

## 8/29: Presentation/Discussion – American Wilderness and Sublime Landscapes

- *the “sublime”*
  - a landscape that brings a sense of awe, can be both beautiful and terrifying; importance of nature - with very little human influence
  - Edmund Burke (late 18th century thinker - father of modern conservatism)
  - Thomas Moran’s *Grand Canyon of the Colorado River* (1892); beauty of American National Parks; a national ethos to dominate nature...
- Relationship between White European settlers, the landscape, and Native Americans
  - New England settlers’ religious beliefs that landscape and natives in league with demonic forces; American settlers felt a responsibility to tame the landscape, create a purer society in the New World (crafting a utopia)
  - Concept of “*progress*” —————> (a very new, Western, Protestant idea)
    - ~ 14th century - radical idea because Catholic Church said man was inherently sinful
    - This also affects conceptions of time, nature...
  - Concept of *capitalism*
    - fundamental idea of private ownership of capital, land, labor + free exchange of goods and labor
- How does progress and capitalism relate to ideas of “*wilderness*”?
  - in the early 17th century New England, ‘wilderness’ as godless, where bad things happen → relates to religious beliefs and stories from the Bible → which means that it must be conquered and made into a ‘garden’..
  - later, in a more secular America, it was then a place “to see God”, to simplify life or feel peace
  - *How did we get there?* - industrialization, landscapes were changed, our beliefs about nature/the West changed...

- Forests
  - in Europe, royalty and landed gentry owned the forests (used for materials and hunting); French: hands-off approach, Germans: wanted to impose order
  - United States: Gilded Age (1865-1896) - urbanization, immigration, industrialization, expansion → cutting down forests as fast possible in early-to-mid 19th century
  - “Conservation” (USFS → Agriculture)
    - Gifford Pinchot - America’s first & leading forester, tasked with leading conservation (friend of Roosevelt); USFS has built millions of miles of roads in USA; used for logging
  - v. “Preservation” - John Muir (NPS → Interior)
  - v. “Wilderness” is still here, too

**8/31: Workshop – Wilderness as an Academic Enterprise**

- What is environmental history?
- How do you read an academic article/argument?
- Workshop and discussion of “The Trouble with Wilderness” and responses...
  - “wilderness”: as a critical component of American environmental history, environmental historians, the environmental movement
  - learning to recognize the construction of arguments; revision; academic exercise of reviewing scholars’ work

(see workshop workshe for more)