

Lingnan University
Department of Visual Studies

Course Title	: Environmental Aesthetics and the Visual Environment
Course Code	: VIS355/ 4355
Recommended Study Year	: 2 nd and 3 rd years
No. of Credits/Term	: 3
Mode of Tuition	: Lecture and tutorial
Class Contact Hours	: 2 hours lecture per week 1 hour tutorial per week
Category in Major Programme	: Programme Elective
Prerequisite(s)	: N/A
Co-requisite(s)	: N/A
Exclusion(s)	: N/A
Exemption Requirement(s)	: N/A

Brief Course Description

An exploration of environmental aesthetics with special emphasis on visual landscapes and environmental art from a cross-cultural perspective.

Aims

To acquaint students with past and ongoing reflections and cultural practices related to the visual environment.

Learning Outcomes

This course is designed to enhance basic reasoning and appreciative and expressive skills, as well as to promote an enhanced understanding of a number of central issues raised by the appreciation of nature, gardens, landscapes, and other aspects of the visual environment. Completion of the course should grant students:

Basic knowledge of fundamental approaches to the topic of environmental aesthetics

This knowledge enables students to:

1. Become aware of key aspects of the appreciation of visual environments
2. Assess claims made about environmental aesthetics
3. Understand problematic issues in discussions of the aesthetics of nature and landscapes

Ability to engage in further, independent learning and reflection

This ability enables students to:

1. Appreciate problems and arguments related to visual environments
2. Grasp new connections between different kinds of visual environments in a cross-cultural and historical perspective
3. Bring some of this knowledge to bear in the appreciation of visual landscapes and related controversies

Indicative Content

1. Basic approaches and issues. Rival conceptions of the aesthetic appreciation of nature. Historical background and 18th-century landscape aesthetics; the aesthetics of gardens in

- Europe and Asia. The aesthetics of ‘disinterested’ appreciation and the aesthetics of ‘engagement’. Environmental formalism. The status of nature’s expressive qualities. How to appreciate nature as nature: the question of relevant categories. Objectivity and subjectivity and the aesthetic point of view. Nature as the object of ‘positive aesthetics’. The appreciation of nature in relation to religious, scientific and instrumental perspectives.
2. A closer look at selected topics and examples, such as: recent controversies surrounding the ‘scenery’ approach to the appreciation of nature; the nature and relevance of categories of the beautiful, the sublime, and the picturesque in appreciating nature; environmental art; the aesthetics of gardens, East and West; *Sakuteiki* and Heian Buddhist gardens; the aesthetics of everyday life and responses to visual design; the visual environment of Hong Kong; pollution and its impact on the appreciation of nature; divergent concepts and attitudes towards nature: spiritual, ecological, and moral approaches to nature.

Teaching Method

Lectures and discussions

Measurement of Learning Outcomes

Students’ progress towards the learning outcomes outlined above will be measured by continuous assessments of the students’ successful engagement with the lectures, tutorial discussions, readings, presentations and written assignments. In addition, students’ knowledge of the subject will be assessed by a final examination at the end of the term.

Assessment

Assessment of the students will focus on their active engagement with the readings and issues, and their ability to develop articulate critical responses.

100 % continuous assessment;

Required Readings

Budd, Malcolm. ‘The Aesthetics of Nature’. In *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Jerrold Levinson. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Fischer, John A. ‘Environmental Aesthetics’. In *The Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics*, ed. Levinson.

Selections from:

Berleant, Arnold, ed. *Environment and the Arts: Perspectives on Environmental Aesthetics*. London: Ashgate, 2002.

Carlson, Allen and Arnold Berleant, eds. *The Aesthetics of the Natural Environment*. Peterborough, CA: Broadview Press, 2004.

Nasar, Jack L. *Environmental Aesthetics: Theory, Research, and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Supplementary Readings

Berleant, Arnold. *The Aesthetics of Environment*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992.

Berleant, Arnold and Allen Carlson, eds. Special Issue: Environmental Aesthetics, *The Journal of*

Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 52:2 (1998).

Budd, Malcolm. *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Carlson, Allen. *Aesthetics and the Environment: The Appreciation of Nature, Art and Architecture*. London: Routledge.

Clunas, Craig. *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996.

Cooper, David E. *A Philosophy of Gardens*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Engel, David H. *A Thousand Mountains, A Million Hills*. Tokyo: Shufunotomo, 1995.

Hull, R. Bruce. *Infinite Nature*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.

Miller, Mara *The Garden as an Art*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993.

Nassauer, J. I., ed. *Placing Nature: Culture and Landscape Ecology*. Washington, D.C.: Island, 1997.

Porteous, J. Douglas. *Environmental Aesthetics: Ideals Politics and Planning*. London: Routledge, 1996.

Ross, Stephanie. *What Gardens Mean*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Sepänmaa, Yrjö. *The Beauty of Environment: A General Model for Environmental Aesthetics*. Denton, TX: Environmental Ethics Books, 1993.

-----, ed. *Real World Design: The Foundations and Practice of Environmental Aesthetics*. Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 1997.

Spirn, Anne Whiston. *The Language of Landscape*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

Johnston, R. Stewart. *Scholar Gardens of China*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

Takei, Jirō and Marc P. Keane. *Sakuteiki: Visions of the Japanese Garden. A Modern Translation of Japan's Gardening Classic*. Boston: Tuttle, 2001.

Tsu, Frances Y. *Landscape Design in Chinese Gardens*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1988.

Wang, Joseph Cho. *The Chinese Garden*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

Important Notes:

- (1) Students are expected to spend a total of 9 hours (i.e. 3* hours of class contact and 6* hours of personal study) per week to achieve the course learning outcomes.
- (2) Students shall be aware of the University regulations about dishonest practice in course work, tests and examinations, and the possible consequences as stipulated in the Regulations Governing University Examinations. In particular, plagiarism, being a kind of dishonest practice, is “the presentation of another person’s work without proper acknowledgement of the source, including exact phrases, or summarised ideas, or even footnotes/citations, whether protected by copyright or not, as the student’s own work”. Students are required to strictly follow university regulations governing academic integrity and honesty.
- (3) Students are required to submit writing assignment(s) using Turnitin.
- (4) To enhance students’ understanding of plagiarism, a mini-course “Online Tutorial on Plagiarism Awareness” is available on <https://pla.ln.edu.hk/>.

* Numbers of hours are subject to adjustment for individual courses.