Forgotten Landscapes: Discursive Traces and Topographical Memories in the United States

Landscapes are palimpsests: urban, rural, or social panoramas overwrite and efface but also reveal traces of the past. This seminar engages with this layered vision from the perspectives of environmental history, queer cultural studies, and literature. We conceptualize landscape not as static but as spatially and temporally dynamic, staging a conversation across (inter)disciplines about the diverse landscapes we study and the different reading practices we deploy.

Suggested Readings available at: http://www.stonybrook.edu/humanities/events/2016_spring/hisb_fellows_readings

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Andrew Newman, Associate Professor of English

‘By the Rivers’: Psalm 137 as a Site of Colonial Encounter

Of the many Biblical “types” for colonial narratives of captivity among Native Americans, the 137th Psalm, a lament for the loss of Zion, mapped most directly onto the experience of the captives, who did sit down by rivers and weep, whose captors did on occasion ask them to sing, and who did fantasize about the eventual destruction of their enemies: “happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.”

Andrew Newman is an Associate Professor of English. He specializes in early American studies and the author of On Records: Delaware Indians, Colonists, and the Media of History and Memory (Nebraska, 2012), and is currently completing Captive on the Literacy Frontier, on the role of literacy in colonial contact.

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Liz Montegary, Assistant Professor of Cultural Analysis and Theory

Gay-Married with Children: Property, Perversity, and Parenthood in the United States

This talk takes a closer look at what happened when “marriage equality” activists began including the children of LGBT-identified parents in their local and national campaigns. Does a focus on the child necessarily result in depoliticizing and desexualizing effects? How might the mobilization of children open up unexpected critical possibilities for queer scholars and activists?

Liz Montegary is an Assistant Professor of Cultural Analysis and Theory. She is currently completing a manuscript on the relationship between queer activism and family life in the United States today. She’ll take a look at the tourist and political landscape of Provincetown, MA through the lens of queer cultural studies.

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Donna J. Rilling, Associate Professor of History

Corrupt & Contested: Remaking Nature in Nineteenth-Century Philadelphia

Mill Creek was once an industrial powerhouse but became the site of conflict over the nature of Philadelphia’s growth. Polluted by industry and human and animal sewage, the creek and its valley raised questions about property rights, health, and municipal power and obligations that echoed in America’s towns and cities.

Donna J. Rilling is an Associate Professor of History. Her focus includes early American history, particularly the period of the Early Republic (loosely, the 1780s–1850s), but her teaching spans the colonial period through the Civil War. Her current book examines the life, death, and metamorphosis of a waterway in nineteenth-century Philadelphia.