Varieties of Radical Dissent:: Bibliographic Preliminary

Our topic for this part of the course is the environment. We'll use feminism to get a better understanding of our relationship to that environment.

Your first question is, What is our proper relationship to the environment?
Your second question is, How should we ensure that relationship is gained or maintained?

Your goals in research are:

1) To uncover a variety of opinions about the human-environment relationship.

Some of the various opinions on what is proper include:

• Those who see the environment as vast and inexhaustible and thus able to handle all of our needs.
• Those who see the environment as property, open to whatever use the owner wishes to give it.
• Those who would ask us to stay out of (or even exit) portions of the environment and thus keep them "wild."
• Those who follow a doctrine like that of the National Forest Service and advocate "managed use" or some other compromise of land interests.

2) To uncover a variety of positions on the best or required action.

Some of the more vocal positions are taken up by:

• Ranchers who claim access to public lands and will defend that access with arms.
• Mining and oil interests who want access to public lands for mining or drilling.
• Recreationalists (including off-roaders, hunters, and backpackers) who have often competing interests in the recreational use of the land.
• Local, state, and federal legislators who support legislation on public lands.
• Radical environmentalists who critique policy and literally stand in the way of certain further “use” of the land.
• Eco-feminists who critique hostile land use by showing how the environment is disregarded in much the same way that women are disregarded.

3) To discover one or more specific incidents you can use to particularize the dilemmas of our relationship with the environment.

I encourage you to think about specific environmental crises that have attracted you for some reason. They may be local, national, or global. Examples that come to mind:

• Landowners at the top of crumbling bluffs in California want to install breakwaters to protect their houses, but those structures would be constructed on the public beach and may, it is argued, destroy portions of that beach.
• Off-road vehicle enthusiasts and some environmentalists alike resist turning Joshua Tree National Monument in California into a National Park because a park brings with it both more use and more restrictions.
• Snowmobilers have recently been granted greater access to Yellowstone and Grand Teton after a Clinton-era plan to ban the use of the machines was lifted.
• Some believe that all wildfires should be extinguished by any means necessary and some who would let all fires burn themselves out for the health of the forest.
Part I:

Learn the tools at your disposal at the library and begin exploring. This will take some time and you will wind up at some dead ends. To come up with a preliminary set of 8 sources, you will have to look at perhaps twice that many. Do not assume the first 8 hits you make will serve you.

Learn the difference between the popular press (newspapers and newsstand periodicals) and academic sources (specialized and "peer-reviewed" journals). You will need 4 entries from each of these two source categories in your initial bibliography.

What are you looking for? in addition to the goals outlined on the previous page, it may help to think that...You are looking for examples of actual environmental actions and responses to such actions. You are looking for environmentalist statements on activism, whether or not they claim to be feminist. You are looking for feminist statements on activism, whether or not they directly involve the environment.

How can you narrow your sources? Read as you go. First, read the abstract which will be your first clue whether the article (or book) will work for you. Then, get the whole source and read the introduction. Read *opportunistically*. Are there other terms the author is using that you could use to find more articles of the same sort? Are there specific incidents that you could use for your essay and which you could use in another search?

Annotate:
Now that you've found your 8 potential sources, sit down and read each of them. In this reading you don't have to puzzle over every detail of the article or essay, but you do need to understand what the author is arguing. Summarize that argument in a short paragraph. Reducing an entire article to a single paragraph is a challenge and one which will actually help you understand the text.

Part II:

After you have assembled your larger list and after we have spent some more time in class talking about feminism and environmentalism, you are ready to move into greater focus on your sources. Return to your bibliography and determine your top 4 sources (2 from the popular press and 2 from academic sources). Read them again. This time your reading is careful, methodical, and analytical. You aim to understand the intricacies of each argument. You are looking for specific parts of those arguments you might use in your own essay. You can "use" an argument in several ways: you can agree with it; you can oppose it; you can refine it.

Now, in 2 pages present a brief analysis (not summary) of each source. Also, suggest how you might employ them all in your argument. Consider ways in which these voices might speak to (or disagree with) each other. Consider which ideas you will agree with and which you will oppose or refine. You don't need to have your entire argument laid out, but I do want to see some ideas you think you might address.