



REEL LANDSCAPE HISTORY
A PROJECT EXPLORING THE HISTORY OF CINEMA AND ENVIRONMENTAL DESIGN

Although for some people cinema means something superficial and glamorous, it is something else. I think it is the mirror of the world.

—Jeanne Moreau

Life is like a Landscape. You live in the midst of it but can describe it only from the vantage point of distance.

—Charles Lindbergh

Photography is truth. The cinema is truth twenty-four times per second.

—Jean-Luc Godard

During the course of the semester we will be examining the development of the modern world in Western civilization, and considering the impact of modernism on environmental planning and design. As Europeans and people of European ancestry began conceiving their societies as “modern,” virtually all forms of cultural expression were transformed according to ideals of modernity. Entirely new forms of cultural expression also were invented, such as photography. Perhaps no art form that is more quintessentially modern than cinema—a medium that emerged during the final decade of the nineteenth century, developed into a mature art form with its own genres and artistic conventions during the twentieth century, and is now evolving into a popular form of self-expression through mass video-making and distribution technologies such as YouTube.

The Reel Landscape History project is an opportunity for you to explore environmental design history through the lens of the cinematographer. The intention of the project are to:

- Consider how the history of environmental design intersects with other art forms;
- Learn about the broader social and environmental contexts that shaped environmental design and other art forms during various periods in the past;

- Contribute to the intellectual culture of the College of Environment and Design;
- Have fun.

REQUIREMENTS

As a class, we will organize and host a series of four public film screenings. Each event will feature a historic or contemporary feature film that engages themes in environmental design history. Working as a member of a team, each student will have an opportunity to organize one screening. The events will be open to the public.

Working as a class and in teams, we will identify four films to feature in the series. Ideally, there should be some common thread or theme to tie the various films together. The list below may provide a starting point for discussion.

We will work as a class to determine the schedule of screenings and the logistics (see suggested schedule below). A graduate assistant will be available to work with you to manage the logistics.

Each team will be responsible for preparing a 10-15 minute talk to introduce one of the films in the series. The talk should place the film in historic context (e.g., consider its place in the history of cinema, and relative to contemporary political, social, and cultural events of the time), and situate the film relative to issues of environmental design.

Prior to each screening, we will devote our class discussion time to reviewing or otherwise preparing for your team's introductory talk.

SUGGESTED SCHEDULE

The following is a suggested schedule, with specific dates and times to be determined:

Week of February 07 – February 11

Week of February 28 – March 04

Week of March 28 – April 01

Week of April 18 – April 22

SUGGESTED TITLES

The following is a chronological list of films that would be good candidates for featuring in the series. Other titles may be considered.

The Birth of a Nation (D. W. Griffiths, 1915).

Metropolis (Fritz Lang, 1927)

Modern Times (Charles Chaplin, 1936)

Gone with the Wind (Victor Fleming, George Cukor, and Sam Wood, 1939)

The Wizard of Oz (Victor Fleming, George Cukor, Mervyn LeRoy, and King Vidor, 1939)

Giant (George Stevens, 1956)

The Searchers (John Ford, 1956)

Mon Oncle (Jacques Tati, 1958)

The Garden of the Finzi-Continis (Vittorio de Sica, 1970)

Chinatown (Roman Polanski, 1974)

Being There (Hal Ashby, 1979)

Hair (Milos Forman, 1979)

Quest for Fire (Jean-Jacques Annaud, 1981)

The Draughtsman's Contract (Peter Greenaway, 1982)

Koyaanisqatsi (Godfrey Reggio, 1982)

The Color Purple (Steven Spielberg, 1985)

Out of Africa (Sidney Pollack, 1985)

The Last of the Mohicans (Michael Mann, 1992)

Sense and Sensibility (Ang Lee, 1995)

Dark City (Alex Proyas, 1998)

Vatel (Roland Joffé, 2000)

Wall-E (Andrew Stanton, 2008)

SUGGESTED READING

Scott MacDonald. 2009. *Adventures of Perception: Cinema as Exploration*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

_____. 2001. *The Garden in the Machine: A Field Guide to Independent Films about Place*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Gregg Mitman, *Reel Nature: America's Romance with Wildlife on Films*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.