Course Description

This seminar will provide an overview of the history of the environmental sciences from ancient times to Charles Darwin’s *The Origin of Species*. We will explore ways in which naturalists and lay people came to know the environment and in what ways nature could mobilize social and moral authority. With a focus on the history of the European environmental problems from the ancient Greeks, Middle Ages, to colonial and Modern experiences, we will survey different ways of knowing nature. Where did the idea of nature as “designed” come from? How did natural philosophers (i.e. magicians) unveil nature’s secrets? What role did scientists play in the colonial experiences? How could Modern scholars imagine “improving” the face of the Earth? These broad questions will guide us in our readings of a series of primary sources, including great and not-so-great books by Hippocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Pseudo-Aristotle, Pliny, St. Francis, Evelyn, Grew, Bacon, Rousseau, Voltaire, Linnaeus, Malthus and Darwin, as well as largely forgotten texts by anonymous authors and colonial explorers.

Papers and assignments
There will be three 10 page papers due October 2, November 1, and December 13. The papers have to engage primary sources discussed in class. Late papers are not accepted.

Grading and attendance
Mandatory attendance
10 % Course and website participation
30 % 1st paper “The Ancient Paper”
30 % 2nd paper “The Medieval/Early Modern Paper”
30 % 3rd paper “The Modern Paper”

Green course
This is a zero-footprint “green” course. All papers must be submitted electronically.

Statement on Academic Integrity
“As a Gallatin student you belong to an interdisciplinary community of artists and scholars who value honest and open intellectual inquiry. This relationship depends on mutual respect, responsibility, and integrity. Failure to uphold these values will be subject to severe sanction
in accordance with the Student Discipline Rules of the Gallatin School of Individualized Study.\footnote{Anonymous, “Academic Integrity,” \url{www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html}. Uploaded Sept. 1, 2012. This webpage contains examples of what the Gallatin School at New York University considers plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating.}

**Books to buy or borrow:**


**Books to read online**


Nehemia Grew, *The Anatomy of Plants*, 1682 edition,


St. Francis of Assisi, The Writings of St. Fancies of Assisi, Pascal Robinson (trs.), or any edition.


Key book not on the syllabus:


Schedule:

Sept. 4      Tuesday: Introductory meeting
            No readings

Sept. 6      Thursday: What is Nature?
            Coates, Nature, 1-22

Sept. 11     Tuesday: Ancient environmental problems: Introduction
            Hughes, Pan’s Travail, 1-44.

Sept. 13     Thursday: Ancient environmental problems: Hippocrates
            Hughes, Pan’s Travail, 45-72.

Sept. 18     Tuesday: No class

Sept. 20     Thursday: No class.

Sept. 25     Tuesday: Ancient environmental problems: Plato
Hughes, *Pan's Travail*, 73-111.

Plato, *Critias*, entire.

**Sept. 26**

**GUEST LECTURE**

Gregg Mitman

**Sept. 27**

**Thursday: Ancient environmental problems: Aristotle**

Hughes, *Pan's Travail*, 112-129.


**Oct. 2**

**Tuesday: Ancient environmental problems: Pliny**


Pliny, *Natural History*, selections

**Oct. 4**

**Thursday: Ancient vs. Medieval Nature**

Hughes, *Pan's Travail*, 149-199.


**Oct. 9**

**Tuesday: Medieval Nature: St. Francis of Assisi**

*1st paper due! “The Ancient Paper”*


St. Francis of Assisi, “Sermon to the Birds” and “Canticle of the Sun”


**Oct. 11**

**Thursday: Medieval Nature: Natural History**

*The Book of Beasts*, entire.
Oct. 15 Fall recess! No class.

Oct. 18 Thursday: Medieval Nature: Magic


Oct. 23 Tuesday: Renaissance/Early Modern Forestry


6-7:30pm: An evening the Bobst Library
The Fales Library and Special Collections
70 Washington Square South, 3rd Fl.

We will look at:
- Pliny, Naturalis historia, (Rotterdam, 1668-69).
- John Ogilby, America: being the latest and most accurate description of the new world, (London, by the author, 1671).

Oct. 25 Thursday: Early Modern Nature: Bacon

Francis Bacon, New Atlantis, entire.

Oct. 30 Tuesday: Early Modern Nature: Grew


Nov. 1 Thursday: Voyages of Discovery: Green Imperialism?

2nd paper due! “The Medieval/Early Modern Paper”


Nov. 6  Tuesday: Voyages of Discovery: West India

*Histoire Naturelle Des Indes*, entire

Nov. 8  Thursday: Voyages of Discovery: New England

Cronon, *Changes in the Land*, entire.

Nov. 13  Tuesday: Modernity: Introduction


Nov. 15  Thursday: Modernity: Diderot

D’Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot*.

Nov. 20  Tuesday: Modernity: Rousseau


Nov. 22  Thanksgiving recess! No class.

Nov. 27  Tuesday: Modernity: Linnaeus


Nov. 29  Thursday: Modernity: Animal Rights


Dec. 4  Tuesday: Modernity: Malthus

Dec. 6  Thursday: Evolutionary Biology: Charles Darwin


Coates, *Nature*, 139-144.


Dec. 11  Tuesday: Evolutionary Biology: Charles Darwin

Browne, *Darwin's Origin of Species*, 57-117.


Dec. 13  Thursday: Last day of Class

*3rd paper due! “The Modern Paper”*