Introduction

Landscapes are views of the world: sites seen as well as ways of seeing and knowing. Representations of landscape invite us to perceive the world while instructing us how to conceive it. Drawing on poetry and prose, art history and cultural geography, painting and film, this course will explore landscapes as symbolic sites that are also physical places, windows on reality that mirror our subjectivity. Our focus will be on the Romantic landscape, its revision of the pastoral otherworlds of Baroque poetry and painting and its transformation by and into the modern city. The Romantic self reads the face of nature as an ambivalent text, by turns beautiful and sublime, vivifying and deathly, familiar and strange. Romantic “spots of time,” local reservoirs of psychic meanings, register the growth of the mind as well as the passage of history, reflecting and resisting the ruinous progress of industrialization and commodification that overwrites the Book of Nature with a new system of inorganic signs. The modern city both negates the Romantic landscape and recovers it in the second nature of streets, façades, and crowds. Turning to twentieth-century landscapes, we will examine their hiding places for modern fugitives from modernity and their melancholy pursuers.

Course Objectives

- To explore the aesthetic and political significance of representations of landscape in European and American literature, visual art, and cultural history.
- To historicize Western ideas of nature and its relation to the self by tracking their transformations from pastoral and underworld landscapes of Baroque literature to Romantic and modernist landscapes, exploring the ways in which subjective experience and objective reality reciprocally shape each other.
- To develop a critical vocabulary for describing and interpreting landscapes and translating between their representations in visual and verbal mediums.

Assignments and Grading
Over the course of the semester, you will write **2 formal essays**. In the first (4-6 pages), you will address a question raised in class or in the weekly responses through a close reading of one of the texts on the syllabus. The second will be a research paper (10-12 pages) in which you will explore and interpret a landscape, in literature, art, or life, drawing on one or more of the theoretical perspectives introduced in class. Be sure to choose topics and texts that truly interest you. Essays will be graded for the form as well as the content of their analysis.

In addition, you will write **bi-weekly response papers** (1-2 pages), which you will post to NYU Classes under “Forums.” In other words, you will need to write one every other week. Please post your response at least 24 hours before the class, to give all of us time to read it before we meet. Part of the assignment for each class will be to read the responses posted for that day. Rather than grading each response individually, I will assign one grade for all of them at the end of the semester.

These responses are designed to prepare you for class discussion as well as generate ideas for your essays. While you are welcome to include personal reflections in your responses, you must organize your comments around an analysis of the assigned text, which should include quotes from and references to specific passages. As the author of a response to a particular text, you will be responsible for helping to direct the discussion about it by raising questions, introducing passages, suggesting interpretations.

I will also ask you to do an oral presentation on a **visual work of landscape art** (in any medium). While you are welcome to choose the work from any historical period, it should be relevant to the topic of our discussion that week. You may choose to present on a work by one of the artists on the syllabus or find one entirely on your own. You will need to briefly explain the work’s origin and historical context, offer some interpretive thoughts, and pose one or two discussion questions. You will also, of course, show the class an image of the work. You can do this presentation by yourself or in a small group of up to 3 people.

From time to time, I may assign brief, informal pieces of writing to be done either at home or in class in preparation for our discussions. I may not collect them, but you will often be sharing them in class. Your work on these will figure into your participation grade.

This course is a seminar, so your regular, active participation in our discussions is crucial. I will expect you to come to class prepared with questions and comments on the day’s reading.

Response Papers (1-2 pages) and Presentation: 25%
Essay 1 (4-6 pages): 25%
Essay 2 (10-12 pages): 35%
Participation: 15%

**Attendance**

If, due to illness, emergency, or religious holiday, you cannot attend class, please be in touch with me directly as soon as possible so that you can be prepared for the next class. You will also need to get the notes for the day you missed from one of your classmates; once you’ve
gotten the notes, I would be happy to meet with you and go over what you missed. Please be aware that more than two unexcused absences will jeopardize your course grade.

**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, which may include dismissal from the University. Examples of behaviors that compromise the academic integrity of the Gallatin School include plagiarism, illicit collaboration, doubling or recycling coursework, and cheating. Please consult the Gallatin Bulletin or Gallatin website [www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html](http://www.gallatin.nyu.edu/academics/policies/policy/integrity.html) for a full description of the academic integrity policy.

**Required Texts**

You can buy all our books at the NYU Bookstore. All other readings will be posted throughout the semester to the Resources folder of our NYU Classes site. Please print these out and bring a hard copy to class.


**Schedule**

1. **Ideas of Landscape**

Wed, Jan 28

- Introduction: Distant Prospects
- Nicolas Poussin, *Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun* (1658)
- William Hazlitt, “On a Landscape of Nicolas Poussin” (1821) (excerpt)

Wed, Feb 4

- Malcolm Andrews, “Land into Landscape” (from *Landscape and Western Art* [1999], pp. 1-22)
II. The Baroque Landscape: Twilight of the Gods

Wed, Feb 11
- Andrew Marvell, “The Garden” (1681)
- John Brinckerhoff Jackson, “Gardens to Decipher and Gardens to Admire” (from The Necessity for Ruins and Other Topics [1980], pp. 37-53)
- Malcolm Andrews, “Topography and the Beau Ideal” (from Landscape and Western Art [1999], pp. 77-105)
- Raymond Williams, “Pastoral and Counter-Pastoral” and “Golden Ages” (from The Country and the City [1973], pp. 13-45)
- Paintings by Claude Lorrain
- Discussion: the pastoral ideal

Wed, Feb 18
- Rudyard Kipling, “Weland's Sword” (from Puck of Pook’s Hill [1906])
- Paintings by Nicolas Poussin
- Discussion: the elegiac

Wed, Feb 25
- John Milton, Paradise Lost (1667, 1674), Books I, IV, V
- Gillian Rose, “Looking at Landscape: the Uneasy Pleasures of Power” (from Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge [1993], pp. 86-112)
- Discussion: the underworld; the gendered garden

III. The Romantic Landscape: Spots of Time

Wed, Mar 4
- Edmund Burke, from A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful (1757) (The Bloomsbury Anthology of Aesthetics [2012], pp. 163-186)
- Immanuel Kant, from *Critique of Judgment* (1790) (*The Bloomsbury Anthology of Aesthetics* [2012], pp. 265-273)
- Malcolm Andrews, “‘Astonished beyond Expression’: Landscape, the Sublime, and the Unpresentable” (from *Landscape and Western Art* [1999], pp. 129-149)
- Denis E. Cosgrove, “Sublime Nature: Landscape and Industrial Capitalism” (from *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* [1984], pp. 223-253)
- Paintings by J. M. W. Turner
- Discussion: the sublime

Wed, Mar 11
- William Wordsworth, “Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey” (1798)
- Malcolm Andrews, “Landscape and Politics” (from *Landscape and Western Art* [1999], pp. 151-175)
- Optional reading: Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque, as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful; and, on the Use of Studying Pictures, for the Purpose of Improving Real Landscape* (1794), chs. 1-4 (pp. 7-84) (especially pp. 7-46, 76-89)
- Discussion: the picturesque
- **Essay 1 due (4-6 pages)**

Wed, Mar 18: **Spring Break**

Wed, Mar 25
- Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818, 1831)
- Raymond Williams, “Ideas of Nature” (1972) (from *Culture and Materialism* [1980, 2005], 73-93)
- Optional reading: Malcolm Andrews, “Nature as Picture or Process” (from *Landscape and Western Art* [1999], pp. 177-199)
- Discussion: the idea of nature

Wed, Apr 1
- William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (1799)
- Discussion: the subjective landscape

Wed, Apr 8
- Washington Irving, “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (1820) (from *the Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.* [1819-1820])
- Leo Marx, “Sleepy Hollow, 1844” (from *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* [1964], pp. 3-33)
- Denis E. Cosgrove, “America as Landscape” (from *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* [1984], pp. 161-188)
- Paintings by Thomas Cole
- Discussion: American Romanticism: the interrupted idyll

Wed, Apr 15
- Ralph Waldo Emerson, “Nature” (1836)
- Paintings by Jean-François Millet, W. S. Mount, Thomas Eakins
- Discussion: American Romanticism: natural supernaturalism; death and revival

IV. The Modernist Landscape: Second Nature

Wed, Apr 22
- Optional reading: Raymond Williams, “Cities of Darkness and of Light” and “The Figure in the City” (from The Country and the City [1973], pp. 215-247)
- Photographs by Eugène Atget
- Discussion: the city as nature

Wed, Apr 29
- Gertrude Stein, “Plays” (from Lectures in America [1935], pp. 91-131), Picasso (1938)
- Virginia Woolf, Between the Acts (1941)
- Discussion: history as landscape

Wed, May 6
- Aimé Césaire, Notebook of a Return to the Native Land (1947)
- W. H. Auden, “In Praise of Limestone” (1948)
- Stalker (1979) (dir. Andrei Tarkovsky)
- Theodor W. Adorno, “Natural Beauty” (from Aesthetic Theory [1970], pp. 61-78 [especially pp. 64-69])
- Discussion: the text of history in the wounds of nature

Fri, May 15: Essay 2 due (10-12 pages)