

## **Humanity and the Natural World**

Humanities 325

Section: D100

Term: 2000 Fall

Instructor: S. Duguid,

AQ 5123, 291-5515

Email:duguid@sfu.ca

Discussion Topics: What is the relationship between Nature and Culture? Is human culture a mere artifact of nature, akin to a beehive, a spider's web or beaver's dam, or is it a unique construction stemming from an equally unique reflective consciousness? Do humans act on nature or within nature? To what degree can such a distinction be sustained? Is current human domination of nature through cultural constructions (e.g. technologies) a natural development of, for instance, evolution or an aberration in the evolution of the earth's eco-system? How might the way we think about nature affect the way we act upon nature? To what extent are humans unique, either as stewards set apart by evolution or by God from the rest of creation, or, as some would argue, as a rogue species, a natural alien? These and other questions are what will occupy our time in Humanities 325.

We will approach these questions through an exploration of two modern paradigms, world-views or ways-of-seeing: the romantic and the scientific. For the romantic perspective we will look at the work of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and for the scientific the work of Charles Darwin. Along the way we will examine through readings and student presentations some of their precursors, successors and commentators.

Grading: There are two written assignments in the course. The first is an essay (20%) based on the work done for a seminar presentation (20%) and the second is a research paper (40%). The remaining 20% of the final mark will be based on participation in seminar discussions.

Required Texts: Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on Inequality* (1755) Penguin 1984.

Laurence Cooper, *Rousseau, Nature, and the Problem of the Good Life*, Penn State 1999.

Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species* (1859) Penguin

Recommended Texts: N/A

Materials/Supplies: N/A

Prerequisite/Corequisite: 45 credit hours.

Notes: HUM 325-4 may be applied towards the Certificate in Liberal Arts.

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For inquiries contact wendy\_sjolin@sfu.ca

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