New York University
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication
Media and the Environment
MCC-UE 1027.001

COURSE DESCRIPTION
This course will investigate the dominant critical perspectives that have contributed to the development of Environmental Communication as a field of study. This course explores the premise that the way we communicate powerfully impacts our perceptions of the “natural” world, and that these perceptions shape the way we define our relationships to and within nature, as well as how we define and solve environmental problems. The goal of this course is to access various conceptual frameworks for addressing questions about the relationship between the environment, culture and communication. Students will explore topics such as consumerism, representations of the environment in popular culture and environmental activism. This is a praxis-based course, meaning that a major, hands-on communication project will be based on critical theory.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES
The course will address the following questions: How are environmental problems discussed and mediated within the public realm? How do these rhetorical and visual discourses structure our relationship to environmental crises? How can students create a communication strategy that frames environmental problems in a specific way in order to align the problem with appropriate solutions.

By the end of this course, students will:

- Identify the role of discourse, rhetoric and representation in shaping the way we think about the natural world.
- Describe how communication plays a significant role in the framing and discussion of environmental problems and solutions.
- Explain the way representations of nature and the environment are politically, socially, and economically constructed.
- Analyze and engage in debates about local, national and global environmental disputes.
- Critically examine the way recent environmental concerns, such as global warming/ climate change are represented to the public.
- Interpret how conflicting discourses about the environment depend upon different values and views of nature and the human place in nature.
- Critique contemporary debates about environmentalism by framing them from the perspective of cultural analysis.
- Synthesize critical theory in order to create an environmental communication strategy for an environmental cause.
REQUIRED TEXTS


ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION
You are responsible for the material covered in lecture and in the reading. You will be evaluated on (1) the level of your engagement with the class materials (as evidenced in your written work and class participation) (2) your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in articulate and well-written forms (3) and your ability to creatively explore these theories and methodologies. These criteria will be evaluated according to the ACUPCC “Defining Success in Student Learning,” which will be distributed in the first class. All of your written and project work will be graded on two primary evaluative scales (1) how well it demonstrates an understanding of the theories and methodologies of the class (2) how well it structures and articulates its argument. The form (2) and content (1) of the work should work together.

Students are expected to do all readings in preparation for class and to participate fully in class discussions and on Blackboard. Written work for the class will consist of weekly blog posts that the readings and topics to your chosen environmental issue, one midterm exam (which will be short essay questions) and a final group communication project on an approved topic of your choosing related to the course materials. Please note, a brief proposal with short bibliography for the final project will be due at midterms. Final evaluation of students’ performance will be made on the basis the following criteria.

In class participation 10%
Blog posts 20%
Midterm 20%
Project Proposal 10%
Final Project 40%

Evaluation Rubric
See extra sheet, attached.

COURSE POLICIES
Absences and Lateness
More than two unexcused absences will automatically result in a lower grade. Chronic lateness will also be reflected in your evaluation of participation. Regardless of the reason for your absence you will be responsible for any missed work. Travel arrangements do not constitute a valid excuse for rescheduling exams. There are no extra credit assignments for this class.

Format
Please type and double-space your written work. Typing improves the clarity and readability of your work and double-spacing allows room for me to comment. Please also number and staple multiple pages. You are free to use your preferred citation style. Please use it consistently.
throughout your writing. When sending a document electronically, please name the file in the following format Yourlastname AssignmentName.doc

Grade Appeals
Please allow two days to pass before you submit a grade appeal. This gives you time to reflect on my assessment. If you still want to appeal your grade, please submit a short but considered paragraph detailing your concerns. Based on this paragraph I will review the question and either augment your grade or refine my explanation for the lost points.

General Decorum
Slipping in late or leaving early, sleeping, text messaging, surfing the Internet, doing homework in class, eating, etc. are distracting and disrespectful to all participants in the course.

Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism
http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/policies/academic_integrity
See extra handout.

Student Resources
Students with physical or learning disabilities are required to register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities, 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor, (212-998-4980) and are required to present a letter from the Center to the instructor at the start of the semester in order to be considered for appropriate accommodation.

Writing Center: 411 Lafayette, 3 FL. Schedule an appointment online at www.rich15.com/nyu/ or just walk-in.
SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

WEEK ONE – Introducing Environmental Communication

Class 1: Introductions, Overview

Class 2: Introduction to the field
Read:
  Tema Milstein, “Environmental Communication Theories,” in Stephen W. Littlejohn and
  Pp. 344-49.
  (Introduction & CH1, “Studying Environmental Communication, pp. 1-43)

WEEK TWO – Origins of Environmentalism & Environmental Communication

Class 1: Major Frames: Conservationism, Preservationism and Sustainability
Read:
  Christine Oravec, “Conservationism vs. Preservationism: The ‘Public Interest’ in the 
  Elizabeth Kolbert, “Turf Wars,” New Yorker, July 21, 2008:
  http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2008/07/21/080721crbo_books_kolbert

Class 2: Major Frames: Outside of America
Read:
  South. London, Earthscan Publications. (selection)

WEEK THREE-- Social/ Symbolic Constructions of Nature

Class 1: Social Construction Theory
Make groups for Final Project
Read:

  Cox, CH2: “Social/ Symbolic Constructions of ‘Environment,’” pp. 45-70

Class 2: The Newsmedia and the Framing of the Environment
Read:
  Alison Anderson, Media, Culture and the Environment (CH4)
  Hannigan, J (1995) ‘News media and environmental communication’ in Hannigan, J 
WEEK FOUR--Environmental Discourse

Class 1: Environmental Rhetoric
Read:
Recommended:

Class 2--Discourses of Consumption
Read:

WEEK FIVE--Scale

Class 1: Communication, and the scalar link between problems and solutions
Read:

Class 2: Scalar falacies
Discussion of Final Project Proposals
Read:

   El Hadu Jazaïry, New Geographies, 4: Scales of the Earth (selections)

WEEK SIX----The Environment in Crisis

Class 1: Urban Disaster
Proposal for Final Project Due
Read:
   Mike Davis, "The Dialectic of Ordinary Disaster" and "How Eden Lost its Garden" in Ecology of Fear.

Class 2: Apocalypse Scenarios and the Media
Read:

**WEEK SEVEN—— A Case of Climate Change**

**Class 1: Global Warming**

Read:


**Class 2: Visual Renderings of Climate Change**

Read:


**WEEK EIGHT—— Environmental Justice**

**Class 1: Environmental Advocacy**

Read:


**Class 2: Organizing for Change**

Read:

Cox, CH 8 “Environmental Justice/ Climate Justice: Voices from the Grassroots,” pp. 263-297.


**WEEK NINE —Radical Environmentalism**

**Class 1: Ecotopianism**

Read:


***Screening: If A Tree Falls: A Story of the Earth Liberation Front dir. Marshall Curry

Class 2: Ecofeminism
Read:

WEEK TEN-- Green Consumerism

Class 1: Green Marketing
Read:
Cox, CH 10, “ Green Marketing and Corporate Advocacy,” pp. 331-65

Class 2: Environmental Commodification on the Internet
Read:

WEEK ELEVEN-- Alternative Media and EcoActivism

Class 1: EcoCulture Jamming
Read:

Class 2: Visualizing Activism
Read:

WEEK TWELVE— Final Projects: work in class
WEEK THIRTEEN—Final Projects: work in class

WEEK FOURTEEN—Final Projects: work in class

WEEK FIFTEEN—Final Projects Due & Presentations

SUPPLEMENTAL BIBLIOGRAPHY/SUGGESTED READINGS


Ereaut, Gill and Nat Segnit. Warm Words: How Are We Telling the Climate Story and Can We Tell It Better? Institute for Public Policy Research. August 2006.

Evans, M.M. & R. Stein (Eds.), The Environmental Justice Reader: Politics, Poetics, and

Gomes, M.E. & A. D. Kanner (Eds.), *Ecopsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind* (pp. 316-324). San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.


Rogers, R. A. Overcoming the Objectification of nature in constitutive theories: Toward a transhuman, materialist theory of communication. Western Journal of Communication, 62, 244-272.


Sturgeon, Noel. “‘The Power is Yours Planeters!’ Race, Gender and Sexuality in Children’s Environmental Popular Culture,” in Stein, New Perspectives on Environmental Justice, pp.262-277.


Also see the *Journal of Environmental Communication*: http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/ren