

FYS: Nature, Environments, and Place in American Thought

Reflection Essay

Introduction

Throughout this semester we have looked at how scholars, creative writers, and artists have thought about and represented the role of nature/environment/place in the human experience. In this seminar we have not only discussed a range of theories and intellectual approaches – we have also put these intellectual traditions into action. First, you reflected on your own thinking in the nature contemplation exercise. Second, you selected images of that conveyed your ideas on a theme in human-environmental interactions. Third, you applied the writings of others to your analysis of a familiar place and situated it spatially on a digital map. Finally, you listened to a local environmental actor and created a multimedia presentation about this individual's work to inform a public audience.

Assignment

Your task is to write a self-reflective essay that narrates *and* analyzes how your understanding of nature, environments, and/or place has evolved as you encountered and applied intellectual traditions to your own representations of nature in the four activities listed above. When you think about your own intellectual evolution over the four activities, what would you say has been the most important theme or question for you in this course? Finally, reflect on the class website as a technological medium for exploring course content. Assess the process of building components of a web exhibit as an avenue for representing and expressing your understanding of nature, environments, and place. Is the digital space more effective or less effective for conveying ideas about nature than other media we have encountered (essay, poem, artwork, photograph, film, site visit)? Explain your reasoning.

Mechanics and Assessment

This paper should be about 3–4 double-spaced typed pages. Include your name, date, and the assignment title in the upper right corner.

This is a reflective writing assignment that asks for both personal narrative (first person is appropriate) and analysis. You will demonstrate understanding of course material and themes by connecting them to your intellectual evolution and the projects you have produced in this class. Much like the nature contemplation essay, I am asking you to write honestly, thoughtfully, and with critical self-awareness.

The assignment will be assessed according to:

- 1) authentic effort and demonstrated engagement with the process of reflection
- 2) whether each of the assignment questions is fully addressed
- 3) style and clarity of writing (no grammatical errors or overly-complicated sentences – keep your writing simple)