Gardens and Religious Traditions
The Cultivation of Spiritual Experience

Professor Todd T. Lewis
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Office Hours: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 1-2 and by appointment
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Course Description:
A survey of the historical and cultural backgrounds of the major garden traditions of world associated with religions. This seminar moves from considerations of human aesthetic and spiritual experience in the natural world, to a survey of the major garden traditions associated with the western Mediterranean and Europe: in classical Greece and Rome, Christianity, and Islam. The course then moves to East Asia and the classical traditions of China and Japan. Special focus will be given to elements of the campus Japanese Garden Initiative: teahouse gardens and monastic viewing gardens. http://sterling.holycross.edu/departments/religiousstudies/tlewis/garden-teahouse/tea-garden.htm). Fieldtrips to regional gardens will be made. For the final project, students will design small contemplative gardens for possible construction at specific sites on the Holy cross campus.

Course Textbooks:
Tom Turner, Garden History Philosophy and Design. NY: Spon Press, 2005
Sylvia Landsberg, The Medieval Garden, University of Toronto Press 2003
Christopher McIntosh, Gardens of the Gods: Myth, Magic, Meaning. NY: Tauris, 2004
Course Reader [ERE-S]

Course Design and Grading:
Term Paper.................................................. 25
Final Project................................................ 30
Participation.............................................. 15
Oral Final.................................................. 30

100 pts.
Schedule of Seminars and Readings

“There are few real boundaries in nature.” -- Rebecca Solnit

“My own experience is that the more we study art, the less we care about nature. What art really reveals to us is nature’s lack of design, her curious crudities, her extraordinary monotony, her absolutely unfinished condition. Nature has good intentions, of course, but as Aristotle once said, she cannot carry them out.” -- Oscar Wilde

Foundations

Friday 1/25
Seminars 1-2. Organizational Matters and Course Overview
Topics: Defining Culture and Cultured Spaces
What is a Garden? Categories of Garden Design

Readings:
Tom Turner, Garden History Philosophy and Design, Chapter 1
Christopher McIntosh, Gardens of the Gods: Myth, Magic, and Meaning, 1-17; 136-164
Anthony Flew, “Theology and Falsification”; Tim Richardson, “Psychotopia”; Marc Keane, “Boundaries”; Anna-Theresa Tymieniecka, “Gardens and the Passion for the Infinite”; Gaston Bachelard, excerpts from The Poetics of Space [ERE-s]

Gardens and the Abrahamic Faiths

Friday 2/1
Seminar 3. Gardens in Mediterranean Antiquity: Egypt, Greece, Rome
Guest Scholar: Prof. David Karmon

Readings:
Garden History Philosophy and Design, Chapters 2

Friday 2/8:
Seminar 4. Medieval Christian Gardens
Guest Scholar: Prof. Joanne Pierce

Readings:
Sylvia Landsberg, The Medieval Garden
Friday 2/15  
Seminar 5. Islamic Gardens: Cultural Foundations  
Readings:  
Emma Clark, “History, Symbolism, and the Quran” [ERE-s]

Friday 2/22  
Seminar 6. Islamic Gardens [II]  
GUEST SCHOLAR: Dr. Amanda Luyster  
Readings:  

Gardens in the Modern World

Friday 2/29  
Seminar 7. Modern Gardens I: Enlightenment Traditions  
Reading:  
Garden History Philosophy and Design, 186-224  
Gardens of the Gods: Myth, Magic, and Meaning, 84-112

3/7  🎉 SPRING BREAK, no class

Friday 3/14  
Seminar 8. Modern Gardens II. “Defiant” and “Extreme” Gardens  
Reading:  
Garden History Philosophy and Design, 225-284  
Gardens of the Gods: Myth, Magic, and Meaning, 113-135  

3/21  EASTER BREAK, no class
Friday 3/28
Seminar 9 Modern Gardens III: Romantic Traditions... From English Estates and Fletcher Steele, to Andy Goldsworthy
Reading:

EAST Asian Garden TRADITIONS

Sunday 3/30: TRIP TO STATEN ISLAND BOTANICAL GARDEN and STORM KING PARK

Seminar 10 Chinese Gardens
TRIP TO STATEN ISLAND BOTANICAL GARDEN: STORM KING PARK
Readings:
Gardens of the Gods: Myth, Magic, and Meaning, 18-34

Friday 4/4: No CLASS

Friday 4/11
Seminar 11 Japanese Garden Design
Guest Scholar: Marc Keane, Instructor, Kyoto University of Art and Design
Readings:
Marc P. Keane, Japanese Garden Design, Boston: Tuttle, 2000
Marc Keane, Sakuteiki [ERES]

Friday 4/18
Seminar 12 Tea Gardens and Tea Ceremony
Jennifer Anderson, Urasenke School of Tea,, San Francisco and Kyoto
Readings:

Friday 4/25
Seminar 13 Japanese Gardens: Principles of Design
TRIP TO JAPANESE GARDEN, WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY
EXAM PERIOD/TBA
Final Seminar Meeting: Presentation of Garden Designs by Seminar Groups
Exam Period: Oral Final Exam