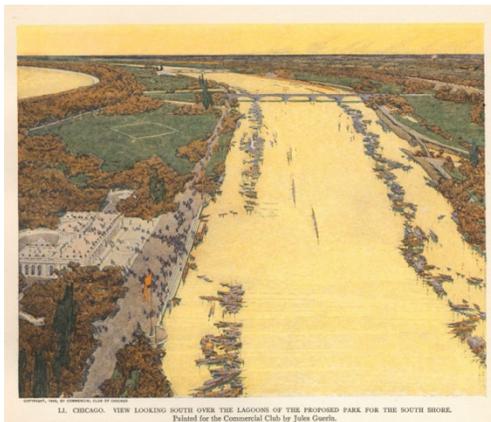


ACM NEWBERRY: RESEARCH IN THE HUMANITIES
Nature and Culture in the Metropolis
Fall 2017

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DESCRIPTION

“Nature” and “Civilization” represents one of the fundamental dichotomies of the Western tradition, at least since the time of Homer’s *Odyssey*, appearing through the years with many variations. In the 18th century Rousseau gives these concepts a modern twist by insisting that inequality was “*almost non-existent in the state of nature,*” that it “*derives its force and its growth from the development of our faculties and the progress of the human mind, and finally becomes fixed and legitimate through the institution of property and laws.*” In this way inequality, and its myriad attendant ills, become equated with civilization, while the state of nature becomes a scene of inherent unity and fairness. Artifice vs. Nature; Sophisticated vs. Primitive; the City vs. the Country: these are only a few variations of the basic dichotomy that have arisen over the past few centuries.



In America, the rise of urbanism, modernity, and the industrial revolution only increased the tension between these dichotomous concepts. No city better exemplifies the American version of the struggle between nature and polis, pasture and skyscraper, than **Chicago**. Yet the concepts of nature and culture are now fundamental beyond the Western condition. In most cultural settings around the globe, nature and culture mean very different things to different peoples. Cities, however, are now universal to humanity even as we cope with their meaning for

our relationship to or with nature. While our seminar will pivot on the period between 1800 and the 1960s, we will draw on other places, authors, and periods for comparative purposes. For instance, what can past ideas, histories, and geographies of urbanized human natures tell us about how to make cities sustainable in the 21st century?

For the fall of 2017, we propose to explore nature, culture, and the metropolis to foster rich, challenging seminar discussions using the Newberry’s collections and Chicago’s setting. Newberry core collections will serve as examples during the seminar alongside our

core readings. Participants will then engage in independent exploration of these themes and produce individual research papers later in the semester.

How can the humanities, humanistic thinking, theory and interpretive methodologies better understand culture, nature, cities, and their complex, entangled relationships? Our ACM-Newberry Research Semester in the Humanities course for fall 2017 will focus on these sets of questions, examples of fundamental tensions that lie at the heart of humanistic inquiry and in most of the humanistic social sciences.

To work toward answers to these questions, we will draw on the unique resources of the Newberry Library, and resources that will help participants conduct substantive research in both the humanities and humanistic social sciences on our broad thematic focus. The breadth of our seminar topic is an inviting intellectual gateway to the riches of the Newberry's collections, the rewards of humanities research, and our location in Chicago.

We will spend the first four weeks on common seminar readings and intensive discussions on our theme (*Nature and Culture in the Metropolis*). The structure, times, and format of the seminar will change over time (just like our topic). For example, Mondays, when the Newberry Library reading rooms are closed, will focus on discussion and core readings. Wednesdays and Fridays will then build on the seminar discussions, and students will be tasked with bringing in examples, primary sources, maps, ephemera, **broadsides**, and photos that connect our class theme to their individual projects. Learning from our previous experience in 2013, we will leave ample space during the week for students to engage with the collections and their research topics.

In weeks five and six, we will help students transition to their individual research topics. We will provide individual research support during office hours and establish peer review research groups. Additionally, we hope to engage the Newberry staff and experts in a mentoring process.

During weeks seven to fourteen, the students will be deeply involved in their own projects. We will convene every Monday as a group to discuss their status and research progress and problems. We will also continue peer review workshops (of groups of three to four peers) and individual appointments.

We will strive to exemplify how a community of scholars maximizes the ability of a single scholar to produce high-quality work in the humanities and social sciences by also emphasizing a team approach to research, editing, mentoring, and professional development. Students will leave Newberry with both a substantial written paper and experience that mirrors that of many graduate seminars.



Our theme is designed to make optimal use of the Newberry collections. Students will learn the joys and challenges of comparative and **interpretive** humanistic research, as

connected and relevant to multiple disciplines and fields. Some of our main goals are as follows:

- To develop abilities as researchers — we will approach this in a scaffolded way: outlining, brainstorming, finding evidence, formulating interesting and researchable questions; successfully locating, understanding, critically evaluating, and synthesizing materials from the rich Newberry collections. In the end, participants will have written an original and documented research paper in the humanities.
- To explore the actual and fictive imaginaries of complex concepts often taken for granted: *nature*, *culture*, *metropolis*, and how these broad carry-all concepts connect to the humanities. We will also **actively use** humanistic **thinking** and **observation** in the library and the field, as we apply ideas encountered in the seminar in the real world during our visits around Chicago (see below). We will also give serious consideration to how the humanities are the starting point for discussions of post-humanism (including objects, species, and “nature” as agents in humanist and post-humanist research).
- To develop skills as members of a research community, capable of discussing complex texts in an open-ended seminar setting; sharing the results of research and writing with peers; and offering, receiving, and using suggestions for revisions.
- To develop an understanding of how a major research library operates through job placements and by participating in the community of scholars at the Newberry. We will **guide students** and help them understand the variety of expertise, resources, and knowledge represented at the library and in the community scholars and experts nearby. We will also emphasize professional development as a *scholar* (through seminar activities and document location and collection activities) and as a humanist. Meetings with Newberry’s exceptional staff will offer students opportunities to explore future career options during the semester in Chicago.



SYLLABUS: Nature and Culture in the Metropolis

Summer Reading: We ask students to read two volumes prior to the seminar in fall of 2017: a) *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, by William Cronon (1991), W W Norton, New York/London. We will re-visit this volume in weeks 1-4 as a basis for discussion, exploration, and critical humanistic inquiry. **PLUS:** b) *The Craft of Research* by Booth et al. (3rd or later edition). Students will also consult the "core collections page at the Newberry Library: <http://www.newberry.org/core-collections> and explore the digital collections features at the library at: <http://dcc.newberry.org/>

Core Texts: a) *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, by William Cronon (1991), W W Norton, New York/London.

b) *The Craft of Research* by Booth et al. (3rd or later edition) will be our guiding document for discussing humanistic research approaches, research design, methods, and tools to consider during research paper development and writing stages. Students will be asked to read this book prior to arriving in Chicago, and we will use this volume during the first 6 weeks of our meetings. It will serve as a critical resource guide in the last half of the semester as well.

Additional readings will be shared in advance and during the semester using GoogleDrive. A sampling of those we have in mind can be found below in the schedule.

We also will, once again, encourage all participants to attend all relevant Newberry Seminars presented by year-long and semester fellows as a way to gain insight on how to present intellectual arguments and evidence in a public setting. One of the major benefits of being inside the Newberry is the intellectual community formed by permanent staff and visiting scholars from around the world.

Humanities in the field: To complement our seminar theme and reading, we also explore Chicago itself for structured **assignments** during the semester:

Field Museum, for an assignment on "taxonomies of nature" mobilizing the vintage taxidermy animal collections at the Field for an observational exercise. How is nature metabolized and represented by our culture in the metropolis? How has this changed? What remains intact in that strange relationship?



Chicago History Museum, for an assignment on how nature becomes culture through the example of urbanizing Chicago. This will be a post-Cronon activity so that participants can better interpret and reflect on the history of a single place (Chicago) as an encapsulation of the urbanized human experience.

Chicago Art Institute, landscape/nature/culture interpretation exercise (as we did in 2013, but with a more focused line of questioning, to address interpretive humanistic inquiry).

Lincoln Park walk-around, cemeteries as the mortal grounds for nature-culture: How do parks reflect past culture-nature relationships? How do cemeteries reflect the social relations between different peoples in an open space setting?

Chicago River Kayak Trip – a vital and early visit to the modified waterways that run like veins through the city. To connect with early material from Nature’s Metropolis on the transformation of nature through urbanization in the Chicago region.

Assignments and Assessment

Participation in seminar – **10%** (throughout semester)

An outline of interests (up to 3) – **5%** (week 1)

Annotated bibliography (20 sources min) – **5%** (week 2)

Seminar assignments as outlined above – **10%** (weeks 1-5)

The research paper and process – **10%** research cohort teamwork; **5%** research precis (2-3pp), *diagnostic* grades for first and second drafts (each); **45%** final draft of paper (weeks 5-14)

Research presentations (2) – the first will be a proposal presentation for feedback (October), the second will be the final version (mid- to late November). – **10%**

Format

Meeting schedule will be: **M-W-F** during weeks 1-4, **M-W** in weeks 5-6, **Mondays** only between weeks 7 and 14 of the seminar.

Schedule

Week 1 – Introduction to the seminar: What is nature? What is culture? How are cities a reflection, or spectrum, of both?

Readings: Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-78), *excerpts* from *On the Origins of Inequality* (1754). William Wordsworth (1770-1850), “Michael” (1800). (About a country boy who moves to London for work, becomes corrupted, and never returns home.

Selections from Raymond Williams’ *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976), and Ellen Churchill Semple (1901).

Core collections (Graff/Ayer) and Digital resources: Frontier to Heartland: <http://publications.newberry.org/frontiertoheartland/exhibits/show/galleries>, plus Indians of the Midwest, French Canadians in the Midwest (both digital).

Full round of orientation activities and intellectual guided inquiry by Newberry staff (on cartography, manuscripts, book as object, special collections, source-finding, catalogs) which will extend into week 3.

Week 2 – Humanistic approaches to nature, culture, and the metropolis (focus on Chicago, kayak trip on the Chicago River)

Readings: Revisiting Cronon’s *Nature’s Metropolis* (summer reading). Plus Henry David Thoreau (1817-62), excerpts from *Walden* (1854). Walt Whitman (1819-1892),

“Crossing Brooklyn Ferry” (1855). Visit Chicago History Museum. Selections from Raymond Williams’ *The Country and the City* (1973), and Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*.

Core collections: Chicago and the Midwest/ Chicago history. **Digital:** CB&Q, Great Lakes, Burnham plan, Pullman collection.

Week 3 – Humanistic methods: approach, method, source (focus on research in the humanities, drawing from sources in Newberry as examples)

Readings: The sources and methods behind *Nature’s Metropolis*. Also: *The Craft of Research*; Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935), “The Yellow Wallpaper” (1892). Theodore Dreiser (1871-1945), *Sister Carrie* (1900). Visit Pilsen during week 3.

PLUS: Paired mentoring with a Newberry professional depending on topic, period, discipline, and kinds of primary sources.

Week 4 – Finding nature/culture in your research (examples from Chicago’s modern period, visits to Haymarket and sites of resistance)

Readings: Carl Sandburg (1878-1967), excerpts from *Chicago Poems* (1916). Lorraine Hansberry (1930-1965), *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959). Tom Lutz, excerpts from *American Nervousness 1903* (1991). Core collections: Midwest authors

PLUS: Peer Review groups begin to meet, exchange ideas/topics, sharing of information and goals from the program for their research papers (groups of 3-4).

Week 5 (transition) – Examples of nature/culture and technology as the go-between (Chicago’s position in technology examined here; visit to Field Museum)

Readings: Aleksander Hemon, *The Lazarus Project* (2008). Donna Haraway, *Teddy Bear Patriarchy* (1984-85). Visit the Field Museum in week 5. Core/digital collections revisited for student topics, special discussion on Pullman digital resource.

Early October: Research proposal Presentation, given to the seminar participants, and key members of the Newberry Library research community.

Visits around Chicago (Humanities in the field) ongoing in October (move to M-W schedule).

Week 6 (mentoring, guidance) – Guided in inquiry on humanistic (and post-humanist) approaches and methods for your research topics. Using visuals as argument. Refining argument in light of contradictory evidence.

Readings: *Craft of Research* and additional selections on post-humanism.

Plus: Mentored group meetings with Davis/Perramond, on-going peer review work. Individual meetings begin to tailor argument, evidence, and structure of paper.

Weeks 7-14 – The culture and nature of research, continued conversations

(guided inquiry / drafts / **weekly** check-in meetings with larger group on **Mondays**). Our group will meet as a whole on Monday; peer groups (of 3-4 people for accountability) will report on progress, and individual research paper meetings with the instructors are anticipated on a weekly basis. *Very brief readings* will be assigned for our weekly meeting to help participants think through research challenges in the last weeks of our research semester.

Late **November**: Final research presentations on the papers with arguments, archival evidentiary support, and visuals.

END December 8, 2017 (last Friday) – final paper due before 12 noon

Note on instructors' past Newberry experience and learning:

As previous faculty fellows from the fall of 2013, we are both well-prepared for the rigors and challenges of this unique undergraduate research semester for liberal arts majors, and humbled by the challenges involved. We have both taught courses off-campus and abroad, and are used to the dense, modular design because of our use of the block plan at Colorado College.

Drawing on our experiences from leading the ACM-Newberry Research Semester in the Humanities during the fall of 2013, *and* from several ACM/Newberry faculty advisory meetings, we have modified our course theme and seminar design to reflect what we hope will produce even more impressive outcomes and research results for students. Previous ACM/Newberry external program reviews, in addition to the fall 2013 student course evaluations, reinforce the importance that a combination of attractive theme and *attention to humanistic research methods and approaches* are valued and needed by students. Thus, our re-conceptualized approach melds the seminar topic with detailed attention and explicit focus on how students can locate and adapt humanistic theories, approaches, and interpretive methodologies in the context of the seminar theme.

We have also used past experiences from 2013 and the program review documents to propose a *re-structured class format* so that students have **more time to begin collecting evidence and searching for primary sources** in the Newberry. Eric Perramond also taught in the spring (April-May) of 2016 and piloted assignments described above in his anticipated Environmental History. Dr. Davis has the same opportunity this spring of 2017 (in a block course at CC) to do the same for the literary and textual materials.

Finally, while we used paired peer review groups in the fall of 2013 due to the small class of 14 at the time, we plan on using groups of 3-4 participants should we be awarded the fall 2017 seminar (as Eric reported in November of 2014 at the faculty advisers gathering in Chicago). We feel a larger number will the group more accountable to honest self-reporting on their progress in research, and this is closer to the kind of graduate school **cohort experience that produces more successful work.**