the instructor.
- Giving your work to another student to submit as his or her own.
- Copying answers from other students during examinations.
- Using notes or other sources to answer exam questions without the instructor's permission.
- Secreting or destroying library or reference materials.
- Submitting as your own work a paper or results of research that you have purchased from a commercial firm or another person. ***Particular emphasis is placed on the use of papers and other materials to be found on the World-Wide Web, whether purchased or freely available. In addition to having access to the same search engines as students, faculty also have at their disposal a number of special websites devoted to detecting plagiarism from the web.*** Plagiarism and other cases of academic fraud are matters of fact, not intention. It is therefore crucial that you be diligent in assuring the integrity of your work.

- Use quotation marks to set off words that are not your own.
- Learn to use proper forms of attribution for source materials.
- Do your own original work in each class, without collaboration, unless otherwise instructed.
- Don't use published sources, the work of others, or material from the web without attribution.
- For further information, consult the College of Arts and Science website on academic integrity at <http://cas.nyu.edu/page/academicintegrity>.