

Art, Water, Ecology: Visibility Forever?

ARH 4930 section 02BG

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Dr. Lesley Gamble

Email: lgamble@ufl.edu

Office: ufl.zoom.us

Office Hours: Wednesday: 3rd period right after class (10:45- 11:45) by appointment.

To join Zoom Office Hours: <https://ufl.zoom.us/j/4179029272>

Meeting ID (if you need it): 417 902 9272

Telephone: (352) 374-4087 (home with answering machine; leave your name and number)

Class Time and Place: T/R 2-3rd per. (9:30-12:15), W 2nd per. (9:30- 10:45) via Zoom.

To join the Zoom class meetings:

<https://ufl.zoom.us/j/99101829758?pwd=bVlrN0Qwazl1TXhLZlhJMktoUkxRdz09>

This will take you to ZOOM (ufl.zoom.us)

Meeting ID: 991 0182 9758

Passcode: 608002 (if you need it)

***NOTE: All classes and meetings are conducted via Zoom. All course communication will take place through the course listserv and your UF email account. Be sure to check your UF email daily.

Required: UF Zoom account

In order to join the class you must have an account on UF Zoom (ufl.zoom.us). For best results, use a computer, not your phone, and plug your computer directly into your modem via cable.

Wi-Fi is not optimal. You will receive a ZOOM invite via the UF email listserv with the class meeting URL and password. If you need Help navigating Zoom you can go to:

<https://ufl.zoom.us> or contact the UF Computing Help Desk at: 352 392-HELP (352 392-4357).

Required: UF Email Account

ALL communication will be conducted through your UF email address. You are responsible for all emails sent, which will go to your UF address only. Do not send me anything through UF OneDrive. If you have problems receiving listserv emails, check with the Registrar's office and the UF Help Desk (392-HELP).

Be sure to monitor your UF email account daily. You must use your UF Email address for all communication and homework/quiz/paper/project submissions. If you use a different email address your work will not be graded nor counted.

*For ALL email submissions including the daily quizzes: begin your email subject line with your **last name, first name**, and a **description of the content**. For example: Smith, Jo quiz. Or Smith, Jo panel 2 paper.

Required Texts:

- T. J. Demos, *Decolonizing Nature: Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology* (Berlin: Sternberg Press), 2017: 129 pp. You will only read selected sections; see the syllabus for page numbers. (UF library N8217.E28 D46 2016) Download from UF OneDrive: https://uflorida-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/lgamble_ufl_edu1/ERoF42_vuyJIu57L65gaocBnLIstxXwi9ec81at7ksRA?e=z2onJq
- T. J. Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today* (Berlin: Sternberg Press), 2016: 294 pp. You will only read selected sections; see the syllabus for page numbers. (UF library: [GE195 .D46 2017](#)). Download from UF One Drive: https://uflorida-my.sharepoint.com/:b:/g/personal/lgamble_ufl_edu1/EUeK2GeYOIFChI9hK0w_WK4Bwmc3t-W92MXwLAdYbtQtjQ?e=S97sGG
- Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (Milkweed Editions) 2013: 388 pp. You will only read selected sections; see the syllabus for page numbers. (ebook, UF library: E98.P5 K56 2013).
- Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals* (AK Press: Emergent Strategies Series) 2020: 174 pp. You will only read selected sections; see the syllabus for page numbers. Download the ebook from the UF library (easiest), or from ARES through Ebsco, or from UF OneDrive: https://uflorida-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/lgamble_ufl_edu1/EpI1eurDT5VJof6LY4cb-xYBwkh-ORiYgUo3RTsdwLl6og?e=C1bj0E
- Cynthia Barnett, *Mirage: Florida and the Vanishing Water of the Eastern U.S.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press) 2008: 191 pp. This is for extra credit only. (ebook, UF Library: <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015079202456>.)

***Required Articles:**

1. Some articles will be available on UF One Drive. I will note those readings in the syllabus and include a link but you'll have to sign in. You can also go to:

<https://it.ufl.edu/services/gatorcloud-onedrive-uf>

2. Most articles are available on ARES <https://ares.uflib.ufl.edu/ares/>

Login with your GatorLink username and password to access ARES. You will have to create an account the first time you use it. If accessing ARES off-campus, be sure to use VPN, which also requires a Duo Push app. If you need help, call the UF Computing Help desk: 392-HELP.

If you encounter a gray screen instead of the article, try accessing ARES through Firefox or Google Chrome. Problems? Before you email me, check with your panel members to see if they can access the article.

ARES cataloging isn't always consistent. You may have to search by first initial or name and last name, even for the same author. I organize my ARES screen by clicking

“sort by” then “author” then “save” in the small box in the right hand corner just above the “Reserve Items.”

Note: You’ll have to access some of the articles on ARES by also logging into JSTOR or another database. If you are using VPN and your UF account is up to date you should have no problems.

*Pay attention to page numbers for the readings. Sometimes a whole ebook or chapter was scanned into ARES and you only need to read the pages assigned in the syllabus.

Recommended Grammar Guide: Hacker: The Bedford Handbook.

Assignments and Grading Undergraduate Students:

100% of the final grade will result from one group presentation with an extended annotated bibliography paper (30%); one research paper 8 pages (up to 2500 words) with several lead-in assignments (50%); and attendance/quizzes/discussion/homework participation (20%).

Note: All document submissions (papers, quizzes, final projects) must be formatted in **Microsoft Word** and emailed from your UF email address to: lgamble@ufl.edu. *Late papers are not accepted and result in a score of zero, and there are no make-up quizzes or presentations.

Assignments and Grading Graduate Students:

100% of the final grade will result from one group presentation with an extended annotated bibliography paper (30%); one research paper 12-15 pages (up to 4000 words) with several lead-in assignments (50%); and attendance/quizzes/discussion/homework participation (20%).

Note: All document submissions (papers, quizzes, final projects) must be formatted in **Microsoft Word** and emailed from your UF email address to: lgamble@ufl.edu. *Late papers are not accepted and result in a score of zero, and there are no make-up quizzes or presentations.

Warning:

If you do not like to attend class, do regular reading assignments, and have participation required of you, you should either not take this course or settle for a lower grade than your work might otherwise warrant.

Course Rationale:

In 1974 the famous French undersea explorer Jacques Cousteau visited Ginnie Springs, a site about 30 miles northwest of Gainesville, Florida. Marveling at the beauty and clarity of the water he praised it as “visibility forever,” a reference to both time and distance. But the system that feeds these springs, the mighty Floridan Aquifer, is, for the most part, *invisible*. Wending its way silently under four states and 100,000 square miles of sand, gravel, porous limestone or dolomite rock, the Floridan Aquifer ebbs and flows daily beneath our feet, rising and falling in syncopated rhythms of declining areas of recharge and increasing public consumption, pollution and saltwater intrusion.

Florida is home to the largest concentration of artesian springs in the world. As premier places for recreation, springs are fundamental to Florida's identity and economy, one of its "brands" on the global tourism market. More importantly, springs are "eyes" into the Floridan aquifer, which provides 90% of Floridian's water and supports a countless array of plants, animals and humans who thrive—or decline—as interdependent ecosystems. Nourishing lakes, rivers, estuaries and wetlands while supplying water for agriculture, industry and public use, these ecosystems are the primary means through which freshwater life in Florida flourishes.

This course is an introduction to a diverse and wide-ranging set of artistic practices that engage with water and environmental issues. Given that much of this work foregrounds an artist's or group of artists' personal engagement with specific sites, ecologies and communities, we'll examine these practices through the lens of a local problem: the degrading conditions of our Florida springs and aquifer. In other words, we'll explore some of the history, problems and strategies of these practices from the inside out, like many of these artists, by immersing ourselves in a local environmental issue that has far broader ecological, social, political and economic implications.

As part of our toolkit, we'll thread through some of the historical questions and issues that inform the development of "environmental" or "eco-art," situating it within a lineage of responses to Modernism that include a number of overlapping trajectories: Minimalism, Earth Art, Feminist and Activist Art, Public Art, and Social Practice Art / Relational Aesthetics. We'll be reading across a broad spectrum of the humanities, from Robin Wall Kimmerer, Judith Butler, Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway to Cynthia Barnett, Shannon Jackson, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Tim Morton, T. J. Demos and others.

Beginning with Ponce de León's fabled search for the Fountain of Youth, we'll briefly consider how water has figured in historical representations of colonial expansion and Florida tourism. Although historically inaccurate, this myth points not only to the value that Florida's springs have held for humans from the Paleo-Indian era on, but also the significance of water to the identity, branding and marketing of our state. Whether we're talking economics, geology, weather, climate, recreation, health, sacred sites, habitat or drinking water—for humans and more-than-humans—*water connects us all*.

But the myth of an endless youth-preserving fountain has become the myth of an endlessly flowing tap. Unfortunately, it informs how most Floridians think about and behave with respect (or not) to water and, by extension, to one another, including the vast domain of nonhuman people we depend upon to thrive and with whom our lives are inextricably entangled (see Timothy Morton, *Humankind: Solidarity with Nonhuman People*, 2017; Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, 2016; Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*, 2013; and Alexis Pauline Gumbs, *Undrowned: Black Feminist Lessons from Marine Mammals*, 2020). Focusing on Florida, Cynthia Barnett's *Mirage: Florida and the Vanishing Water of the Eastern U.S.* outlines this history in social and political, as well as environmental and economic terms.

Taking our initial cue from American expansion in the 19th century, we'll examine how art, often in concert with science, religion and politics, has played a key role in shaping our understanding of and relationship to that which we have defined as "Nature," typically in

opposition to “Human” and “Culture.” In the process, many humans have viewed themselves as separate from and superior to nature, which is often conceptualized as a frightening adversary to be controlled or a resource to exploit in the name of “civilization,” “progress” or “economic growth.”

We’ll track some of the ways in which Nature has been deployed as a figure for producing American regional and national identities, ideas about race, class and gender, and notions of dominion, such as male privilege and white privilege—ideas that continue to inform many social, economic and environmental policies today (e.g. Flint, Michigan, Hurricane Katrina, the Dakota Access Pipeline and, closer to home, the Sabal Trail Pipeline and the Rodman Dam, for starters). It’s no coincidence that National Book Award winner Ta-Nehisi Coates ends his letter to his son, *Between the World and Me*, by linking the ongoing history of violence against black, female and minority bodies to the large-scale plundering of the earth and global climate change (Coates, 150-151). Coates is far from alone in this analysis. With attention to the research of art historian T. J. Demos as well as BIPOC (black, indigenous and people of color) scholars, artists and activists, one of our guiding questions will be: What does it mean to “decolonize” nature?

We’ll also consider how art-making is a form of research just as valuable as other forms (e.g. “science-based” methods) for engaging not only environmental issues but also the fraught and complicated intersections of environmental and social justice. We do so, in part, as a way to think about the many strategies artists use to engage the public, particularly as citizens and policy makers here in Florida grapple with the effects of global warming and climate change; ongoing impacts of the Deepwater Horizon disaster in the Gulf; massive algal blooms in Lake Okeechobee that continue to periodically infect the Caloosahatchee River, the St. Lucie River estuary and coastal areas; and the declining health and flow of our freshwater springs throughout the state.

One goal of this course, then, is to offer a place-based experience analogous to that of many ecologically engaged artists, whose deep research into a particular site often requires collaboration across disciplines and communities as they draw from history, aesthetics, politics, scientific research, local and indigenous wisdom, and the intelligence of the biome to develop their work. In the process, we’ll explore the capacity of art to produce work that may contribute to shaping alternative or speculative futures, inspiring participants and audiences alike to make connections between environmental and social justice through considerations of science-based data, public policy, community identity and personal as well as collective well-being. In turn, this course offers a range of critical, theoretical and historical lenses for further developing our own forms of research, creative engagement and local-global citizenship far beyond the scope of this course.

Consider:

“What allows life *to become visible* in its precariousness and its need for shelter, and what is it that keeps us from seeing or understanding certain lives in this way? This problem

concerns the media, at the most general level, since a life can be accorded a value on the condition that it is *perceivable as a life*.” -Judith Butler (*Frames of War*, 51)

“We are finally out of this strange idea of a nature that could remain infinitely distant from the fragile life-support system that we are slowly making explicit. Art and nature have merged, folding into one another and forming a continuous sensorium.”

-Bruno Latour (*Sensorium*, 107)

“One of the ways that empire does its work is to convince us that our range of possibilities is much smaller than it really is. [...] For many black men, the only thing that the empire wants them to believe is that their future is compliance to a corporate model or they’re going to be imprisoned or dead at an early age. So when young folks come out to the farm and they’re like, ‘Wait a minute, you built that house? And you like hop hop? And you’re growing food? And your momma lives here?’ it’s just blowing their minds because those were not given in the range of menu options. There’s the technical knowledge but a big part is just about healing our sense of what’s possible and believing in ourselves again and all the potential paths that our ancestors prepared for us—we can reconnect to that destiny.”

-Leah Penniman of Soul Fire Farm (interviewed in *Black Land Matters*, 7)

Course Schedule:

Week 1: Introductions

Week 2: Decolonizing Nature, American Exceptionalism

Week 3: 20th -21st c. Environmental Art: Responses to Modernism

Week 4: Living as Form: Feminism, Poetics and Social Practice Art

Week 5: Moving Water, Damming Water, Canals and Lost Springs

Week 6: Sympoiesis for “Staying with the Trouble”: The Intelligence of Nature and Play

Additional information:

*****Class Attendance Policy**

1. Each class will begin with a **short one or two question quiz** on something obvious in the reading. If you answer correctly and turn in your **three homework questions** (see below), you get full credit for attending that day; if you answer incorrectly or you don't turn in your homework questions you receive half credit, and if you are absent you receive no attendance credit for the day. Late quizzes are not accepted. Email quiz answers to me along with your three homework questions in the body of the same email.

Note: Double period absences count doubly. If you miss a Tuesday or a Thursday class, that counts as **two absences**. Early departures from class count as an absence. After **three unexcused absences** I will begin to drop your FINAL GRADE one increment for every absence. Any student with five or more absences will automatically receive a D or lower for a final grade for the course.

2. At the beginning of each class, along with your answer to the quiz question/s, you will turn in **three questions from the readings due for the day**. This means three questions total, not three for each reading. This should help you prepare for discussion. **Write them in the body of the same email as your answer/s to the daily quiz.** Late reading questions are not accepted. Questions that were answered in the readings or have little to do with the readings will not count. If you don't turn in your three questions but do answer the quiz question correctly you will receive only half credit for the day. Beware: in a short semester a half credit day has a lot of impact on your attendance grade.

3. Brief **homework** assignments and **class participation** will also count toward attendance. Comments that make connections between course material and current events or personal experience are welcomed, as are opinions that differ from those presented in the lecture or by classmates. This enlivens the discussion and everyone's comprehension of the materials.

Note: While it is your responsibility to keep track of your attendance you are welcome to contact me at any time if you have any questions or concerns.

****Panel Meetings with Dr. Gamble after class:**

May 16: Panel 1

May 22: Panels 2 and 3

May 29: Panels 4, 5 and 6

June 5: Panels 7 and 8

Academic Honesty Policy:

Evidence of academic dishonesty will result in an automatic failing grade for this course and may result in further penalties. An academic honesty offense is defined as the act of lying, cheating, or stealing academic information so that one gains academic advantage. Familiarize yourself with the UF Academic Honesty Guidelines as well as the Student Honor Code:

<https://sccr.dso.ufl.edu/policies/student-honor-code-student-conduct-code/>

Grading:

A = 94-100 = 4

A- = 90-93 = 3.67

B+ = 87-89 = 3.33

B = 84-86 = 3

B- = 80-83 = 2.67

C+ = 77-79 = 2.33

C = 74-76 = 2

C- = 70-73 = 1.67

D+ = 67-69 = 1.33

D = 64-66 = 1

D- = 60-63 = .67

E = 59 and below

Services for Students with Disabilities:

If you are a student with a disability you must be registered with the Dean of Students Office for verification and determination of reasonable accommodations.

Harassment and Discrimination Policy:

The University of Florida prohibits any form of discrimination or sexual harassment among students, faculty and staff. For further information, refer to the UF Human Resources Policies website at: <https://policy.ufl.edu/regulation/1-006/>

University Counseling Center:

The Counseling Center provides counseling and consultation services to currently enrolled undergraduate and graduate students and their spouses/partners. The Center offers brief counseling and therapy to help students confront personal, academic, and career concerns. The primary goal of counseling is to help students develop the personal awareness and skills necessary to overcome problems and to grow and develop in ways that will allow them to take advantage of the educational opportunities at the university. See: <https://counseling.ufl.edu>