Topics for Essay 4: Wilderness and the American Mind (chapters 6-12)

Write a three- to four-page response to one of the following:

1. In chapter eight, Nash describes the tensions that developed between Muir and Pinchot in terms of the fundamental schism between the preservationists and the conservationists (129). How does Nash’s portrait of Aldo Leopold, in chapter eleven, show us a figure who combines preservationist and conservationist? What elements are left out? And what new elements are added? To what extent, finally, does Leopold represent a healing of that late nineteenth-century schism?

2. At the close of chapter seven, Nash asserts that “the rationale for wilderness preservation was gradually catching up with the ideology of appreciation” (121). Over the course of chapters eight through twelve (Muir to Brower, in effect), what key factors (perceptions and practices) contribute to an expansion and strengthening of the rationale and, for that matter, of the ideology as well? Select two or three factors to analyze, drawing your examples from Nash’s chapters of course.

3. “At a Senate hearing in 1961 Brower went so far as to allege that ‘no man who reads Leopold with an open mind will ever again, with clear conscience, be able to step up and testify against the wilderness bill’” (225). Elaborate on Brower’s statement, using such key concepts from the previous chapter as the land ethic and ecological conscience to support his claims or generate a counter-argument to them. In other words, if you support Brower’s remark, indicate in some detail how and why you do so or if you do not support it, indicate in some detail how and why you do not.

4. For those familiar with Freud’s Civilization and Its Discontents (1930), explain Nash’s claim that it lends substance (202) to Robert Marshall’s critiques against civilization. How (in general and specific ways) do Freud’s points seem to inform and reinforce Marshall’s case? You might want to consider to what extent it seems that Marshall was all too prophetic.

5. Create your own topic in response to Wilderness and the American Mind (chapters 6-12). If you select this option, be sure to include a copy of your topic with your essay, and feel free to consult with me before the 11th.

Remember our two key questions:
1. How do you know what you know?
2. Why do you feel what you feel?

DOUBLE-SPACED, TYPED ESSAYS ARE DUE AT THE BEGINNING OF CLASS, Tuesday, November 11th.