

Nature(s)?

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Call for Papers

It is not without trepidation that the word 'nature' is employed by the majority of postmodern scholars. When used, it is usually followed by an explanation of what the speaker actually designates as nature lest the audience perceives it differently. Naturally, the term in question is often theorized as a social construct. However, the very fact that it often disguises itself as quite the opposite is what makes it an authoritative ideological nexus. The 'natural' anxiety of esteemed academics may be understood, therefore, as the fear of exploring the environment where many a beast prowls, and where the benign flowerbeds of aesthetics may hide quagmires of oppression.

Despite the dangers, many intrepid surveyors set forth to blaze trails in this particular wilderness, making it easier for subsequent expeditions to investigate the nature/Nature/natures in detail. Some chose the earthly path, focusing on the territory they travel through. Romanticism saw it as sublime – the turbulent Nature. Marxism believed that labor alters Nature which becomes the "inorganic body" of Man. The converging paths of literature, critical theory, and the land expressed in ecocriticism, have studied the environment both as 'natural' and 'man-made', and brought attention to the ultimate precedence of nature over culture. Some thinkers, however, have moved beyond the act of constructing nature and focused on reasons behind it. Postcolonial theory, gender and minority studies have proven that behind the ostensibly innocuous 'natural order(s)' lurk beasts of coercion, authoritarianism and subjugation.

Scholars are cordially invited to participate in yet another excursion into the land of nature. While particularly encouraged are contributions concerning the subject of the conference, feel free to walk paths less trodden and explore the field in any way you consider natural. Possible topics include:

- Nature/nature/natures
- nature as a social construct/contract
- *physis* and *techne*, earth and artifact
- consumption and destruction
- nature and the discourses of power
- ethnocentric and ecocentric
- nature in cityscape, cityscape in nature
- ecocriticism and ecology without nature
- ecology as the new opium for the masses