HIST/ENVIR ST/HIST SCI 125  
Green Screen: Environmental Perspectives Through Film  
Fall 2013  
MW, 1:20-2:10, Education Building L196  
Discussion sections, Thursday and Friday  
Screenings, Wednesday, 4:00-6:00 pm, Humanities 1111  

Instructors:  
Gregg Mitman  
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Caitlin Iverson  
DesignLab TA  
Email: ceiverson@wisc.edu  
Office hours: by appointment at DesignLab M: 3:30-5:30p, T: 1:30-5p  

Course Description: From Teddy Roosevelt’s 1909 African safari to the Hollywood blockbuster King Kong, from the world of Walt Disney to The March of the Penguins, cinema has been a powerful force in shaping public and scientific understanding of nature throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century. How can film shed light on changing environmental ideas and beliefs in American thought, politics, and culture? And how can we come to see and appreciate contested issues of race, class, and gender in nature on screen? This course will explore such questions as we come to understand the role of film in helping to define the contours of past, present, and future environmental visions in the United States, and their impact on the real world struggles of people and wildlife throughout the world.  

Course Requirements:  
Discussion (20%): Each one in class needs to assume the responsibility of an active participant and learner. Success in the class depends largely upon the time, energy, and commitment you invest. You will be required to arrive at class having attended the required film screening on Wednesday evening, read the material assigned for the day, and be prepared to engage in a thoughtful and constructive conversation that is respectful of others in the classroom and takes seriously the issues and themes presented in the films and readings. You need to post at least one comment or question on the films screened to the course webpage each week.  

Film Reviews (40%): Choose two films, either screened in class, or approved in consultation with us, and write a 1,000 word review essay for the film that discusses how the film has reflected and/or shaped past or present environmental perceptions. Who made the film and why? In what context was the film shown and seen? Who was its intended audience? How was the film received by critics and the public? In what ways did the film reinforce or alter public attitudes toward nature or the
environment in significant ways? These are due, in class, on Wednesday, October 2nd and November 20th.

Tales from Planet Earth film festival (10%): On November 1st – 3rd, the Nelson Institute’s Center for Culture, History, and Environment will be featuring its fourth biennial festival, Tales from Planet Earth, which will include screenings of 38 features, shorts, and work-in-progress films, along with panel discussions and talks by visiting filmmakers. You are required to attend at least two film screenings and tweet or blog about them. You can gain 3% in extra credit toward your final grade by volunteering for the festival.

Take-Home Exam (30%): You will have one week to prepare answers of 1,000 words each to two of three questions on the course content. The due date for the take-home exam is Wednesday, December 11th, in class.

OR

Digital Short Option (30%): Working with the DesignLab TA assigned to this course, you will produce a 3-5 minute short video that challenges viewers to see the environment in a new way or offers a mashup of a previous film, challenging us to see its content in a completely different light. See separate handout.

Grading Structure: A=93-100%, AB=88-92%, B=83-87%, BC=78-82%, C=70-77%, D=60-69%, F=0-59%

Attendance is mandatory. You are allowed one excused discussion section and screening absence before it starts to jeopardize your grade. Each absence after that will result in a deduction of your final grade by 2%.

If any problem arises, either academic or personal, that might jeopardize your performance in the course, you must try to inform me of the problem at the next available office hour, or by leaving a message with the Department of Medical History and Bioethics (262-1460).

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, I urge any student in this course with a disability to inform me as soon as possible, so that I may make any necessary accommodations to ensure full participation and facilitate your educational opportunities. All such requests are confidential.

Students are expected to familiarize themselves with the UW policies on plagiarism and to assume responsibility for honesty in all course work.

Required Readings:

The following required books are available at the University Bookstore:


A set of digital readings are available on the course Learn@UW website.
Introduction

9/4  Telling Stories

Environmental Pasts: Landscapes of Purity and Whiteness

9/9-9/11  Great White Hunting

9/16-9/18  The Myth of the Vanishing Race
John Grierson, “Flaherty” in Grierson on Documentary, edited and compiled by Forsyth Hardy (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), pp. 139-144

9/23-25  Animal Worlds

9/30-10/2  New Deal Visions

10/7-10/9  Disney’s Nature
Matt Cartmill, *A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature through History*, 161-188.

**Environmental Presents: Diversifying Issues and Audiences**

10/14-10/16  The Ecological Indian

10/21-10/23  The Enduring Legacies of Colonial Conservation

10/28  Celebrity Animals

10/30  NO CLASS/NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS

11/4-11/6  Toxic Burdens
11/11-11/13  Extractive Landscapes

11/18-11/20  The Politics of Food

Environmental Futures

11/25-11/27  The End Times of Ecology

NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK

12/2-12/4  Facing a Warming Planet

12/9-12/11  Whose Future?
SCREENINGS
Wednesdays, 4:00 pm, Humanities 1111

Sept. 4  March of the Penguins (2005, 80 min)
Sept. 11 Simba: King of the Beasts (1928, 87 min)
Sept. 18 Nanook of the North (1922, 79 min)
Sept. 25 The Sea Horse (1934, 15 min); The Love Life of the Octopus (1965, 13 min); The Private Life of the Gannet (1934, 10 min); Microcosmos (1996, 80 min)
Oct. 2 The Plow that Broke the Plains (1936, 25 min); The Grapes of Wrath (1940, 129 min). Please note that the running time is 155 minutes, which means the screening will end at 6:30 pm.
Oct. 9 Nature’s Half-Acre (1951, 33 min); Bambi (1942, 70 min)
Oct. 16 PSA of Ecological Indian; Imagining Indians (1992, 60 min)
Oct. 23 Gorillas in the Mist (1988, 122 min)
Oct. 30 No screening. See two films at Tales from Planet Earth festival, including Before Tomorrow
Nov. 6 Blue Vinyl (2002, 98 min)
Nov. 13 Deep Down (2010, 57 min); The Return of Navjao Boy (52 min)
Nov. 20 King Corn (2007, 88 min)
Nov. 27 NO SCREENING
Dec. 4 Soylent Green (1973, 70 min); Sun Come Up (2011, 38 min); That Which Once Was (2011, 21 min)
Dec. 11 Sleep Dealer (2008, 90 min)
Optional Digital Short Assignment

Digital Short Option (30%): Working with Caitlin Iverson, the DesignLab TA for this course, you will produce a 3-5 minute short video that challenges viewers to see the environment in a new way or offers a mashup of a previous film, challenging us to see its content in a completely different light.

Those interested in the Digital Short Option must submit a one-page maximum request answering the question why producing a short video would enhance your academic goals and enrich your experience in this course. Please also indicate how you would like to use this exercise to broaden your perspective on what constitutes an environmental issue or problem.

In addition include the name of someone, if any, that you would like to work with on this project. Your partner will otherwise be assigned randomly.

Finally please indicate if you have any experience using these applications:
  iMovie, Final Cut Pro X, Final Cut Pro, Premiere Pro
  (Training for these applications is available through DoIT and explained in detail below.)

Submit this request to Caitlin Iverson, DesignLab TA at ceiverson@wisc.edu by Friday, September 20th.

Outline of semester:
Submit one page request by September 20th
Optional: Register for STS course on Final Cut Pro X September 26th
Submit outline/sketch of story ideas by October 4th
Optional: Attend Final Cut Pro Training October 10th
First Critique – meet with Caitlin by appointment October 14th, 15th, 21st OR 22nd
Submit first video draft by November 15th
Second Critique – meet with Caitlin by appointment Nov 18th, 19th, 25th OR 26th
Optional: meet with Caitlin again before final is due
Final video due: December 13th

Caitlin’s DesignLab schedule: (make an appointment at DesignLab.wisc.edu)
Mondays 3:30-5:30p, Tuesdays 1:30-5p

DoIT offers free technology courses, if you would like to create a short video but need technical assistance it is strongly recommended that you take a Software Training for Students (STS) class.

STS schedule:

Final Cut Pro X (a professional video editing application available on the DesignLab computers and the video editing computers in Hellen C White College Library)

October 10th from 6-8pm in the Digital Media Center (Biochemistry, Room B1144A)
Registration begins September 26th at 6pm from sts.doit.wisc.edu
To register go to sts.doit.wisc.edu, click on Free Training Courses, scroll down to Multimedia, finally click on Final Cut Pro X (you will be directed to a netID login)

**iMovie**

October 17th from 6-8pm in the Digital Media Center (Biochemistry, Room B1144A)
Registration begins October 3rd at 6pm from sts.doit.wisc.edu