THE NATURE OF LANDSCAPE IN LATIN AMERICA

Photo: José Falconi
[This syllabus is comprehensive in terms of readings, as it serves as a road map for a research agenda that has been explored very little until now: Landscape studies in Latin America. For that reason, don’t panic when you see lots of readings each week: we will only select a few readings each week out of the whole menu provided in it. Hope you enjoy the course!]

[Taught Brandeis University / Spring 2016]
Second Nature
THE NATURE OF LANDSCAPE
IN LATIN AMERICA
Surprisingly, despite the marvelous scenery, breathtaking natural surroundings and endless natural resources, the notion of “landscape” itself might be the most foreign of all in Latin America culture. To put it bluntly: if one can attest that Latin America has existed for almost five hundred years (since first contact in 1492), its first authentic “landscapes” (that show a critical departure from the academic mold inherited from the European tradition) did not appear until late into the XIX century and, if one gets really strict, it will not be until the 1910s were one could detect the first original takes in the tradition (in Alejandro Reverón’s work). The fact is that Latin America had no “landscape” during the Spanish and Portuguese Colonial times, for which for almost four centuries out of the five in which the region has existed, there have not been meaningful, original descriptions of the territory—whereas verbal accounts or visual depictions—produced by their very own people.

This course, therefore, is an invitation to think about such significant absence—and a speculation of why it happened, and how it has affected the regions cultural development. In brief: What does it mean to establish a culture without an idea of landscape? Is that even possible? And if possible, what does that mean for Latin American culture?

Thus, the course not only introduces students to a discussion on the very notion of “landscape”—as a genre—but also the way in which Latin American culture has been build, since the “discovery” of the continent by Europeans, over a problem of “expressiveness” of language that seemed to pervade all the writings of the “discoverers” as well as of the “cronistas” that accompanied all the expeditions in the Americas. In other words: At the basis of the problem of “expressiveness” in Latin American art lays, the students will find, the problem of landscape. And at the basis of the problem of landscape lays, students will also find, a particular belief of “nature” (i.e. natural settings, outside the city limits) that Latin Americans have had since the Colonial times.

The course also examines in chronological order several canonical paintings and texts that wrestle with landscape, focusing on the creativity generated by the epistemological anxiety caused by ungovernable physical surroundings outside the city limits, and the way in which nature has been thought from within “city limits.”
The course, therefore, hopes to show the student the basis of Latin American culture through the study of the notions of “landscape” and its associate beliefs about the “natural” and the environment—a theme most pressing for present days.

**MEASURABLE OUTCOMES**

Those of you who successfully complete this course and all its requirements will have an understanding of not only some of the major works produced in Latin America and will be able to place them within their relevant historical, geographic, and cultural contexts, but also have a command of theory of landscape, from its inception to its latest developments in the region.

Beyond gaining a familiarity with major artistic movements, students will be knowledgeable of significant theoretical issues, starting with the category of “landscape” and “Latin America” in itself, as well as its culture, and its the relationship between major cultural centers in Europe and the United States with those in Latin America; and the impact of theories on postmodernism and globalization on the understanding of visual art produced by Latin Americans.

**REQUIRED READING**

All required main readings are in English, which are drawn from artist’s writings, criticism, art-historical scholarship. All readings will be made available on the course’s site. The readings are posted by week.

The recommended, secondary readings include texts in Spanish and Portuguese and are meant to direct the student to direct sources and some of the most important and cutting edge scholarship produced in Latin America.

**Electronic Resources**

There are a number of important resources on the web you can access to help you when researching and/or writing a paper in Art History and more specifically about Latin American Art. I encourage you to take a look at them:

- **Oxford Reference online (includes Oxford Art online)**
  [http://www.oxfordartonline.com](http://www.oxfordartonline.com)

- **International Center of the Arts of the Americas (ICAA) Digital Archive**:
  [http://icaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/](http://icaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/)
**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EVALUATION**

1. **ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION**

   Attendance is mandatory and absences will affect your grade. If you miss multiple classes due to illness, you are expected to bring in a doctor’s note. If you know that you will need to miss class, please see me in advance.

   You are each required to read course materials in advance and to arrive prepared to actively participate in daily activities and discussions. In addition, other in-class assignments will contribute to your final participation grade. Regular tardiness, use of cell phones during class, and other disruptive or disrespectful behavior will negatively impact your participation grade.

   Finally, discussion and debate will make this course a lot more fun so, please engage with the material and please respect your fellow classmates; each and every other opinion is valuable!

2. **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS AND OFFICE HOURS**

   You are each expected to complete weekly short writing assignments and a final paper. Your final paper must be submitted as a hard copy to me on the day that it is due. It should be typed, using a 12-point Times New Roman font, and double-spaced with one-inch margins. You should use Chicago Style for your citations and bibliography. The short writing assignments will all be posted on the course site and will respond to selected course material.

   I would like to meet with each of you separately during my office hours at some point during the beginning of the semester. Please sign up for a 10 minute conversation during the first two sessions of class.

3. **READING RESPONSES**

   Each student is expected to write weekly brief responses to course readings this semester. Each of these responses should not exceed one page, they should be given to me at the beginning of every Thursday class. Insofar they are considered “responses” to a reading, they are meant to be an opportunity for you to flesh out some of the questions you have about the week’s readings.
4. FINAL PAPER

Each student will select and investigate one work of contemporary art or architecture that corresponds with the parameters of the class session that you chose for your presentation. The goal of this short 15-page research paper is to offer an in-depth analysis of one work of art and to connect it to the broader themes that the individual work and the class have addressed.

Papers are due on the last day of the exam period (May 12).

5. EXTRA CREDIT

This course hopes to encourage students to be actively involved in the appreciation and creation of contemporary culture. Therefore, I encourage everyone to attend outside activities that are related to the subject of our course. In order to earn extra credit, write a one-page critical summary of the pre-approved event that you attended. The write-up is due one week after the event. I will accept three extra credit assignments per student. Each satisfactorily completed assignment will be worth one point towards your final grade.
COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Attendance and Participation: 20%
Response Papers: 35%
Final Paper: 45%

GRADING SCALES

A (94–100), A- (90–93), B+ (87–89), B (84–86), B- (80–83), C+ (77–79), C (74–76), C- (70–73), D+ (67–69), D (64–66), D- (60–63), F (0–59). Incompletes (I) will be given only in documented cases of extreme hardship.

COURSE SCHEDULE

What is Landscape? What is the critical difference between “nature” and the “natural” order?

WEEK ONE

JANUARY 14 (Thursday)

John Constable, Weymouth Bay (c. 1816)

Main Readings
Listen to “Your Body is a Wonderland” by John Mayer (any audio streaming)

http://www.philsophynotes.info/2009/01/j-s-mill-on-nature-1874/

Friedrich Schiller, Naïve and Sentimental
http://www.schillerinstitute.org/transl/Schiller_essays/naive_sentimental-1.html

Secondary Readings:


WEEK TWO

The Rise of Landscape

JANUARY 19 (Tuesday)

Dosso Dossi, Landscape With Saints circa 1542

Main Readings


Denis E. Cosgrove, Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape. Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1998. (Chapters 1–2)

Jeff Malpas, Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. (Selected Passages)

Watch: “Into the Wild” by Sean Penn (2007)

Secondary Readings

North by Northwest: Romanticism, Landscape and National Traditions in Northern Europe
JANUARY 21 (Thursday)

Monk by the Sea by Caspar David Friedrich, 1809–10

Main Readings:
Immanuel Kant, Critique of the Power of Judgment (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001 or any edition that Paul Guyer has supervised). – Selected Passages


**Secondary Readings:**


**Natural Surroundings in America: Fabled Descriptions, Thwarted Expressiveness**

**WEEK THREE**

**JANUARY 26 (Tuesday)**

First Rendering of the American Continent, Attributed to Christopher Columbus, circa 1492
Main Readings:
Christopher Columbus, “Journal of the Third Voyage (1498-1500)” (Any web version)

Geoffrey Symcox and Blair Sullivan, Christopher Columbus and the Enterprise of the Indies. Boston, MA: Bedford, 2005. (Selected Passages)


Selections from: Américo Vespucio, José de Acosta, Bartolomé de las Casas, Juan de Cárdenas, Alvar Nuñez Cabeza de Vaca, Fray Toribio de Benavente “Motolina”, M. Girolamo Benzoni, Francisco Lopez de Gómara, Gonzalo Fernandez de Oviedo, Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, Pedro Cieza de León, Fray Gaspar de Carvajal, Juan Rodriguez Freyle, Cristóbal de Acuña, Alonso de Oválle, Antonio Pigafetta and others.


Secondary Readings:
On Descriptions:


America: (Natural) Paradise Regained

JANUARY 28 (Thursday)

De Bry, America Engraving

Main Readings


Secondary Readings


WEEK FOUR

FEBRUARY 2 (Tuesday)

Main Readings:
Romero, José Luis. *Latin America: Its Cities and Ideas* INTERAMER No. 59 Serie Cultural 1999, OAS (Selected Passages)


Secondary Readings:

Fray Diego de Valades, *Rhetorica Christiana* (1579), (Selected Passages)


**From Reductions to Villas, From Villas to Cities**

**FEBRUARY 4** (Thursday)

Guaraní Reduction, XVIII Century.

**Main Readings**

Ordenanzas Reales by Felipe II (1573):


Secondary Readings:


“Colonial Landscapes”: Between Nowhere and The No-Place of Ideals

WEEK FIVE

FEBRUARY 9 (Tuesday)

Folding Screen with Indian Wedding and Flying Pole, 1690

Main Readings:


Alonso Carrió de la Vandera (Concolocorvo), Guide for Blind Travelers (1775) – Selected Passages

Secondary Readings:

The Case of Potosí
February 11 (Thursday)

Gaspar Miguel Berrio, Detail of Cerro Rico and the Imperial Town of Potosí, 1758.

Main Readings:


**Secondary Readings:**
Teresa Gisbert and Jose de Mesa, *Historia de Pintura Cuzqueña* (1962)

[NO CLASSES FEB 16–18]

**Other Depictions:**
Colonial Codices, between landscape and cartography

February 23 (Tuesday)

Detail, Mapa Siguenza Puebla, Mexico. Sixteenth Century.

**Main Readings:**


**Secondary Readings:**
Federico Fernández Christlieb and Angel Julian García Zambrano (Eds.), *Territorialidad y Paisaje en el Altepétl del Siglo XVI*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 2006. (Selected Passages)

**Describing Place in the dispute between word and Image:**
**The Case of Guaman Poma de Ayala**

February 25 (Thursday)

*TRAVAXO*

*ZARAPCOLO VIAMATA*

Guamán Poma de Ayala, *Crónica de Buen Gobierno*, 1615.

**Main Readings:**
Guaman Poma de Ayala, *Primer Nueva coronica i buen gobierno* (1615)
www.kb.dk/elib/mss/poma/


**Secondary Readings:**


**Brazilian Exceptionality under the Dutch:**

*Frans Post and Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*

March 1 (Tuesday)

![Franz Post, Recife, 1637.](image)
Main Readings:


Secondary Readings:

Mario De Andrade, Aspectos das Artes Plasticas no Brasil. (Selected Passages).

Law and Order: The Lettered City

March 3 (Thursday)

Anonymous, Detail of Procession of Corpus Christi Cuzco series (c. 1680)

Main Readings:


Nicolau Sevcenko, “Peregrinations, Visions and the City: From Canudos to Brasília, the Backlands become the City and the City becomes the Backlands” in Vivian Schelling (ed.), Through the Kaleidoscope, The Experience of Modernity in Latin America (London: Verso, 2000). 75-107


**Secondary Readings:**


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**The Nature of Natural Discoveries I:**
*Celestino Jose Mutis and Borbonic Expeditions*

**March 8 (Tuesday)**

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**Main Readings:**


Secondary Readings:

José Antonio Amaya, Mutis, Apóstol de Linneo: Historia de la Botanica en el Virreinato de la Nueva Granada (1760-1783). 2 Volumes Bogotá: Instituto Colombiano de Antropología e Historia, 2005. (Read all)

Blue-Prints for a Nation: Romanticism, Independence and Landscape

March 10 (Thursday)
Main Readings:


A. Huxley, “Wordsworth in the Tropics” (any version on the internet)

Jose Maria Heredia, “Niágara”:


Secondary Readings:


The Nature of Natural Discoveries II: Humboldt, Rugendas, Bomplant, and others

March 15 (Tuesday)

Humboldt, Atlas.

Main Readings:
Alexander Von Humboldt, “Atlas” and “Kosmos” (any versions)


**Secondary Readings:**
Jean Baptiste Boussingault and François Desire Roulin, *Viajes Científicos a los Andes Ecuatoriales* (1849). Instituto Colombiano de Cultura Hispánica, 2006. (Read all)

**(North) Americans in (South) America:**
The Case of Frederick Church in Latin America or Two Versions of Nature

**March 17 (Thursday)**

Film Still, “Deliverance,” (1972)

Watch John Ford’s “The Searchers” (1956)
Watch John Boorman’s “Deliverance” (1972)
Watch Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez’s “The Blair Witch Project” (1999)

**Main Readings**


Secondary Readings:

**The Other America or the Harmony between Self and nature**

March 22 (Tuesday)

Anonynous, “A Pic Nick in the Woods of New England,” 1855

**Main Readings:**
Henry Thoreau, Walden (Any Version) – Read all.

Secondary Readings:


The Other America II: From Gardens to Lawns

March 24 (Thursday)

“Ideal American Lawn”
Main Readings:


Secondary Readings:


**WEEK ELEVEN**

**The Argentine Case: A Nation for the Dessert**

March 29 (Tuesday)

Juan Manuel Blanes, *Ocupación militar del Río Negro por la expedición al mando del General Julio A. Roca*, 1879
Main Readings:


Secondary Readings:

Zeballos, Estanislao. La Conquista de Quince Mil Leguas. Buenos Aires: La Prensa, 1878.


**Mexico City from Porfiriato to the 1960’s: Buenos Aires circa 1940s: Spendor and Erosion of the Lettered City**

March 31 (Thursday)

![Image](image_url)


**Main Readings:**

Jorge Luis Borges, “Death and the Compass” (Any web version) – read all.


**Secondary Readings:**

Salvador Novo, *Los Paseos de la Ciudad de Mexico*. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica; 2012. (Read all)
Claude Bataillon, *La ciudad y el campo en el México Central*. Mexico City: Siglo Venituno Editores, 1972. (Chapters 1 and 2)


**WEEK TWELVE**

**Landscape on Sight: José María Velasco**

April 5 (Tuesday)

Jose María Velasco, *Valle de Mexico, 1870*
Main Readings:
Dawn Ades, “José María Velasco” in Art in Latin America, pp. 125-149.


Secondary Readings:
José Maria Velasco, Homenaje. Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico, 1989.
Armando Reverón and the Caribbean Light: Did he paint the first (Original) Latin American Landscape?

April 7 (Thursday)

Armando Reverón, El Playón (1917)

Main Readings:


Secondary Readings:
Alfredo Boulton, Reverón. Caracas, Ediciones Macanao, 1979. (Read all)

No Garden Allowed: Two Ways of Wrestling with Wilderness

April 12 (Tuesday)

Still from Francis Ford Coppola’s Apocalypse Now (1979)

Main Readings:


Watch Francis Ford Coppola’s “Apocalypse Now” (1979)


John Dixon Hunt, The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting and gardening during the Eighteen Century Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1989 (Chapter one and Chapter 5)
Secondary Readings:


Could abstraction be the path to National Landscape?

April 14 (Thursday)

Alejandro Otero’s Solar Delta at the Guri Dam (Venezuela)

Main Readings:


**Secondary Readings:**

Alejandro Otero, “Del arte abstracto,” Los Disidentes, No. 4, June 1950, p. 12

Mexico City, Spiral City: Megalopoli’s Urban Sublime

April 19 (Tuesday)

Main Readings:

Watch Paul Haggis’s “Crash” (2004)

Paolo Gasparini, Megalopolis: Los Angeles, Mexico, Sao Paulo. Lestans, Italy: Galleria Regionale d’Arte Contemporanea and CRAF (Centro di Ricerca ed Archiviazione della Fotografia), 2000. (Review all images)

Dawn Ades and Cuauhtemoc Medina (Eds.) Melanie Smith: Spiral City & Other Vicarious Pleasures. Mexico City: Turner/Jumex Collection, 2007. (Read all)


Alexis Fabry (Ed.), Mexico City. Mexico City: Toluca Project, 2004. (Selected Passages)


**Secondary Readings:**


Nestor García Canclini, "México, ciudad desimaginada" in *El Ángel/ Reforma* (March 14, 1999)

Conclusion: Landscape, The Space/Time of the Third World

April 21 (Thursday)

Cover of the First Edition of *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae* by Willem Piso, 1648.

Main Readings


**Secondary Readings:**
Wanna know more about the desert?

ENROLL IN FA 177B!

Second Nature

THE NATURE OF LANDSCAPE

Photo: José Falconi
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