

Alternate Edens: Our Gardens, Ourselves
Honors 112, 4 Credits (first-year science gen ed)
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General Description:

Gardens are archetypal spaces rich in cultural associations and intimately connected to the forces of history. On a philosophical level we ask why gardens are built and how they reflect attitudes to nature. As historians we examine how gardens have fitted into power structures, exploited particular environmental conditions, and spurred scientific inquiry. Visits to gardens historical, fictional, and actual deepen our understanding of the impulse to recreate Eden, and we ground our speculative forays with some hands-on practical work in the honors garden on campus. This class sets out to change the way we see the world around us.

Main Course Texts:

Michael Lewis ed. *American Wilderness*.

Michael Pollan *Second Nature*.

Christopher Thacker *A History of Gardens*.

EReserve Readings from: Edmund Burke *An Inquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful*, Francesco Colonna *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (trans. Godwin), Penelope Hobhouse *Story of Gardening & Natural Planting*, Melvin Kalfus *Frederick Law Olmsted: the Passion of a Public Artist*, Guillame de Lorris and Jean de Meun *Le Roman de la Rose* (trans. Robbins), Anna Pavord *The Naming of Names*, William Robinson *The Wild Garden*, Simon Schama *Landscape and Memory*, Henry David Thoreau "Walking", Jenny Uglow *A Little History of British Gardening* & JSTOR Articles as noted.

Syllabus

Week 1: What is a Garden? Theory, Archetype, and Dirt

Jan 25 Of Paradise and Wilderness

*OED definitions, Genesis 2:8-25.

Jan 27 A Brief History of Paradise

Jan 29 Gardens at Home

*Pollan "Two Gardens" & "Nature Abhors a Garden" 7-53.

Week 2: Symbolism and Landscape Design: 2 Models

Feb 1 Japanese Gardens: Tsukiyama, Kare Sensui, Cha Niwa and the Sakuteiki

* Thacker 63-79.

Feb. 3 Traditional Islamic Design: Persia, Mughal India, Moorish Spain

*Thacker 27-42, & EReserve Hobhouse Story 72-9.

Feb. 5 Landscape Design: Translating Views of Nature to Space

Week 3: Monks, Monarchs and Poets: Gardens of the Christian Middle Ages

Feb 8 Monastery Gardens and the "Hortus Conclusus"

*Thacker 81-7 & EReserve Hobhouse *Story* 104-7.

Feb 10 The Garden of Courtly Love

*EReserve: excerpts *Roman de la Rose* Book 1.

Feb 12 Honors Garden Renovation Project - Introduction

*EReserve: Design collection notes & 2007 Planting Guide.

Week 4: Allegory and Culture: The Learned Gardens of Renaissance Italy

Feb 15 Italian Design Theory: Alberti and the Hypnerotomachia

*Thacker 95-8, EReserve: excerpts *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*.

Feb 17 Italian Villa Gardens

*Thacker 98-111, & JSTOR: Claudia Lazzarro-Bruno "The Villa Lante at Bagnaia: An Allegory of Art and Nature" *Art Bulletin* (1977).

Feb 19 The Villa Garden: Shall We Dance?

*JSTOR: Jennifer Nevile "Dance and the Garden: Moving and Static Choreography in Renaissance Europe" **Renaissance Quarterly** (1999)

Journals DUE

Week 5: Technology and Mechanical Nature

Feb 22 Water Technology and Artifice in the Third Nature

*Thacker 113-19, 134-7.

Feb 24 Descartes' Rainbows

*JSTOR: Simon Werret "Wonders Never Cease: Descartes' Meteores and the Rainbow Fountain" *British Journal for the History of Science* (2001)

Feb 26 Back to Earth: Garden Renovation Project discussion

Week 6: French Power Gardening

Mar 1 Vaux le Vicomte and the Envy of Kings

*Thacker 139-45, EReserve: Schama *Landscape* "Power Lines" 33-46.

Mar 3 Versailles, Le Trianon and the Queen Shepherdess

*Thacker 139-45, Handouts: Marlowe's "Passionate Shepherd" & Raleigh's "Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd".

Mar 5 Down to Dirt: Garden Renovation Project Discussion

Week 7: Renaissance (Plants)men

Garden Work Outdoors

Mar 8 Plants in Antiquity

*Handouts: Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* & Dioscorides' *De Materia Medica*.

Mar 10 Renaissance Herbals and Early Botanic Gardens

*EReserve: Pavord Naming "Theophrastus Reborn" 143-60 & "Brunfel's Book" 161-73. & Handouts: Title pages of early herbals and florilegia.

Mar 12 Collectors and Explorers

*EReserve: Hobhouse Story "Plants on the Move" 169-75, 184-94. & Uglow: *Little History* "The Plantsman Cometh" 67-78. *Journals DUE*

Week 8: The English Landscape Garden Leaps the Fence *Garden Work Outdoors*

- Mar 22 The Genius of the Place: Pope, Kent and Claude
*Thacker 181-207 & Handout: Alexander Pope “Moral Essay IV”.
- Mar 24 Capability Brown and the Calm before the Sublime
*Thacker 209-12 & Handout: Goldsmith “The Deserted Village”.
- Mar 26 Sublimity and Terror
*EReserve: excerpts Burke’s *Inquiry* & Handout: from Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey*.

Week 9: Poets and Scientists in the Garden

- Mar 29 Sublimity and Terror in the Picturesque Garden
*Thacker 212-25.
- Mar 31 Two Faces of Arcadia
*Schama *Landscape* “Primitives and Pastorals” & “Rudeness and Confusion” 526-45.
- Apr 2 John Ray, Linnaeus and the Frontiers of Modern Botany
*Pavord *Naming* “The Beginning of the End” & “Epilogue” 372-402.

Week 10: The Suburban Gardening Revolution in C19 England *Garden Work Outdoors*

- Apr 5 Victorian Opportunities
*Thacker 227-42.
- Apr 7 Victoria’s Daughters
*EReserve: Uglow *Little History* “Victoriana” 170-81 & “Don’t Sneer at Mrs. Lawrence” 210-19 & Handouts: excerpts from Jane Loudon’s *The Lady’s Country Companion*.
- Apr 9 William Robinson’s Wild Garden
Thacker 242-52 & EReserve Robinson *The Wild Garden* “Explanatory” 3-17, *The Garden of British Wild Flowers*” 157-61.

Journals DUE

Week 11: Early American Gardens: Cultivating the Wilderness

- Apr 12 European Models on American Soil
* Pollan “Planting a Tree” 150-75& EReserve: Hobhouse *Story* 207-384.
- Apr 14 A Singularly Cultivated Man: Jefferson at Monticello
*JSTOR: Kenneth Hafertepe “An Inquiry into Thomas Jefferson’s Ideas of Beauty” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (2000).
- Apr 16 Gardening the Wilderness
*Lewis AW, Perreault “American Wilderness and First Contact” 15-33 & Stoll “Religion Irradiates the Wilderness” 35-51.

Week 12: American Romantics in the Garden

Garden Work Outdoors

- Apr 19 Landscape Ideals in New England
*Lewis AW, Dean “Natural History, Romanticism and Thoreau” 73-89 & EReserve: Thoreau “Walking”
- Apr 21 Opening the West
*Lewis AW, Miller “The Fate of Wilderness in American Landscape Art” 91-112 & EReserve Schama Landscape “Grizzlies” 185-201.

Apr 23 Wilderness Parks at Home and Abroad

*Lewis AW, Johnson “Wilderness Parks and Their Discontents”

EReserve: Schama *Landscape* “The Forest of Fontainebleau” 546-60.

Reflective Gardening Essay DUE

Week 13: Public Parks and Suburban Ideals

Garden Work Outdoors

Apr 26 Frederick Law Olmsted’s Pastoral Vision

*EReserve: Kalfus *FLO* “A Philosophy of Urban Landscape Design”

277-89 & Handouts: Olmsted & Vaux Plans for Prospect Park.

Apr 28 Olmsted and Suburban Aesthetics

*Pollan “Why Mow?” 54-65.

Apr 30 National Parks: Preservation vs. Conservation

*Lewis AW, Miller “A Sylvan Prospect” & Pollan “Idea of a

Garden” 176-201.

Journals DUE

Week 14: Naturalism and the Native Plant Movement

May 3 Following in Robinson’s Footsteps

*EReserve: Hobhouse *Natural Planting* 18-32.

May 5 Politics and Plant Choice

*EReserve: Groning and Wolschke-Bulmahn “The Native Plant Enthusiasm:
Ecological Panacea or Xenophobia” PDF (Arnold Arboreteum).

May 7 Theorizing Weeds

*Pollan “Weeds are Us” 98-116.

Week 15: Review

May 10 & 12 Exam Review

Grading:

Garden Journals 40% : Collected at the ends of weeks 4, 7,10 and 13, the journals contain both casual observations and more fully developed pieces. Students choose 15 from a list of 20 prompts and work up 12 (3 for each collection period) as 500 word essays.

Class Garden Renovation Project 15%: Students work (minimum of 5 hours) on perennial, shrub and herb plantings in a campus garden. A reflective paper (700wds) invites them to relate their experiences to what we are studying and is due at the end of week 12.

Field Trip Assignments 10%:We visit the National Gallery (in February) to look at paintings and Longwood Gardens (in April) to see the real thing. Short scavenger hunt type assignments encourage close observations.

Final Exam 35%

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