

LS 812: Contested Relationships between Humans, Ecosystems and Other-than-Human Animals

Fall 2017 | Dr. Stephen Duguid

COURSE OUTLINE:

This Seminar is an exploration of the relationship between *Nature* and *Culture*. Is human culture a mere artifact of nature, akin to a beehive, a spider's web or beaver's dam, or is it a unique construction stemming from an equally unique reflective consciousness? Do humans act *on* nature or *within* nature? To what degree can such distinctions be sustained? Are current human attempts to dominate nature through cultural constructions (e.g. technologies) a *natural* development or an *aberration* in the evolution of *Homo sapiens*? To what degree is the seemingly pervasive spread of Capitalism and Neoliberal ideology a threat to the global ecology? How might the way we *think* about nature affect the way we *act* upon nature? To what extent are humans unique, either as *stewards* set apart by evolution or by God from the rest of creation, or, as some would argue are we a *rogue species*, a *natural alien*?

In exploring these questions we will focus on three areas of inquiry:

The variety of human interactions with the natural world (4 weeks)

- Francis Bacon, *The Great Instauration & the New Atlantis*
- Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*
- Erazim Kohak, *The Embers and the Stars*

Critical Perspectives on Human/Nature Relations (4 weeks)

- Val Plumwood, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*
- Deborah Cook, *Adorno on Nature*
- Alasdair McIntyre, *Dependent Rational Animals: Why Human Beings Need the Virtues*

Future Directions in Thinking About Ecological Issues (5 weeks)

- Jacques Derrida, *The Animal that therefore I Am*
- Jason Moore (ed.) *Anthropocene or Capitalocene? Nature, History and the Crisis of Capitalism*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- Submit by e-mail at least two discussion questions/points two days prior to each weekly seminar. These will form the basis for our exploration of each of the texts.
- Research Paper/Project – On a topic of your choice based on the issues raised in the course.