"Environmental imaginaries" names the contending discourses that order society around processes of development and change. Behind public controversies over development, its subjects, objects, and technologies, are an array of collectively wrought fictions that relate people to their material surroundings. Related to the notion of the “social imaginary,” the term “environmental imaginaries” was coined by social geographers Michael Watts and Richard Peet to highlight the interrelations of nature and society across a spectrum of time-spaces that humanize nature and socialize humanity.

We will be especially attentive to the persistence of post-Cartesian fictions that allow the separation of culture from environment. How are these fictions produced, enacted, and materialized in such diverse sites as Appalachian strip mines and Sea World, nature centers and permit hearings? In contrast, what kind of environmental imaginary sustains the notion that human destiny is not the accumulation of wealth but of a wisdom that “sits in places”? How are alternative ways of knowing and being sustained through naming practices, narratives, and other speech genres, as well as yardscapes, protest rallies, spontaneous shrines and other forms of public display? Traversing the border between humanities and social sciences we will ask how is Mikhail Bakhtin’s law of placement essential for urban planners? Why is Gregory Bateson’s notion of the thinking system vital for environmental writers? What are the implications of Edith Cobb’s study of “bioaesthetic striving” in children, or John Dewey’s “aesthetic ecologies” for vitiating the institutionally entrenched dualisms that continue to shape our world?

Moving from theories of world making, multiple realities, and aesthetic ecologies through case studies on the
interplay of culture and environment, and into your own experience, observation, and written reflections, this seminar will explore the production of environmental imaginaries across a range of modern discourses and practices. At stake is nothing less than place, identity, and the nature of human being.

Required texts:

Edith Cobb. The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood.
Raymond Williams. Keywords
Mary Hufford. Chaseworld

Copies of Taylor’s book can be purchased from me ($15 each), and the other three books have been ordered through Penn Book Center, near Samson and 34th Streets. All other readings will be downloadable from the course blackboard site. Films and hard copies of the readings will be on reserve in the Rosengarten reading room and in the Folklore Archive, Room 404, 3619 Locust Walk. You will need to contact me or Joyce Roselle jroselle@sas.upenn.edu in advance if you wish to use the Folklore Archive.

Work for the Course:

1) Participation: Do all of the readings and post short written exercises, as assigned, to the blackboard discussion page. Written exercises will take the form of responses to prompts I will post in advance. Please post each week by Monday at midnight. Participate actively in class discussion.

2) Gleanings from everyday life: Each week bring in an “exhibit” encountered in the course of your everyday life and relate this to anything in any of the readings or discussions. The “exhibit” can be a newspaper clipping, an artifact or a photograph of one, a story you heard, or anything else. Be prepared to connect your exhibit to class discussion.

3) Term Project: - Explore a modern environmental imaginary, through a study of one genre of production. This genre could be public art, cinema, a novel, a landscape element, a contested space such as the Barnes Gallery, a spontaneous public display, or the imaginary of an organization such as Spiral Q, Scribe Video, Philadelphia Mural Arts, or narrative in such modern spaces as nature
centers and community planning meetings, architecture, landscapes and so forth. You will need at least three events or “texts” demonstrating both variation and consistency across productions. Using analytical tools and concepts from the course readings, describe the imaginary that is conjured and relate it to the modern social imaginaries described by Charles Taylor. Guidelines for the proposal (due October 19) and the paper will be posted to the course blackboard by September 26. Please see me by Friday, October 12 to discuss your topic.

Submit electronically, either as a word document attached to an e-mail, or, if multi-media are used and the file is larger than 10 megabytes, on a cd or dvd in my mailbox.

Schedule of Topics and Readings

1) September 5: Introduction

2) September 12: Refiguring Nature and Society
Taylor, Modern Social Imaginaries

Watts and Peet, "Conclusion: Towards a Theory of Liberation Ecology," Liberation Ecologies


Film: Saltmen of Tibet

3) September 19: Disembedding as Historical Process


Thomas, “Natural History and Vulgar Errors,” in Man and the Natural World, pp. 51-91.

Williams, “Enclosures, Commons, and Communities” in The County and the City. Pp. 96-107.


Film: *The Gleaners and I*

4) September 26: Phenomenological Moorings
Schutz, "Transcendences and Multiple Realities," in On Phenomenology and Social Relations, pp. 245-262.


Appadurai, "The Production of Locality." In Modernity At Large, pp. 178-204.


METATOPIAS/HETEROTOPIAS

5) October 3: Critical Regionalism


6) October 10: Chronotope and Public Space


Folch-Sera, “Place, Voice, Space: Mikhail Bakhtin’s Dialogical Landscape,” in Environment and Planning D 8:255-274.


Hufford, “Inscribing the Stage and Its Players,” “Making the Dogs,” and “Inscribing the Fox,” Chaseworld, pp. 79-144.

Please see me by the end of this week, October 12, regarding your project for the final paper.

October 17: NO CLASS – American Folklore Society Meeting in Quebec – Submit paper proposals electronically by Friday October 19.

ARTICULATIONS

October 24: Collective Embodiment and Spatialized Hierarchies


Gilbert, “Resurrecting the Body: Has Postmodernism had any Effect on Biology?” Science in Context, 8:563-578.


October 31: Regional Discursive Formations: Appalachia

Bauman, “Folklore,” in Folklore, Cultural Performances, and Popular Entertainments, pp. 29-40.

Allen Batteau – “A Poetic for Appalachia,” In The Invention of Appalachia, pp. 1 – 18.

K. Stewart – “Encounters,” In A Space on the Side of the Road, pp. 117-139.

Hufford, Waging Democracy in the Kingdom of Coal http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/center/waging_democracy2.pdf


Films: To Save the Land and People and Breaking New Ground

THE CULTIVATION OF THINKING SYSTEMS

November 7: Aesthetic Ecologies


Cobb, The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood


Film: Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill

November 14: Narrative, Landscape, and Cultural Ownership

Potteiger and Purinton. “Beginning” and “The Nature of


Folch-Sera, “Place, Voice, Space: Mikhail Bakhtin’s Dialogical Landscape.” Environment and Planning D 8:255-274.

November 21: Community Gardening in a Global Context

Crumley, “From Garden to Globe: Linking Time and Space with Meaning and Memory.”
http://anthropology.unc.edu/french/papers/garden_to_globe.html


http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/faculty/mhufford/MollyMooching.pdf

Link to casita website:
http://www.italianrap.com/casitas.html

Link to Tending the Commons:
http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/cmnshtml/

November 28: No Class – American Anthropological Society Meeting in Washington, DC
December 5: Backtalking Fungibility: Public Art and Cultural Policy
Berman, “Modernism in New York,” All that is Solid Melts into Air, pp. 287 – 348

Zeitlin, “Conserving Our Cities’ Endangered Spaces,” in Conserving Culture, pp. 215-228

Hufford and Miller, Piecing Together the Fragments
http://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore.center/fragments.pdf


Film: Crosstown

December 12: Student presentations and class discussion (make up class)

December 19: Papers due
Bibliography


Anderson, Bennett. Imagined Communities.


Arendt, Hannah. The Human Condition.


Bateson, Gregory. Steps to an Ecology of Mind.


Douglas, Mary. Natural Symbols.


Ethnography, University of Pennsylvania.


Polanyi, Karl. The Great Transformation.


