History from Above:
Birds and People in the New World, 1492-1962

The Ostrom Enders Collection of Ornithology at Trinity College’s Watkinson Library gives students the unique opportunity to craft original research projects based on rare books and manuscripts that few scholars, if any, have studied. This workshop will provide hands-on experience with original sources, and guidance for students in the development of their research skills, projects, and final papers, utilizing these sources. Research projects will incorporate material on birds, but they may also deal with wide-ranging topics in social and political history, the history of science, and environmental history.

Since few students have any background in the study of birds, the workshop will begin with several weeks of discussion based on shared readings about natural history in the Americas. Students will read selected writings by Mark Catesby, John James Audubon, Charles Darwin, and Rachel Carson, as well as recent scholarship on indigenous knowledge of birds, early ornithology, bird hunting, bird watching, economic ornithology, and the decline and extinction of various bird species. The history of birds will be considered within the broader contexts of colonization, westward expansion, the conservation and preservation movements, and urbanization. Students will learn about historical changes affecting various bird habitats, including beaches, salt marshes, meadows, ponds, lakes, and rivers. Birds to be discussed include crows, ravens, eagles, hawks, hummingbirds, geese, ducks, turkeys, snowy egrets, passenger pigeons, and pelicans.

Course Requirements
Attendance, Participation: 10%
“Bird Species in Historical Context” Presentation: 10%
Annotated Bibliography and Presentation: 15%
Watkinson Manuscript/Book Presentation: 15%
Final Presentation: 10%
Research Paper (20-25 pp.): 40%

Students are required to purchase the following books for this course:

All other reading assignments will be provided electronically to students.
Mon., Jan. 28: What was Natural History?
   To read together in class:

Mon., Feb. 4: Using Birds, Fearing Birds
   Reading Assignment:

Mon., Feb. 11: class canceled due to blizzard

Mon., Feb. 18: Making Pictures of Birds
   Reading Assignment:
   To read together in class:

Mon., Feb. 25: Field Trip: Eagle Cruise on Connecticut River, leaving from Haddam, CT (transportation will be provided; trip will stay more or less within the course meeting time.)

Mon., Mar. 4: Birding in the Field
   Reading Assignment:

“Bird Species in Historical Context” Presentation

Mon., Mar. 11: Birds and Conservation
   Reading Assignment:
   To read together in class:

Annotated Bibliography Presentations

[Mar. 18: NO CLASS – Spring Break]

Mon., Mar. 25: Individual Meetings with Wickman and Ring  [optional: attend Professor Cheryl Greenberg’s session on using footnotes, making arguments, and organizing papers]

Mon., Apr. 1: Watkinson Manuscript/Book Presentations

Mon., Apr. 8: No class – Individual Meetings with Wickman and Ring

Mon., Apr. 15: 21st-century Ornithology with Professor Joan Morrison (1:15-2:30) – First Draft, 20-25 pp., due to Wickman and Ring, by 5 pm

Mon., Apr. 22: Final Presentations

Mon., Apr. 29: Final Presentations

********Tu., Apr. 30: Final Essays due, by email, to Wickman and Ring**********