

Fall 2011

HUMA 888: The Spaces, Boundaries, and Nature of Knowledge

Seminar in Interdisciplinary Studies I

Wednesdays from 2-5pm in LB – 1014 (Department of History seminar room)

Instructor: Anya Zilberstein

Email: anya.zilberstein@concordia.ca

Office: LB-1014.15, Department of History; Office phone: x-5089

Fall 2011 office hours: Mondays 4:00 p.m. - 5:30 p.m. or email for an appointment

Course Description: Researchers across the humanities, social sciences, and fine arts have lately come to rely on spatial, topographical, cartographical, and ecological metaphors for conceptualizing their arguments, theories, and models. This seminar will explore and interrogate the 'spatial turn' by focusing on work in Science and Technology Studies (STS), a broad interdisciplinary field dedicated to understanding how knowledge is embedded in society, culture, politics, and history. We will survey both canonical and recent work in a variety of disciplines encompassed by STS, including the history, sociology, and anthropology of science and technology; environmental history; geography; and animal studies. While readings address a range of contexts from the early modern period to the present, the course will be organized thematically, addressing such topics as: territoriality; boundary objects; the boundaries of the human; microbial, plant, and animal geographies; empires, frontiers, and borderlands; margins and centers of epistemic authority; spaces of wildness, domestication, and conservation; the politics of geographically localized knowledge; laboratory versus field sciences; and the humanization of extreme environments—the Poles, the deep sea, and outer space. The final assignment will provide the opportunity to study these topics in greater depth or to explore a related topic relevant to students' particular research interests.

Course requirements and Grading:

(1) Writing assignments for the course—combined = 80%.

One short paper, about 6-8 pages (due at any point during the course of the semester). Each student will write a concise synthetic review that compares and contrasts two or three readings on the syllabus, each assigned for different weeks. Try to couple odd bedfellows and consider how different juxtapositions raise new questions and analytical problems.—20%.

One longer paper, about 15-20 pages (due at the end of the semester), and a prospectus and bibliography for it, about 2-5 pages (due earlier in the semester). Write either A) a historiographical review of a scholarly field of your choosing in STS or related fields, which ventures beyond the readings on the syllabus, or B) a detailed proposal for an original research project that engages with and challenges major questions in STS or related fields. Please email me or arrange to meet with me before the end of October to discuss your topic. Prospectus/ bibliography—10%, Final paper—50%.

(2) Class participation—20%. Besides active participation in all discussions, each student will lead discussion of at least one session. Each student will also share their work-in-progress during class time on the long paper in two stages: first, in the initial stages of formulating a topic to pursue and, second, in the final stages of preparing the paper. These short presentations are required but not graded.

Note: Rather than aiming at the weaknesses in individual readings, we will emphasize the points of contact and analyze contrasts between various perspectives, working to establish the main lines of inquiry in existing scholarship and to consider future directions for research.

Schedule:

Key:

\$ Readings marked with a dollar sign are available for purchase in the campus bookstore

* Readings marked with an asterisk are available as PDFs on the course website.

I will try to reserve 1 copy of \$ readings for 3-hour loans at the Webster Library

September 7: Introduction

\$ Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Malden: Blackwell, 1996), Introductory matter & Part I.

* Charles W. J. Withers, "Place and the 'Spatial Turn' in Geography and in History," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 70: 4 (Oct., 2009), pp. 637-658.

September 14: Placing Knowledge

\$ Karin Knorr-Cetina, *Epistemic Cultures: How the Sciences Make Knowledge* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

* H.J. Rheinberger, *Towards a History of Epistemic Things: Synthesizing Proteins in the Test Tube* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997), pp. 24-37.

* Peter Galison, "Chapter 9: Trading Zones," in *Image and Logic: A Material Culture of Microphysics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), pp. 781-844.

September 21: Historicizing Space

\$ David Livingstone, *Putting Science in Its Place: Geographies of Scientific Knowledge* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

* "Introduction" **and** "Spaces of Erotic Delight," in Miles Ogborn and Charles W.J. Withers, eds. *Georgian Geographies: Essays on Space, Place, and Landscape in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), pp. 1-23, 131-150.

September 28: Frontiers, Boundaries, and Borderlands

* Frederick J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," (1894) [Login to CLUES and locate through the 'Empire Online' database]

* Lauren Benton, "Spatial Histories of Empire," *Itinerario* 30, 3 (2006), pp. 19-34.

* Robert Kohler, *Landscapes and Labscapes: Exploring the Lab-Field Border in Biology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 1-59, 293-308.

October 5: State Territoriality

* James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes To Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 1-102.

* Charles S. Maier, "Consigning the Twentieth Century to History: Alternative Narratives for the Modern Era," *American Historical Review* 105: 3 (Jun. 2000), pp. 807-831.

* Chandra Mukerji, "Reading and Writing with Nature: Social Claims and the French Formal Garden," *Theory and Society* 19: 6 (Dec. 1990): 651-679.

October 12: The City as Laboratory

\$ Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Malden: Blackwell, 1996), Part II.

* Thomas Gieryn, "The City as Truth Spot: Laboratories and Field Sites in Urban Studies," *Social Studies of Science* 36 (2006): 5-38.

* Henri LeFebvre, "Chapter 2: Social Space," in *The Production of Space* (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991, [1974]), pp. 68-168.

October 19: Animal Geographies

* Etienne Benson, *Wired Wilderness: Technologies of Tracking and the Making of Modern Wildlife* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010), pp. 1-52.

\$ Nigel Rothfels, *Savages and Beasts: The Birth of the Modern Zoo* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).

* Jennifer R. Wolch and Jody Emel, eds., *Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands* (New York: Verso, 1999), pp. xi-26.

October 26: Prospectus Discussion:

DUE: Prospectus and bibliography

Please pre-circulate your prospectus and bibliography for the long paper by email *at least two days before class*. Read each prospectus and be prepared to comment, offer suggestions, and ask questions about the scope, perspective, methodology, and aims of each project.

November 2: Local Knowledge of Place:

\$ Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1996).

* Julie Kruikshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001). [e-reader in CLUES]

November 9: Making Environments

* William J. Turkel, *The Archive of Place: Unearthing the Pasts of the Chilcotin Plateau* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), pp. xix-43, 75-107, 225-227. [e-reader in CLUES]

* Gregg Mitman, "Natural History and the Clinic: The Regional Ecology of Allergy in America," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 34 (2003): 491-510. !

* Hugh Raffles, "The Uses of Butterflies," *American Ethnologist* 28 (2001): 513-548.

November 16: Outer Space

* Valerie Olson, "The Ecobiopolitics of Space Biomedicine," *Medical Anthropology* 29: 2 (Spring 2010), pp. 170-193.

* Peter Redfield, "The Half-Life of Empire in Outer Space," *Social Studies of Science* 32: 5/6 (2002), pp. 791-825.

* Peder Anker, "The Ecological Colonization of Space," *Environmental History* 10 (2005), pp. 239-268.

November 23: Extreme Environments

* Stefan Helmreich, "An Anthropologist Underwater: Immersive Soundscapes, Submarine Cyborgs, and Transductive Ethnography," *American Ethnologist* 34: 4 (Nov., 2007), pp. 621-641.

Film: Werner Herzog, "Encounters at the End of the World," (2009), 99 minutes.

November 30: Student presentations

Note: Class will meet from 2-6 PM

Each student will have 10-12 minutes to share the outcomes of their research for the long paper. In order to allow sufficient time for every student presentation, I would like to extend the class session by an hour on this day (I will provide refreshments!).

December 9:

DUE: Long paper