

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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Office Hours: Tues., 11am – 1 pm

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DesignLab TA
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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:

Gregg Mitman, *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Film*, rev. ed. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009).

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

Introduction

- 9/4 Telling Stories
Mitman, Reel Nature, 203-210.
William Cronon, "A Place for Stories: Nature, History, and Narrative," Journal of American History 78 (1992): 1347-1376.
William Stott, "What is Documentary," in Documentary Expression and Thirties America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 5-17.
Brian Dunigan, "Storytelling and Film: Fairy Tales, Myth, and Happy Endings," P.O.V. 18 (2004); http://pov.imv.au.dk/Issue_18/section_1/artc1A.html

Environmental Pasts: Landscapes of Purity and Whiteness

- 9/9-9/11 Great White Hunting
Mitman, Reel Nature, 5-58.
William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," Environmental History 1 (1996): 7-55.
Helen Bullitt Lowry, "New Adam and Eve Among the Gentle Wild Beasts," New York Times Magazine (April 29, 1923), p. 8.
- 9/16-9/18 The Myth of the Vanishing Race
Robert Flaherty, "How I Filmed *Nanook of the North*," World's Work 44 (1922): 632-640.
John Grierson, "Flaherty" in Grierson on Documentary, edited and compiled by Forsyth Hardy (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), pp. 139-144
Michelle H. Raheja, "Reading Nanook's Smile: Visual Sovereignty, Indigenous Revisions of Ethnography and *Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)*," American Quarterly 59 (2007): 1159-85.
Fatimah Tobing Rony, The Third Eye: Race, Cinema, and Ethnographic Spectacle (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996), 99-126.
- 9/23-25 Animal Worlds
Mitman, Reel Nature, 59-84.
Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman, "Introduction," in Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 1-14.
Jacob von Uexküll, "A Stroll through the Worlds of Animals and Men," in Instinctive Behavior: The Development of a Modern Concept, trans. and ed. by Claire H. Schiller (New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1957), 5-13.
Jean Painlevé, "Feet in the Water," in Science is Fiction: The Films of Jean Painlevé, ed. by Andy Masaki Bellows and Marina McDougall (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000), 130-139.
- 9/30-10/2 New Deal Visions
Finis Dunaway, Natural Visions: The Power of Images in American Environmental Reform (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 33-86.

Mitman, Reel Nature, 85-108
Paul Sears, Deserts on the March (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1935),
157-184.

- 10/7-10/9 Disney's Nature
Mitman, Reel Nature, 109-131
Matt Cartmill, A View to a Death in the Morning: Hunting and Nature through History, 161-188.
Walt Disney, "What I've Learned from the Animals," American Magazine 155
(February 1953): 23, 106-109.
"Walt Disney Receives Audubon Medal," Audubon Magazine 58 (1956): 25, 45.

Environmental Presents: Diversifying Issues and Audiences

- 10/14-10/16 The Ecological Indian
Shepard Krech, III, The Ecological Indian: Myth and History (New York: W. W. Norton, 1999), pp. 15-28, 211-229.
Fatimah Tobing Rony, "Victor Masayeva, Jr., and the Politics of *Imagining Indians*,"
Film Quarterly 48 (1994-1995): 20-33.
Finis Dunaway, "Gas Masks, Pogo, and the Ecological Indian: Earth Day and the Visual Politics of American Environmentalism," American Quarterly 60 (2008): 67-99.
- 10/21-10/23 The Enduring Legacies of Colonial Conservation
Mitman, Reel Nature, 180-202
Jonathan Adams and Thomas McShane, The Myth of Wild Africa: Conservation without Illusion, 184-206.
Ramachandra Guha, "The Authoritarian Biologist and the Arrogance of Anti-Humanism: Wildlife Conservation in the Third World," The Ecologist 27 (1997): 14-20.
- 10/28 Celebrity Animals
Mitman, Reel Nature, 157-179.
- 10/30 NO CLASS/NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS
- 11/4-11/6 Toxic Burdens
Barbara Allen, "Telling Stories about the Environment," in Uneasy Alchemy: Citizens and Experts in Louisiana's Chemical Corridor Disputes (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003), 19-49.
Giovanna Di Chiro, "Nature as Community: The Convergence of Environment and Social Justice," in Uncommon Ground: Toward Reinventing Nature, ed. by William Cronon (New York: W. W. Norton, 1995), 298-320.
Judith Helfand, Interviewed by Adina Back and Pennee Bender, "Connecting the Dots: Workers, Families, and Toxic Exposure, Past and Present," Radical History Review 80 (2001): 121-133.

- 11/11-11/13 Extractive Landscapes
 Valerie Kuletz, "Tragedy at the Center of the Universe," in Learning to Glow: A Nuclear Reader, edited by John Bradley (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2000), 141-157.
 Silas House et. al., Something's Rising: Appalachians Fighting Mountaintop Removal (University Press of Kentucky, 2009), 1-22.
 Bill McKibben, "Energizing America," Sierra Magazine (January/February 2007); <http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/200701/energizing.asp>
- 11/18-11/20 The Politics of Food
 Michael Pollan, "When a Crop Becomes King," New York Times (July 19, 2002); <http://michaelpollan.com/articles-archive/when-a-crop-becomes-king/>
 Maya Joseph and Marion Nestle, "Food and Politics in the Modern Age, 1920-2012," in A Cultural History of Food in the Modern Age, vol 6 (Berg, 2012), 87-110.
 Eric Schlosser, Fast Food Nation (New York: Perennial, 2002), 169-190.
 Julie Guthman, Weighing In: Obesity, Food Justice, and the Limits of Capitalism (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 140-162.

Environmental Futures

- 11/25-11/27 The End Times of Ecology
 Jacob Hamblin, "The Doomsday Men," in Arming Mother Nature: The Birth of Catastrophic Environmentalism (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 151-178.
 Paul Sabin, The Bet: Paul Ehrlich, Julian Simon, and Our Gamble over Earth's Future (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 1-9, 217-227.
 Paul Erlich, The Population Bomb (New York: Ballantine Books, 1968), 15-67.

NO DISCUSSION SECTIONS THIS WEEK

- 12/2-12/4 Facing a Warming Planet
 Rob Nixon, Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 263-280.
 Mike Davis, "Living on the Ice Shelf: Humanity's Meltdown," <http://www.tomdispatch.com/post/174949>
- 12/9-12/11 *Whose Future?*
 Giovanna Di Chiro, "Beyond Ecoliberal 'Common Futures': Environmental Justice, Toxic Touring, and a Transcommunal Politics of Place," in Race, Nature, and the Politics of Difference, ed. by Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 204-232.
 Sharada Balachandran Orihuela & Andrew Carl Hageman, "The Virtual Realities of US/Mexico Border Ecologies in *Maquilapolis* and *Sleep Dealer*," Environmental Communication 5 (2011): 166-186.

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