"In short, a land ethic changes the role of Homo sapiens from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It implies respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such" (Leopold, "The Land Ethic")

English 3597.03 / Geography 3597.03
TuTh • 9:35-10:55 a.m. • 250 Denney Hall

Environmental Citizenship

All of us have a stake in our environment—we are all, in effect, environmental citizens, whether or not we consider the environment when we vote or consider the effects of our daily actions on the environment. However, it is not always clear what it takes to enact environmental citizenship, how to do so responsibly and reflectively, and with what consequences.

English 3597.03 / Geography 3597.03 offers students an opportunity to reflect on the skills and knowledge needed to act responsibly as environmental citizens. We will focus on "reading" and "writing" the environment (i.e., on the one hand, learning how to interpret the physical, social, and cultural forces that shape environments, and on the other hand, examining various ways of playing an active role in shaping environments). English/Geography 597.03 will involve reading and discussion, film screenings, guest speakers, and field trips.

We will highlight change over time, including past relations of culture and environment, present issues, and possible futures—in other words, we will strive to place the present moment in historical perspective. We'll also focus on variation and linkages across space, tying local issues into progressively larger contexts. The course will be explicitly interdisciplinary, examining concepts from the natural sciences, social sciences, and the arts and humanities, and will also explicitly acknowledge the expertise and experience of environmental actors beyond academia (e.g., environmental organizations), and we will address citizenship at multiple scales, from the individual through larger collectives.

Note: English/Geography 3597.03 meets the General Education Cross-Disciplinary Seminar requirement.

Readings

We will read across a wide range of approaches to environmental issues, including environmental autobiography, environmental philosophy, environmental justice, political ecology, scientific ecology, environmental history, art and environment, and faith-based environmental stewardship.

Assignments

Writing/composing assignments will consists of 1) short reading responses; 2) an exploration of individual environmental history (an environmental autobiography); 3) an oral history interview with someone whose practice as an environmental citizen you would like to know more about; and 4) a site-based, research-based public proposal for an environmental practice or project you support.
An Olentangy River
Environmental Walkscape
(Before the 5th-Avenue Dam Removal)

For further information, or to request this material in another format, please contact Prof. Lewis Ulman.