

## **Mt. Rainier Field Trip, October 5, 2009**

This is the first of many field trips for our program, “Cultural Landscapes: Sustainability, Power, and Justice.” Our objectives include skill building and taking an initial look at the 722-square-mile Nisqually Watershed. The skills we want you to work on include the following:

- showing up at the vans on time, to never be left behind either on campus or in the field;
- not getting hurt or lost;
- staying warm, nourished, and hydrated;
- making friends with as many classmates as possible;
- taking good field notes;
- taking good photos;
- being reflective about the cultural landscapes you pass through as well as those at your destinations.

Although we will have time to only get out of the vans at one destination, Mt. Rainier National Park, we want you to observe, take notes, and reflect upon the landscapes all along the way as we drive up and down the Nisqually River Valley. This watershed is a local microcosm of the landscape transformations we will be studying in the American West in general. It has been a cultural landscape for thousands of years, as the home of the Nisqually People. While it was a dynamic landscape throughout that period of time, always changing in response to the forces of nature and the choices of the Native people, this landscape currently speaks of profound changes that have taken place within just a few human generations, reflecting an evolving mix of cultures and social systems. Those who have left their marks on this landscape have warred with each other, engaged in sustained conflicts with each other, ignored each other, and successfully cooperated with each other. The Nisqually Watershed has remarkable examples of each one of these. You will learn more about this in coming weeks.

Record in your notebook and with your camera the many different sorts of landscapes you see in this watershed. It is imperative that you keep your notes clear and organized, to be of use to you later in writing your field note summaries and field trip papers. For the overall field trip, record the date and, for each set of observations, record the time of day, locations, and convenient landmarks for later use in locating on a map or on Google Earth the features you noted in the field. Every time you take pictures, make notations in a separate part of your notebook to remember the location, time, and other important facts about the scene photographed. Observe the mix of urban, suburban, and rural land uses as you travel. Look not just for interesting, isolated landscape features but, more importantly, for patterns.

When photographing, it is important to take carefully composed and thought-out pictures. Choose your subject matter carefully. Consider different vantage points and focal lengths. Take the time to set the modes and functions on the camera – no "auto" or "easy" modes! It is OK to consult and help one another. Remember, this is mostly a practice session, to get you used to observing cultural landscapes, thinking about what they mean, noticing clues and patterns in the landscape, creating images of the things you've observed, and making a good, careful log of your photographs.

You will find that the landscape presents you with many more questions than answers. Record the important questions that the landscape raises in your mind. Above all, focus your

observations and the questions you bring to the landscapes you observe through the use of the following guiding questions from our program:

2. What are the various biophysical and social forces that contribute to forming, maintaining, altering, and transforming landscapes? How have these forces changed over time?
3. How do landscapes affect people's lives, the choices they have, and ultimately make? To what extent are the needs of humans and other living things being met within the landscapes we are studying and is this sustainable over the long term? Have people's needs changed according to changing landscapes?
4. Landscapes hold traces of human existence, struggle, and value. Different cultures, communities, classes, genders, and other groups experience and utilize landscapes differently. How can we see these traces in the landscape, and what are the stories, images, and ways of knowing that develop around any given landscape?
5. Who gets to tell the story of a landscape? Whose voices have been marginalized or silenced? How do peoples' stories or histories converge, join, or conflict in relationship to any given place? Should marginalized stories and histories be recuperated and, if so, how can we do that?
6. What are the assumptions that underlie the way communities and cultures see and understand landscape? What are you learning about your own ways of seeing and thinking about the places you inhabit or visit?
7. How are people's relationships to land, place or nation revealed in the many ways in which they portray themselves and the landscape?

Preparation for the trip ahead of time will make the landscapes you observe more meaningful. Here are some suggested resources, easily accessible through the Internet:

Mt. Rainier National Park: <http://www.nps.gov/mora/index.htm>  
Nisqually Indian Tribe: <http://www.nisqually-nsn.gov/>  
Nisqually River Council: <http://www.nisquallyriver.org/nrc.html>

**This Friday, 10/2**, we'll take the last 5 minutes of seminar to organize ourselves for the photography activities on Monday.

- After seminar, Group 1 goes to Ted's seminar, Group 2 goes to Therese's seminar; Group 3 goes to Anne's seminar.
- Divide into teams of 3 or 4 (no larger, please).
- Pick one person in your team to be the contact person.
- Give your faculty a list of all people on your team, with cell phone numbers. Indicate who is the contact person.

**Monday:**

- In the morning, we will give a camera to each team. You'll stay together as a team and share the camera.
- There is no required number of images to take, but we suggest somewhere between 8 and 15 each.
- Before the day ends, sit with your team and review the images you took. Each person chooses 1 of their own images to work with at next Wednesday's workshop. You can do this on the vans coming home if you like. Give the camera to your contact person, and make sure that person knows which images each of you has chosen.

**Tuesday afternoon**, immediately following seminar (Contacts only):

- Go with Anne to Photoland with your team's camera.
- Upload the selected photographs. Photoland will make 8 x 10 prints to discuss at the Wednesday workshop.
- Take cameras back to Media Loan.