

**Furn 2451-01 Witness Tree Project**  
**Emergence of Conservation in the US to 1900**  
**[in conjunction with HPSS 732-01]**  
**Wintersession 2022**

Instructor: Dale Broholm

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Class: AA Schedule, Furniture Dept. Woodshop Metcalf Bldg. 1-6pm

### **Course Philosophy**

Since 2009, Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) and the National Park Service (NPS) have worked to develop a collaborative model for teaching and learning centered on witness trees, long-standing trees that were present for key moments in American history. The Project arranges for a fallen witness tree to be shipped from a national historic site to RISD, where, in a joint history seminar and design studio, students interpret the history the tree witnessed and make relevant objects from the tree's wood. In addition to classroom study, the Project variously involves field trips, guest lectures, exhibitions of students' objects, and other events that highlight the significance of material culture, landscape, and design in learning about American history.

In this iteration of the Witness Tree Project, we will work with Maple trees from the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park in Woodstock, Vermont. As the boyhood home of environmentalist George Perkins Marsh and the farm of businessman Frederick Billings, the site served as a catalyst for the nineteenth-century American conservation movement and offers many ways to explore the emergence of conservation and its ideological complexities, including debates about resources, stewardship, restoration, protection, and justice, from the colonial occupation of Abenaki lands to the development of national parks at the turn of the century.

In conjunction with the Witness Tree Seminar, the overarching focus of the Witness Tree Studio is twofold: focus on developing your capacity for historical thinking and research as a Design tool and use said skills to create objects that reflect your work in the Seminar.

### **Learning Objectives**

- Learn to use historical research and study as a means of shaping one's design thinking and practice.
- Become proficient with the hand tools and machinery of the woodshop to create related objects to one's research and study in the History Seminar.
- Create 2 objects, that potentially will be exhibited at Marsh-Billings Rockefeller NHP.

## **Course Requirements and Grading**

As in all studio courses you are expected to attend all classes. If you miss a studio class, you are expected to make up the work and have it ready for the following day. Missing 3 classes (unexcused) means an automatic No Credit. Studio hours are limited and there will be demand for the machines and tools, which means effective use of your time in the studio will serve you well. You are not to use any Studio machinery until you have permission of the instructor(s) for its usage. You are bound by the Studio Rules and Guidelines and must follow them. Not doing so may result in your time in the studio being restricted.

Students are required to keep a sketch book/design journal and bring it to class daily. This book should contain all handouts, careful notes from demos and be a register of your thoughts and ideas from both the seminar and studio components of this collaborative class. This sketch book will be referred to frequently when discussing your ideas so always bring it to class.

**Due to the ongoing challenges stemming from the pandemic, For Wintersession 2022 grades will be based on a Pass or No Credit scale. Pass means you have met or exceeded the requirements of the class. No Credit means you have incomplete or unfinished work by the end of Wintersession. Since this is a collaborative class, both of your instructors will be determining the studio grade.**

### **Credits**

Students will receive 6 credits, 3 in History, Philosophy, and the Social Sciences and 3 in Furniture Design.

### **Assignments**

#### **Assignment 1. Mapping The Land**

This assignment is a joint Seminar/Studio assignment. As Dan has written, “Maps are selective, purposeful representations of a place. They quickly communicate multiple levels of detail and scale and can address diverse factors such culture, behavior, and physical environment”.

For this Assignment you are to create a 3-D map that has 3 clear layers of information pertaining to the Central Piedmont area of Vermont. This region is where the Park is located. Your work is to be based on the study and research you have done in Seminar to date. The information from the 2-D map you are creating for Seminar can be incorporated in this assignment. One of the layers must address one of the groups that inhabited the land of the current Park. Scale of the map is up to you. You are also required to write a brief (no more than 2 paragraphs) statement that explains your map. Structure this statement so a viewer unfamiliar with the Project will understand your intent.

**Critique: 1/27**

## Assignment #2. Consequences

Marsh's prescient observations on man's impact on the natural world were until recent history one of few. Design and make an object that expresses one of his concerns and the consequences that have occurred.

**Critique: 2/9**

### Schedule

- 1/6** Group Meeting and Intro to the class (remote).
- 1/10** Intro to Studio, Dept. Rules & Reg's. Safety talk. Wood technology and intro to basic hand Tools. Sketch book and design development process. 1<sup>st</sup> Assignment given. (remote)
- 1/12** Intro to Power tools, demos of Carving, shaping, and sanding demonstrations (remote).
- 1/13** Machine demos & means of construction process talk. (remote)
- 1/20** Review of power tool usage. Lathe demonstration.
- 1/24** **Field Trip. All day 7am-7pm.** 2<sup>nd</sup> Assignment given
- 1/26** In-class working time. 2nd Assignment design review.
- 1/27** Mapping Assignment Critique. 2<sup>nd</sup> Assignment design finalized.
- 1/31** In-class working time.
- 2/3** In-class working time.
- 2/7** In-class working time.
- 2/9** **Final Critique.** Location TBA.

- Note: as deemed necessary or appropriate, other demos will be scheduled to meet demands.