Investigates how painters are exploring contemporary approaches to nature and landscape through such questions as: How is nature represented in the media? How is the urban/nature opposition beginning to break down? How can cities be ecologically friendly? These questions are discussed through: an historical survey of how artists of the past viewed and represented nature, a class visit to the McMichael Collection, and an examination of how contemporary painters are re-engaging with nature. Students explore these themes through three, studio projects. Students are encouraged to draw and paint from nature instead of using only photographic sources. The projects are evaluated by extensive individual and class critiques. Pre-requisites: 3.00 credits in 2020 series of courses

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**SPECIAL FEATURES**

This studio course will investigate how artists are exploring contemporary approaches to nature and landscape through Painting. In order to consider some contemporary approaches, we will first begin by looking at the rich history of nature and landscape Painting in Canada – with particular focus on the Group of Seven. Followed by a thorough exploration of what our contemporary experiences are of nature and how we can view contemporary artists tackling this ever-present topic of study. The three studio Painting projects will ask us to consider how we translate our experiences and study of nature into the form of Painting.

Questions such as: What is the sublime and how did painters depict the sublime through nature; How is nature depicted as a force in opposition to ‘man’, to be tamed; How is nature gendered; What is our contemporary relationship with nature; How do we interact with nature; How is nature represented in the media; Are our experiences of nature primarily mediated or viewed through various screens; How is the urban/nature
opposition beginning to break down; How can cities be ecologically friendly; What is the relationship of the suburbs to nature?; How is our relationship to nature changing?

Currently, painters are beginning to again look at nature as a complex and contested terrain. The three studio painting projects required for this course each focus on a different aspect of this contemporary experience.

Objective:
To introduce students to a range of historical and contemporary artists who are working from nature as source or object of study. We will approach this through a variety of lenses (philosophical, historical, theoretical, technical, social, societal etc.) to consider how artists are translating their experiences and study of nature and landscape into the form of Painting, and to develop our own approach to this through the three studio projects.

TOPICS AND CONCEPTS

Project 1: Working In and From Nature 25%
Concept: There is a very vibrant tradition of landscape / nature painting, particularly in Canada. How have painters depicted the natural world? How does the time period and the society in which the painter is living, influence how the painter views the landscape, the style used and the underlying message? What is the sublime, the pastoral, the wild, the picturesque in landscape painting? What do these approaches to landscape painting mean? Taking into consideration these questions and research topics, consider how you view the topic of “landscape” and “nature”. How have these topics changed or remained the same over time? In this project, we will be considering how we look at nature and how our observations can be distilled into a Painting.

Procedure:
Part 1: We will be working ‘en plein air’ = ‘in the open air’, which means working directly from nature in the outdoors. We will bring our painting materials and supplies outside on the campus grounds for the entire duration of Class 2 (weather permitting). Painting directly from nature, we will consider our surroundings and how they differ from working in the studio. We will consider the movement of the subject of our painting. How do you represent movement, texture, changes in lighting and atmosphere?
Part 2: Working from a photograph that you have taken of nature or a particular landscape, paint in the studio from this photograph. Consider how the way in which you are looking differs from working in the outdoors, how does working from a photograph compared to working in the outdoors? How has your sense of colour and texture been comparatively influenced?
In conceiving of this project, consider how Part 2 will function in relation to Part 1: have intention and reasoning as to how your choice of image for Part 2 relates to Part 1. The relationship can be vague, overt, subtle, subversive, ambiguous, oppositional, complimentary etc. – whatever the relationship is, be prepared to talk about it during critique.
Materials: sketchbook, pencils, acrylic paint and brushes, palette, water container, 2
canvases or 2 panels minimum 16” x 20” (one for each Part of the project), FULLY PREPARED AND READY TO WORK ON – we will not have time in-class to gesso and prepare the surfaces of your painting supports for this project, so please come to class with a fully prepared canvas or panel to work on for Class 2 and Class 3.

Objective: To explore how our vision, concentration and forms of looking and working are influenced by our choice of source material and environment.

To understand the difference between working from a physical source vs. a digital representation of that source.

To consider how these approaches to nature and landscape painting function in relation to the artists discussed in class for this project.

Project 2: Experiences of Nature 30%
Concept: Where Project 1 asked us to consider how we look at nature and how our source / reference point influences the way in which we paint, Project 2 asks us to elaborate upon our unique experiences of nature. To explore how contemporary artists are once again looking to nature for inspiration, critique and contextualization. This project invites you to consider your relationship to nature in a very personal / psychological way. This will be realized through your selection of one of the following options to explore.

Procedure:
Select one of the following approaches to complete this project:
Option 1: Consider how you experience nature and reflect thoughtfully upon an aspect of this experience that inspires you, moves you, or affects you in a particular way. Think about how you can communicate this experience to a viewer through your painting. What strategies and techniques have you employed to convey to a viewer your perspective of how you experience nature? Think about the tone, atmosphere and psychological mood that you wish to convey, think carefully and be specific about how you use colour, composition and the style of your work.

Option 2: Imagine that you are not yourself, but that you are the branch that holds the leaves, the soil that holds the roots, or the rain that touches your surface. Imagine that you are conveying the expression of something in nature from the vantage point of another element of nature. How will a viewer know that this is a non-anthropocentric perspective? Consider this option as a more sensorial and imaginative approach to nature. As with Option 1, think about the tone, atmosphere and psychological mood that you wish to convey, think carefully and be specific about how you use colour, composition and the style of your work.

Your approach to either option can be realized in an abstract or realistic manner, it can be a commentary on an aspect of nature that interests you, or a very personal experience; it can be a political statement or a poetic gesture. Projects will vary greatly on an individual basis.

Materials: The final painting must be done on a painters panel, stretched or unstretched canvas in acrylic or oil paint, at least 2’ x 3’. The type of support you choose, the shape and size of the support and your paint choice will contribute to the overall ‘meaning’ of your work.

Objective: Where Project 1 offered a more formalized framework for studying our
approach to nature through a two-part painting exercise, Project 2 allows for the development of a more personalized expression.

To confront the challenge of how to distill a specific expression or experience of nature into a painting.

Project 3: The Politics of Nature 28%
Concept: Where Projects 1 and 2 considered our individual relationship to nature, Project 3 considers the politics of environmentalism, global warming, social media, and society on our relationship and understanding of nature. Is there such a thing as wilderness today, with satellites, Google Earth, drones and electronic surveillance? What does it mean for our most common interaction with nature to be mediated? How is nature fetishized or made into a commodity? How have the changes in our experiences of nature affected us? How can you comment on / convey the significance of our changing relationship to nature?

Procedure:
Option 1: Environmentalism and Nature
In this painting project, you may wish to be very activist and political in your approach, commenting through your painting, how ‘we’ are destroying nature, animals and the world through the way we have chosen to live our lives. How can you communicate your idea to the viewer, make a strong social / political comment without being too didactic or obvious? You can begin by researching the topic of environmentalism and nature, considering topics such as global warming, tar sands, flooding, forest fires etc. to start developing your concept and proposal for the painting.

Option 2: Techno-Nature
The way we ‘view’ nature today is very different than in the past. We view nature through a lens, mediated through technology. Instead of painting nature as if it is, right there in front of us, how do we ‘point out’ that we are using a camera or videotaping nature through for example; overlapping, double exposure, blurring, time lapse etc. Think about what it means philosophically / psychologically to you as an individual, to society and to the future for this to potentially be the more common experience of nature.

Option 3:
You may wish to combine elements of both of the above listed approaches or propose an alternative approach to the Instructor.

Materials: The final painting must be done on a painters panel, stretched or unstretched canvas in acrylic or oil paint, at least 3’ x 4’. The type of support you choose, the shape and size of the support and your paint choice will contribute to the overall ‘meaning’ of your work.

Objective: To think critically upon the broader context of our relationship to nature as not only an individual, but as a member of society and human on earth.

Weekly Schedule:
Week 1: (September 7): Introduction to the course and each other
Introduction to Project 1
Week 2: (September 14): Plein air painting: come prepared to paint outdoors (weather permitting)
Week 3: (September 21): Part 2 of Project 1: working from a photograph of nature
Individual Consultations
Week 4: (September 28): CRITIQUE of Project 1
Group discussion of reading (will be handed out in class)
Introduction to Project 2
Week 5: (October 5): Bring proposals for Project 2 and source material
Workday. Informal group discussions of each other’s work
Individual Consultations
Week 6: (October 12): Workday. Informal group discussions of each other’s work
Group discussion of reading (will be handed out in class)
Individual Consultation
Week 7: (October 19): Workday. Informal group discussions of each other’s work
Individual Consultations
Week 8: (October 26): Reading Week. No class
Week 9: (November 2): CRITIQUE Project 2
Introduction Project 3
Week 10: (November 9): Bring proposals for Project 3 and source material
Workday.
Individual Consultations
Week 11: (November 16): Workday. Informal group discussions of each other’s work
Group discussion of reading (will be handed out in class)
Individual Consultations
Week 12: (November 23): Workday.
Individual Consultations
Week 13: (November 30): CRITIQUE Project 3

LIST OF LEARNING OUTCOMES AND EXAMPLES OF

Course Content:
Introductions to projects and key concepts will be administered through a combination of: slideshows of relevant artists and works, short readings, class discussions, group critiques and individual consultations.

As this is a group-learning environment, it is essential that we all show respect for each other by: arriving on time, fully prepared to work. Keeping the studio clean after use. Sharing our ideas, comments, questions and critiques during class discussion (i.e. participating). This is an open learning environment where we will engage in discussions of contemporary artists’ work, canonical artists’ work and each others’ work. Together we will build upon our arts vocabulary and increase our ability to discuss the topic of Nature and Landscape Painting.

It is expected of you to:
1) Complete all projects on time. Even though this is a studio course, projects are akin to exams. There is no way to make up for missing a critique. Even if you hand in your assignment, you will have missed out on valuable discussions. Late
projects will be deducted grades. If there is a valid reason for missing a critique, proper documentation will be required (i.e. doctor’s note etc.).

2) Spend an additional 5 hours minimum on a weekly basis for your projects. You have regular access to the studio room outside of class hours. This is a great resource to use.

3) As this is a studio course, it is imperative that you attend all classes on time and for the entire duration. Art takes time! Whether this time is spent reading, researching, painting, experimenting etc. you must be prepared to spend that time working in-class so that we can discuss your work together. Individual consultations will take place on a weekly basis. In order for the instructor to adequately grade your projects, you must be in class working in an observable way.

4) Participate fully to the best of your ability. Participation means not only being physically present, but mentally present as well (verbally and nonverbally). This means contributing ideas, comments and questions to foster a stimulating learning environment, as well as demonstrating your nonverbal participation by paying attention during class – no cell phones are permitted during group conversations and critiques.

Bibliography:
These will be helpful resources for all of the course projects. It is your responsibility to take the initiative to review these resources to strengthen the conceptual basis of your projects. Mandatory course readings will be distributed in class and discussed as a group. The Call Numbers listed on the last line of each reference are for the Scott Library.

ND 195 C66 2010

ND 195 C75 2003

ND 1352 C3 B49 2007

GF 50 S33 1995

ND 196.2 V58 2016

N6494 E6 W45

GRADED ASSESSMENT
Evaluation Summary:
Project 1: Working In and From Nature 25%
Project 2: Experiences of Nature 30%
Project 3: Politics of Nature 28%
Reading Responses: 3%
Participation: 14%
Projects will be graded based on the following criteria:
1) Concept Creation: how well have you considered and researched the project and reflected critically upon its content? How have you planned for effective execution of your work? How strong is your concept?
2) Material decisions and technical execution: Have you chosen appropriate materials to fulfill the requirements of your proposal? Have you attempted to apply an adequate degree of technical skill to accomplish your work?
3) Final actualization and presentation: Does your work demonstrate that you have spent time on both the concept and execution of your work? Did you offer an adequate attempt at articulating your thoughts on the project during critique?
• Please keep in mind that grades for projects are based on the entire process leading up to the work, not just the final work that you present in critiques.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Final date to drop the course without receiving a grade: November 10, 2017
Grading, Assignment Submission, Lateness Penalties and Missed Tests
Grading: The grading scheme for the course conforms to the 9-point grading system used in undergraduate programs at York (e.g., A+ = 9, A = 8, B+ - 7, C+ = 5, etc.). Assignments and tests* will bear either a letter grade designation or a corresponding number grade (e.g. A+ = 90 to 100, A = 80 to 90, B+ = 75 to 79, etc.)
(For a full description of York grading system see the York University Undergraduate Calendar - http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/pdfs/ug2004cal/calug04_5_acadinfo.pdf)
Students may take a limited number of courses for degree credit on an ungraded (pass/fail) basis. For full information on this option see Alternative Grading Option in the Faculty of Fine Arts section of the Undergraduate Calendar - http://calendars.registrar.yorku.ca/calendars/2010-2011/faculty_rules/FA/grading.htm
Assignment Submission: Proper academic performance depends on students doing their work not only well, but on time. Accordingly, assignments for this course must be received on the due date specified for the assignment. Painting Studio Assignments are to be completed for the in-class critique date to be reviewed and graded by the Course Instructor.
Lateness Penalty: Painting projects received later than the due date will be penalized three grades per week, for example a painting with a grade of 23/30 will be dropped to 20/30. Please note: Paintings can only be submitted during class time not by appointment or otherwise.
Exceptions to the lateness penalty for valid reasons such as illness, compassionate
grounds, etc., may be entertained by the Course Instructor but will require supporting
documentation (e.g., a doctor’s letter).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
As this is a studio painting course, students are expected to come to class with the
appropriate painting materials and tools.

IMPORTANT COURSE INFORMATION FOR STUDENTS
All students are expected to familiarize themselves with the following information,
available on the Senate Committee on Curriculum & Academic Standards webpage (see
Reports, Initiatives, Documents)
http://www.yorku.ca/secretariat/senate_cte_main_pages/ccas.htm
Final course grades may be adjusted to conform to Program or Faculty grades distribution
profiles.

Many courses utilize Moodle, York University’s course website system. If your course is using Moodle,
click here to access it.
Moodle @ York University