

University of Wales, Lampeter
Sophia Centre
MA in Cultural Astronomy and Astrology
Sacred Geography

Introduction

There are different ways to divide this module thematically. One might think of themes such as 'monuments', 'the sacred', or chronological divisions (past, present) or cultural ones (east, west). The arrangements of the readings should provoke its own thoughts about the material.

Workload

The expected workload for this module, as for all our taught modules, is 200 hours. How you manage this is a matter of your time management. Bearing in mind you have a research project, you need to work out your own balance of reading, research and writing. This is even more the case if you decide to do some fieldwork, which could be anything from qualitative research (if you have taken the Research module) to visiting sites.

Reading and weekly work

The readings are arranged in weekly sections, each with a forum question. I would like to encourage you to engage with this and I will also take an active role. You can also use the weekly forum for floating ideas on your research project. I would strongly advise you to do this because the advice of other students can often be valuable.

As autonomous and self-directed learners, you should also make as much use as you can of the Universities electronic resources, especially JSTOR. For example, type 'Pilgrimage' or 'Sacred Space' into JSTOR, and you will turn up a wealth of material.

You should also make wide use of the web, on which you will discover a wealth of source material, ALWAYS REMEMBERING to apply your critical eye.

Research Project

In the first few weeks of the module, try to formulate an idea for a research project. The sooner you come up with a proposal the sooner you can begin to focus your reading and begin your work.

Week One

The reading this week is light, but is designed to focus on the concept of the sacred. What is the 'sacred' and, in terms of space, is it separate to its converse, profane space? The key reading is from Mircea Eliade's *The Sacred and the Profane*.

Eliade, Mircea, *The Sacred and the Profane* (New York: Harcourt Brace 1959), pp. 20-65 ('Sacred Place and Making the World Sacred').

PDF

Trubshaw, Bob, *Sacred Places: Prehistory and Popular Imagination*, Wymeswold: Heart of Albion Press, 2005, chap. 1, ('Thinking about Places'), pp. 1-23.

PDF

Hubert, Jane, 'Sacred beliefs and beliefs of sacredness' in Carmichael, David L., Jane Hubert, Brian Neeves and Audhild Schanche (eds.), *Sacred Sites, Sacred Places* (London, Routledge, 1994), pp. 9-19.

PDF

Forum Question:

Does Eliade convincingly distinguish sacred space from profane?

Week Two

Durkheim is one of the modern world's most influential theorists of religion, a materialist sociologist, for whom religion could be defined by its external functions (it has a church, a congregation and so on). His work is the key reading for the work. James Twyman's eccentric piece is included because, by identifying a shopping mall as a sacred space, he is explicitly challenging conventional notions of sacred space.

Durkheim, Emile, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, trans. Karen E. Fields, New York: Free Press 1995 [1st edn., *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris; F. Alcan 1912], pp. xliii-li, 8-13, 70-83, 440-7.

PDF

Bowie, Fiona, *The Anthropology of Religion: An Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell 2006, chap 5 ('Religion, Culture and Environment').

PDF

Hughes, J. Donald, 'Spirit of Place in the Western World' in Swan, James A. *The Power of Place: Sacred Ground in Natural and Human Environments* (Bath: Gateway, 1993), pp. 15-27.

PDF

Schama, Simon, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Fontana 1996), pp. 3-19 ('Introduction').

PDF

Twyman, James F., *Ten Spiritual Lessons I Learned at the Mall*, Forres: Findhorn Press, 2001, 'Introduction', pp. 7-15.

PDF

Forum Question: Does Simon Schama suggest that the natural is sacred?

Week Three

This week introduces the concept of contested space; the notion that the same piece of physical space can simultaneously satisfy competing numinous, religious, political or social uses. Bender set out this theory, but other theorists have worked along parallel paths. One way of introducing contested meaning into a space is to endow it with gender.

Bender, Barbara, *Stonehenge: Making Space*, Oxford, Berg 1998, chap 4 ('Contested Landscapes: Medieval to Present Day').

PDF

Bodenhorn, Barbara, 'Gendered Spaces, Public Places: Public and Private Revisited on the North Slope of Alaska, in Bender, Barbara, *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*, (Oxford: Berg 1993), pp. 169-203.

PDF

Plumwood, Val, *Environmental Culture: The Ecological Crisis of Reason*, London: Routledge, 2002, pp. 218-235 (Chap 10, 'Towards a materialist spirituality of place')

E BOOK

Massey, Doreen, *Space, Place and Gender* (Oxford: Blackwell 1994), pp. 1-16 ('General Introduction').

PDF

Week Four

This week focuses on one particular area, which is important in itself but also has a modern cultural impact in that it has become the foundation of the modern discipline of 'Earth Mysteries': the British stone-age and its monument. Ernst Cassirer is the week's major theorist, included here because he is very concerned with the origins of human thought.

Cassirer, Ernst, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, Vol. 2., Mythical Thought, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 1971 [1955], pp. 83-105 ('Foundations of a Theory of Mythical Forms. Space, Time and Number. 1. The Articulation of Space in the Mythical Consciousness')

PDF

Bradley R., *The Significance of Monuments: On the Shaping of Human Experience in Neolithic and Bronze Age Europe*; London: Routledge, 1998, chap 8, ('Theatre in the Round; Henge monuments, stone circles and their integration with the environment'). pp. 116-131.

E BOOK

Hodder, Ian, *Reading the Past: Current approaches to interpretation in archaeology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1986), chapter 8 ('Post-precessual archaeology'), p. 147-178.

E BOOK

Edmonds, M., *Ancestral geographies of the Neolithic: landscape, monuments and memory*, London: Routledge, 2002, chap 1 ('Setting the Scene'), pp. 1-10.

E BOOK

Morris, Ian, *Archaeology as Cultural History*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000, chap 1 (Archaeology as Cultural History'), pp. 3-33

PDF

Forum Question: Can we understand the past, or are we trapped in the present?

Week Five

We return to postmodernism this week. In a geographical sense postmodernism encourages us to see space in different ways. For example, with maps, a postmodern cartographer might make a map with Australia at the top or India in the centre, to challenge. Postmodern architecture is characterised by its use of vernacular styles from different periods and cultures. We also return to phenomenology this week, especially to Merleau-Ponti's criticism of Husserl. For Husserl, phenomenological investigation should lead to an appreciation of the transcendent. Merleau-Ponti regarded this position as fundamentally unphenomenological. All we have, he argued, is our immediate experience, and that includes our physical experience, an argument of some significance for our understanding of space, landscape and nature.

Soja, Edward W., *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, London Verso, 2003 [1989], chap 1 ('History: Geography: Modernity').

PDF

Merleau-Ponti, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. Colin Smith, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978 [1962], pp. vii-xxi, 3-12, 52-63, 67-72, 243-254.

PDF

Robinson, Tim, *Setting Foot on the Shores of Connemara and Other Writings* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press 1996), pp 199-208.

PDF

Tilley, Christopher, *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (Oxford: Berg 1994), chap 1 ('Space, Place, Landscape and Perception: Phenomenological Perspectives').

PDF

Sudjic, Deyan, *The Edifice Complex: How the Rich and Powerful Shape the World*, London: Allen Lane, 2005, chap 1 ('Why we Build') pp. 1-11

PDF

Forum Question: Can one study the landscape independent of one's experience of it?

Week Six

This week we return to the sacred, with a further consideration of what it is. Central to the issue of whether nature is sacred is the Romantic tradition, which gives a higher value to the natural than the artificial. Is the Earth itself sacred?

Gatta, John, *Making Nature Sacred: Literature, Religion and Environment in America from the Puritans to the Present*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, chap 7, ('Post-Darwinian Visions of Divine Creation').

E BOOK

Primavesi, Anne, *Sacred Gaia*, London: Routledge, 2001, chap 11 ('Women and the ordering of Nature'), pp. 121-136.

E BOOK

Rigby, Kate, *Topographies of the Sacred: The Poetics of Place in European Romanticism*, Charlottesville and London, University of Virginia Press, 2004, chap 1 ('The Rebirth of Nature'), pp. 17-52.

PDF

Sheldrake, Philip, *Living Between Worlds: place and journey in celtic spirituality* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1995), chap 2 ('Landscape and Sacred Sites'), pp. 22-45.

PDF

Week Seven

In this week and next we move on to pilgrimage, the art of moving over or through the land from one place to another. Pilgrimage is fascinating because it represents a sustained relationship between the pilgrim and the land over the course of a journey which may be long or difficult, and which corresponds to a spiritual journey.

Artress, Lauren, *Walking a Sacred Path: Rediscovering the Labyrinth as a Spiritual Tool* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), chap 1 ('To Walk a Sacred Path', pp. 1-22)

E BOOK

Pullan, Wendy, 'Mapping Time and Salvation: Early Christian Pilgrimage to Jerusalem', in Flood, Gavin D., *Mapping Invisible Worlds, (Cosmos: the Yearbook of the Traditional Cosmology Society, Volume 9, 1993)*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 1993, pp. 23-40.

PDF

Casey, Edward S., *Earth-Mapping: Artists Reshaping Landscape*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, chap 4 ('Plotting and Charting the Path: Voyaging to the Ends of the Earth with Michelle Stuart'), pp. 57-91.

E BOOK

Coleman, Simon, and J.Elsner, *Pilgrimage Past and Present in the World Religions*, London: British Museum Press, 1995, pp. 196-220, ('Epilogue: Landscapes Reviewed').

PDF

Forum question: is it truly possible to embark on a spiritual journey without a physical journey?

Week 8

This week we continue our examination of pilgrimage.

Coleman, Simon and John Eade (eds.), *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion*, London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 1-25 (Chapter 1; 'Introduction').

E BOOK

Devereux, Paul, *Re-Visioning the Earth: A Guide to Opening the Healing Channels Between Mind and Nature* (New York: Fireside 1996), pp. 121-151 ('Journeying: Healthy Outdoor Exercise for the Soul').

PDF

Petsalis-Diomidis, Alexia, 'Narratives of Transformation: Pilgrimage Patterns and Authorial Self-Presentation in Three Pilgrimage Texts', in Coleman, Simon, and J.Elsner, *Pilgrim Voices: Narrative and Authorship in Christian Pilgrimage*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2004, pp. 84-109.

PDF

Forum question: give an update on your research project.