ENG 615  Pastoralism in America: Nature, Subsistence, Leisure, Labor
Winter term 2011   CRN 22377
Thursday mornings 9-12 in 253 PLC

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Office Hours: noon to 1:30 Wednesdays, 1:00 to 2:30 Thursdays (except Jan. 6)

This course is an exploration of the theoretical and historical origins for Americans' understanding of environment, wilderness, and landscape. It satisfies a requirement for the Literature and Environment Structured Emphasis, as well as the 1660-1800 period in the PhD program distribution requirements. Of course, all graduate students are welcome to enroll.

The title of the course puns on two distinct meanings of the word “pastoral”: as a subsistence strategy of peoples who rely primarily on herds of animals, and as a literary genre that expresses an ideology about class, labor, and rural land. The latter meaning comes out of a Classical and Renaissance tradition that would seem to bear little relation to America, and in fact literary reference works often define the pastoral genre without mentioning a single American author. The former emerges from anthropological theories that conceived of human history as a progression toward more intensive exploitation of natural resources. Oddly, pre-Columbian indigenous North America did not include any nomadic pastoral societies. Hence “American Pastoral” may be an oxymoron, yet the term has been influential in studies of American literature, art, and culture.

The course will therefore explore possible definitions for a uniquely American Pastoral tradition, and examine the stakes behind this paradox of the pastoral using four approaches:
First, a study of anthropological theories of cultural progress and diffusion (Lewis Henry Morgan, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Frederick Engels, Marshall Sahlins, Tim Ingold).
Second, a study of the relationship between American nature and gender, as explored in founding works of eco-feminism by Annette Kolodny and Carolyn Merchant.
Third, we shall turn to readings of key works of American Pastoral including Walden and The Machine in the Garden, which express and examine the desire to disengage from modern industrial capitalism in order to seek a simpler, more harmonious way of life closer to nature.
Fourthly, we shall read foundational texts in the academic fields of environmental history, such as William Cronon’s Changes in the Land, which draws upon accounts of seventeenth-century New England imbued with the pastoral ideology as it functioned in England at that time.

The first half of the course is devoted to the theoretical readings, while in the second half we will devote our attention to colonial America and to Thoreau.

READINGS
Books available at the University Bookstore (with approximate prices):
Morton, New English Canaan,  Digital Scanning, Scituate, MA  $20
Cronon, Changes in the Land,  Hill and Wang, $14
Cooper, The Pioneers,  Penguin Classics,  $11
Stange, *Woman the Hunter*, Beacon Press, $16
Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land*, UNC-Chapel Hill, $18
Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions*, UNC-Chapel Hill

I did not order an edition of *Walden*, so you will need to get a copy if you do not already have one.

**Blackboard coursesite:**
In the "course documents" tab you will find many of the course readings, a mix of pdf photocopies of book chapters, articles from journals, and links to electronic texts.

**Electronic databases**
The articles by Buell, Sweet, and Gross are available in the collections of electronic journals accessed through the Knight library webpage.

**Assignments and Grading:**
1 - weekly response papers of 2-3 pages each, will be due for five of the ten meetings.
Suggested questions for these writing assignments will be posted on blackboard. 25% of total grade
2 - a class presentation, in the form of discussion leader. This will involve a 10-minute introduction to one of the assigned readings for that day, including a handout with proposed discussion questions. Students will take this responsibility on each of the 9 meetings from Jan. 15th to March 10th and therefore on some days there will be two discussion leaders. 10% of grade
3 - Seminar paper, 10-12 pages, due March 16th. Please submit by e-mail. 50%
4 - proposal and bibliography for seminar paper, due February 24th in class. 15%

**Schedule**

1/6 **Introduction to the Pastoral in America**
Please read these texts, found on the blackboard site, before coming to the first meeting of the seminar on Jan. 6th.


Virgil, *Eclogues* #1, #4

1/13 **Origins of Pastoralism, of Agriculture, and of Economic Anthropology**
Bible, *Genesis* 1-4, 24-25, the legends of Jacob and Esau and of Cain and Abel
Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan*, First Book, pp. 2-50

pdfs on blackboard:
Steven Stoll, “Agrarian Anxieties” *Harper's Magazine* (July 2010), 7-9
David Halperin, Before Pastoral ch. 6, “Pastoral Origins and the Ancient Near East”
Tim Ingold, *Hunters, Pastoralists, and Ranchers* chapter 2, pp. 82-100
Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* pp. 76-98, “The Domestic Mode of Production”
Jeffrey Wagner, “Free Riding on Eiseley's Star Thrower, Thoreau's Huckleberry

link from blackboard:
Ben Jonson, “To Penshurst”

1/20 *Native America and Stadal History and Anthropology*

pdfs on blackboard:
Christian Marouby, “Adam Smith and the Anthropology of the Enlightenment: The
‘Ethnographic’ Sources of Economic Progress,” from Larry Wolff and Marco

links from blackboard:
Rousseau, *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among Men* Preface and Part One
Karl Marx, “The Fetishism of Commodities and the Secret Thereof” from *Capital*
volume I Part I chapter 1, Section 4
Frederick Engels, “The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man” in
*Dialectics of Nature* (Moscow, Progress, 1934)

1/27 *American Pastoralism and Agrarianism*
Mary Zeiss Stange, *Woman the Hunter* chapters 1, 3

pdfs on blackboard:
D’Arcy McNickle, *The Surrounded* chapters 6 and 27
Jim Corbett, *Goatwalking*, chapters 1-2

link from blackboard:
Lewis Henry Morgan, *Ancient Society*, or, *Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery through Barbarism to Civilization*, part 1

2/3 *Hunting Ecofeminists*
Mary Zeiss Stange, *Woman the Hunter* chapter 2
Annette Kolodny, *The Lay of the Land*, chapters 1-3
Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions* chapters 2, 4

pdfs on blackboard:
Paul Shepard, *Coming Home to the Pleistocene*, chapter 6 “Romancing the Potato”
and chap. 7 “The Cowboy Alternative.”
J. Hector St. John de Crèvecœur, *Letters from an American Farmer* Letters 1, 2, 12
2/10 Colonial New England: Nature and Promotion in the Seventeenth Century
William Wood, New England's Prospect, Part 1 [I will distribute a photocopy]
Thomas Morton, New English Canaan, Second Book, pp. 53-101
Cronon, Changes in the Land, chapters 1-4
Marx, The Machine in the Garden, chapter 3
pdfs on blackboard:
John Smith, excerpt from A Description of New England (1614)

2/17 Colonial New England: Landmarks in Ecological History
Morton, New English Canaan, Third Book, chapters 1-15 (pp 104-146)
William Wood, New England's Prospect, Part 2
Cronon, Changes in the Land, chapters 5-7
Merchant, Ecological Revolutions, chapter 3
pdf on blackboard:
Michelle Burnham, Folded Selves chapter on Thomas Morton
link from blackboard:
Nathaniel Hawthorne, “The Maypole of Mare-Mount”

2/24 Thoreau: Labor, Technology, and the Pastoral 1
Buell, The Environmental Imagination, introduction and chapter 1
pdf on blackboard:
Sayre, “The Beaver as Native and as Colonist”
lights from blackboard:
Le Page du Pratz, History of Louisiana, vol. 1, chapters 16-19
Virgil, Eclogue #6

3/3 Thoreau: Labor, Technology, and the Pastoral 2
James Fenimore Cooper, The Pioneers chapters 1-3, 14 (skip chapters 4-13, that is)
Thoreau, Walden “The Bean-Field” “Baker Farm” “Higher Laws” “House Warming”
“Former Inhabitants; and Winter Visitors” “The Pond in Winter”
on library electronic journals:

3/10 Land, Law, Property and Subsistence
James Fenimore Cooper, The Pioneers, chapters 16-36
Annette Kolodny, The Lay of the Land, chapter 4
link from blackboard:
John James Audubon, “The Passenger Pigeon, ecdopistes migratoria” from Ornithological Biographies

Short Paper topics (if you wish to write on another topic please check with me first):
For Jan. 6th
What, in your view, is the most accurate definition of Pastoralism in American literature and culture, based on what you've read in Lawrence Buell's and Glen Love's essays? (We will read Leo Marx later, or you can peek ahead.)

or

How can we define "work" in a manner that will be consistent and relevant both to primitive and modern societies? Is such a definition possible?

for Jan. 13th
What can we learn about pastoralism from studying cosmogonies in the earliest literary sources and from oral traditions? On what basis can such histories or speculative histories help modern peoples determine the proper relationship between land, work, and subsistence? Focus on one or more of our readings for this week.

Jan. 20th:
Tim Ingold writes (in the excerpt we read for Jan. 13th): "We might define 'production' either economically or ecologically. In the former sense, it refers to the expenditure of human labour in order to procure objects for consumption. But, as [Karl] Marx himself observed...the gathering of food is a form of economic production. Moreover, cultivators and pastoralists, who are every bit as dependent on plant and animal resources as their 'savage' predecessors, also 'gather' in the sense of harvesting their food from nature. In ecological terms, however, production refers to the creation of organic matter in nature, fuelled ultimately by solar radiation...Evidently, the celebrated contention of Leslie White, that Neolithic men 'make plants and animals work for them' contains a monumental confusion between the two senses of production" (83). Would you say that Carolyn Merchant's analysis of production and reproduction in the first chapter of Ecological Revolutions also suffers from a confusion between these two meanings of the word?

Jan. 27th:
Some of you may have read McNickle's The Surrounded in the seminar with Prof. Lima last term. If you have read it, write about how the novel critiques the ideology that American Indians are living in an outdated mode of production, and yet also questions the benefits of technological progress.

-or-

Consider Leo Marx updates his concept of the American Pastoral, from the introduction to his classic 1964 book, to the 1986 article, to the afterword in the 2000 reprint of the book. What did he change and why?

Feb. 3rd:
Annette Kolodny's analysis of early American literature proposes a Freudian psychoanalytic version of the theme of pastoral regression that we've examined in earlier readings. She writes; "the move to America was experienced as the daily reality of what has become its single dominating metaphor; regression from the cares of adult life and a return to the primal warmth of womb or breast in a feminine landscape." How does this differ from the other concept of regression, to earlier or more primitive forms of subsistence? To what degree do you believe the two temporal scales are comparable?

Feb. 10th:
William Cronon begins Changes in the Land by quoting Thoreau quoting William Wood about what New England was like at the time the English first colonized it. Cronon uses Wood several more times as he develops an environmental history of New England from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries. Do you see any potential distortions or problems in using Wood's text as a empirical document for evidence about nature? Are there obvious literary qualities to New England's Prospect which might lead you to read it instead as figurative, unreliable or exaggerated?

-or-

Tim Sweet invokes More's Utopia in his article, not only as an example of the impulse behind colonial promotional tracts, but specifically for the role of sheep and wool in that text. Explain why this pastoral economy is particularly important for his and our understanding of New England promotional literature.

Feb. 17th:
In his chapter 7 William Cronon describes (as Carolyn Merchant does on p93) how New Englanders issued a series of laws and regulations intended to settle conflicts between crop-growers and the owners of livestock, both cattle and swine. How does this history offer an update to our definitions of "pastoralism"? How is this conflict related to yet distinct from the one between Natives and colonists?

-or-

In Part 3 Thomas Morton tells several tales from his time in Massachusetts, featuring characters such as the "Barren Doe of Virginia" and "Master Bubble" and "Mine Host." Based on Dempsey's and Burnham's research and on your own judgment, can these people be identified, and the allegories decoded? If not, why might Morton have created such opaque allusions?

Feb. 24th:
Toward the end of the "Economy" chapter Thoreau wrote "thank Heaven there is so much virtue still in man; for I think the fall from the farmer to the operative as great and memorable as that from the man to the farmer" and a couple pages later "I found, that by working about six weeks a year, I could meet all the expenses of living." Discuss how Thoreau strives to realize the pastoral vision of retrogressing to a simpler and less laborious mode of subsistence. And why and how does he express his satisfaction through his contempt for others who work harder?

-or-

In section 5 of the "Machine" chapter (just before the section assigned for this week), Leo Marx presents the railroad as inspiring what he calls the "rhetoric of the technological sublime." Does Thoreau mimic this rhetoric when he describes the railroad? Is he a believer in the power of this machine to enhance the pastoral garden? Or is he mocking the kind of boosterism that Marx describes as being so pervasive in the U.S. in the mid 19th century?

March 3rd:
This question was inspired by a chapter on J. F. Cooper that I read in Ezra Tawil's recent book, The Making of Racial Sentiment (Cambridge, 2006).

In the opening chapters of The Pioneers a dispute arises over who shot, who killed, and who should have the right to the carcass of, a deer. Explore how this dispute between hunters over property rights responds to the theories expounded by Locke in his chapter on Property (see paragraphs 27-32 at the beginning of the excerpt I copied for you), or of Ingold in his discussion of property rights in hunting societies.

Mar. 10th:
In the fishing scene in chapters 23 and 24 three different methods of fishing are portrayed, or at least mentioned, and each represents different classes of fishermen, different moral or aesthetic approaches to fishing, and different economic means of distributing or using the fish. How is the debate among these three positions played out? Do they also represent various theories of property in the common resource of fish? Which claims to do the best job protecting this resource?