

ARTH 5770 / ARCH 7130 ECOLOGICAL THINKING IN ART AND ARCHITECTURE

Fall 2024, Thursday 10:15 a.m. - 1:15 p.m., Jaffe 104

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Office Hours, Tuesday 11 a.m. – 2:00 p.m., Jaffe 211



Course Description

In the past three decades, discussions about ecological impact and sustainability have come to prominence in the Arts and Sciences as well as in Architecture and Urban Planning. On the one hand, the growing priority of ecocriticism across the humanities (e.g., the recently developed *Undergraduate Minor in Environmental Humanities* at Penn) and the enlarged agenda of Ecological Art to engage with environmental, aesthetic, social, and political relations have led Art Historians to strive at a probing and pointedly ethical integration of visual analysis, cultural interpretation, and environmental history—for an “Ecocritical Art History.” Architecture schools, on the other hand, have created MA programs, such as “Landscape Urbanism” and “Environmental Building Design” and architectural theorists and ecological thinkers coin new terms – “resilience,” “adaptation,” and “mitigation”— in efforts to reframe and more effectively tackle the urgent environmental and demographic pressures of global urban developments. Many of these developments aim to articulate a more earth-conscious mode of analysis for art and architecture alike. Such concerns have been intensified recently by initiatives to designate the current era of geological time as the “Anthropocene”—the epoch that began when ‘the human enterprise’ started to have a noticeable influence on earth systems.

These anxieties are not new. Concerns around climate and environmental conditions has been an essential aspect in architecture for centuries, and even more so in the early years of the architectural modernism. From well-known architects such as Le Corbusier, to lesser known figures such as the Olgyay brothers and Constantinos Doxiadis, ecological thinking has played a substantive role in the development of design strategies. In the current critical analysis of the idea of “nature,” art has been conceptualized as a means to articulate concerns about humans’ environmental impact. From Roman garden and landscape paintings to Georgia O’Keeffe’s flower paintings and Thomas Cole’s landscape paintings, artists have long both responded to and actively instigated changes in ecological understanding.

This course will address diverse narratives of ecological thinking in the history of art, architecture, and urban planning during the 20th century, so as to highlight how discussions about the idea of a “post-carbon world” has taken place across time and in numerous disciplines. The course intends to engage students in the School of Arts and Sciences and the Weitzman School of Design in a discussion on the interconnected histories of environmental thinking in art and architecture during the 20th century.

Learning Objectives

On successful completion of this course students are expected to be able to:

- understand the diverse narratives of ecological thinking in the history of art, architecture, and urban planning during the 20th century;
- map received trajectories of Eco Art, Ecocritical Art History, and Ecological Histories of Architecture and Urban Planning
- contextualize and interrogate contemporary disciplinary discourses as well as historical assumptions related to ecological thinking in art and architectural history and environmentally-conscious practices

Method of Assessment

Participation

20%

Active class participation in Zoom meetings and on Canvas

Keyword Submission and Presentation in Week 8

20%

At mid-term, each student will submit three to five keywords, with a robust re-definition and images or projects to help explain the utility of this keyword to reimagining ecological histories of art and architecture.

Presentations in Weeks 13 & 15

20%

Students will be responsible for a presentation of 20 min, drawing out aspects of the readings and projects under discussion that may relate to their research for the course.

Final Project / Paper

40%

For the final, students will be expected to produce a project – for some, this might be a graphic or illustrative project clarifying the newly framed ecological aspects of familiar projects; for others, a text-based exploration of an episode in eco-art or -architectural history (research paper of 4,000 words). PhD and MS students are required to write a research paper of 4,000 words.

Readings

Required and recommended readings for each class will be available on Canvas.

WEEK 1

INTRODUCTION

ECOLOGY, NATURE / CULTURE, AND DESIGN

WEEK 2

NATURE, ECOLOGY AND ECOCRITICISM

Angela L. Miller, "The fate of wilderness in American landscape art," in Alan C. Braddock and Christoph Irmsher, eds., *A Keener Perception: Ecocritical Studies in Art History* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2009), 85-109.

Alan C. Braddock and Karl Kusserow, "Introduction," in Karl Kusserow and Alan C. Braddock, eds., *Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), 12-39.

Kathleen Dean Moore, ed., *How it is: The Native American philosophy of V.F. Cordova* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007) 186-200.

Recommended:

William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," *Environmental History* 1: 1 (1996): 7-28.

WEEK 3

ECOLOGY, COLONIZATION AND EMPIRE

Alan C. Braddock, "The order of Things," in Karl Kusserow and Alan C. Braddock, eds., *Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), 43-69.

Karl Kusserow, "Ordering the land," in Karl Kusserow and Alan C. Braddock, eds., *Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), 71-101.

Recommended:

Alan C. Braddock, "Bodies of water: Thomas Eakins, racial ecology, and the limits of civic realism," in Alan C. Braddock and Laura Turner Tilgoe, eds., *A Greene Country Towne: Philadelphia's Ecology in the Cultural Imagination* (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2016), 129-150.

WEEK 4

DESIGN WITH NATURE AND EKISTICS

Constantinos A. Doxiadis, "Ekistics seen as a science related to ecology," in Gerald Dix, ed., *Ecology and ekistics* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1977), 49-70.

Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, "Background to C.A. Doxiadis' «Ecology and Ekistics»," *Ekistics* 45: 266 (1978): 12-19.

Ian L. McHarg, *Design with Nature* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday/Natural History Press, 1969), 1-18, 55-66, 187-197.

CLIMATE AND TECHNOLOGY

WEEK 5

TROPICAL CLIMATES

Jiat-Hwee Chang, "Building a Colonial Techno-scientific Network: Tropical Architecture, Building Science and the Power-Knowledge of Decolonization," in Duanfang Lu, ed., *Third World Modernism: Architecture, Development and Identity* (London: Routledge, 2010), 211-35.

Hannah Le Roux, "The Networks of Tropical Architecture" in *The Journal of Architecture* 8:3 (2003): 337-354.

Henrique Mindlin, *Modern Architecture in Brazil*. (New York: Reinhold, 1956), 2-12.

'Browse' images and ideas:

Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry. *Tropical Architecture in the Dry and Humid Zones*. (Huntington, NY: Krieger Publications, 1957), "Introduction" and "climate," 17-33.

See also: Fernando Lara, "American Mirror: the Occupation of the 'New World' and the Rise of Architecture We Know It," *the Plan Journal* 5.1. (2020)

Recommended:

Daniela Sandler, "The Other Way Around: The Modernist Movement in Brazil," in Duanfang Lu, ed., *Third World Modernism: Architecture, Development and Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 31-56.

WEEK 6

FALL BREAK

WEEK 7

AIR CONDITIONING TAKES COMMAND

Reyner Banham, *The Architecture of the Well-Tempered Environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), "The Well-Tempered Home," 93-121.

Daniel Barber, *Modern Architecture and Climate: Design before Air Conditioning* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2020), "Architecture, Media and Climate," 2-21.

Wulf Böer, "Synthetic Air," *Future Anterior* 13:2 (Winter 2016): 77-101.

Eva Horn, "Air Conditioning: Taming the Climate as a Dream of Civilization," in James Graham, et al., eds. *Climates: Architecture and the Planetary Imaginary* (New York/Zurich: Columbia Books on Architecture and the City and Lars Müller Publications, 2016), 233-241.

Recommended:

Aladar Olgyay and Victor Olgyay, *Design with Climate: A Bioclimatic Approach to Architectural Regionalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

Peter Sloterdijk, *Terror from the Air* (Cambridge, MA: Semiotexte, 2009), "Gas Warfare – or: the Atmoterrorist Model," 9-46.

WEEK 8

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF KEY-WORDS

ECOCRITICAL ART HISTORY AND ECO ART

WEEK 9

ECOCRITICAL APPROACHES TO LANDSCAPE

- Alan C. Braddock, "From nature to ecology: The emergence of ecocritical art history," in John Davis et al., eds., *A companion to American art*, (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2015), 1165-1215.

- Mark A. Cheetham, *Landscape into Eco Art* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2018), "Beyond suspicion: Why not landscape?," 49-89.

- Mantha Zarmakoupi, *Shaping Roman Landscape: Ecocritical Approaches to Architecture and Wall Painting in Early Imperial Italy* (Los Angeles: Getty, 2023), "Ecocritical approaches to Roman landscape," 9-25.

Recommended:

- Brooke Holmes, "Before nature?," in C. Schliephake, ed., *Ecocriticism, ecology, and the cultures of antiquity* (New York, London: Lanham, Boulder, 2017), 5-11.
- W.J.T. Mitchell, "Imperial landscape," in W.J.T. Mitchell (ed.), *Landscape and power* (Chicago 1994), 4-34.

WEEK 10

PLANETARY ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTALISM

Scott Hicks, " 'A thorough study of causes': W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro, and Progressive Era Materiality*," in Alan C. Braddock and Laura Turner Tilgoe, eds., *A Greene Country Towne: Philadelphia's Ecology in the Cultural Imagination* (University Park: The Pennsylvania University Press, 2016), 141-152.

Alan C. Braddock and Karl Kusserow, "The big picture: American art and planetary ecology," in Karl Kusserow and Alan C. Braddock, eds., *Nature's Nation: American Art and Environment* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018), 357-393.

WEEK 11

ECOLOGY, MATERIALITY AND AGENCY

Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), "Political Ecologies," 94-109.

Hartmut Böhme, *Fetishism and culture: A different theory of modernity* (Berlin, De Gruyter, 2014), "Now that's some thing – an introduction to the world of things," 7 -9; 68-120.

Rebecca Zorah, "Welcome to my Volcano": New materialism, art history, and their others," in Christopher P. Heuer and Rebecca Zorach, eds, *Ecologies, Agents, Terrains* (Yale: YUP, 2018), 147-166.

Robert Felfe, "Premodern geosphere: Nature's workshop, treasure house, and deep time," in Christopher P. Heuer and Rebecca Zorach, eds, *Ecologies, Agents, Terrains* (Yale: YUP, 2018), 113-134.

WEEK 12

GUEST SPEAKER TBC

WEEK 13

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS

WEEK 14

THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK 15

STUDENT PRESENTATIONS