

Environmental Communication
COM/EVS 459 – Spring 2020

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Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 12:30 – 1:45 pm, and by appointment

Email: My preference is that you use BlueLine, but if you can't access that, use SamanthaSenda-Cook@Creighton.edu.

Text

Phaedra C. Pezzullo and Robert Cox. *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018.

Course Description

Our communication about the natural world both interprets and defines it. We experience and understand the natural world through communication, through different channels, and through discourses that have evolved over time. This course interrogates this communication as well as the underlying assumptions that ground such communication. In doing so, we will evaluate the social construction of the environment and environmental issues through media and other communication processes. This will allow us an opportunity to recognize how dominant discourses shape individual and societal choices.

Course Objectives

While each person will acquire something different from this class, three objectives remain constant for everyone:

1. You will *critically engage constructions of the environment*.
2. You will *develop your analytical skills*. We see discourse about the natural world every day. By cultivating your analytical skills, you will become better at assessing such discourse and its underlying ideological assumptions.
3. You will *practice communication*. This class involves both written and oral communication skills. Class discussion, oral presentations, and written essays will reinforce these skills.

Role in the Magis Core

Fit to Core and Mission

Environmental Communication fits the Doing Social Science requirement of the Magis Core by striving to “further students’ knowledge of society and human nature within a social scientific discipline” (Magis CCAS Core Curriculum Plan, 2013, p. 63). The assignments in this course give students a chance to apply what they learn about both quantitative and qualitative social scientific methods. These methods function as “empirical data analysis tools that allow for deep study of the questions that face humankind today” (Magis CCAS Core Curriculum Plan, 2013, p. 64). Asking these questions furthers our mission at Creighton because we are concerned with helping

students understand the world around them and figure out the best ways to solve to the problems that exist. Taking this course will help students critically analyze social science phenomenon, become informed citizens, and advocate for change (Magis CCAS Core Curriculum Plan, approved April 2013, p. 64).

Additionally, this course satisfies the Written Communication Designation by teaching students the discipline expectations of writing in the field of Environmental Communication, which overlaps with both Environmental Science and Communication Studies. The importance of *eloquentia perfecta* is necessary in understanding how to advocate for change in our contemporary world. In fulfilling the Written Communication Designation, Environmental Communication will instruct students in discipline-specific strategies for writing well. This not only fits the Magis Core of Creighton University; it also fits the mission.

Objectives

- Students will be able to analyze a particular question encountered within at least one area of social science using the accepted techniques of that field.
- Students will recognize that data sets may have multiple interpretations and be able to evaluate the relative merits of alternative interpretations for the data.
- Students will critically evaluate a social scientific investigation.
- Students will review their own work critically, employing creative thinking and problem solving in the process of revision and editing.
- Students will adapt the content and style of communication to a variety of rhetorical and aesthetic situations.
- Students will effectively use ... written ... language appropriate to the audience, occasion, and context.

University Policy

Accommodations

If you need accommodations because of a documented disability, please speak with me. I would like to work with you to ensure you have the opportunity to succeed in this class.

Integrity in Action—The Integrity Code

The Student Senate drafted an Integrity Code in 2003 and asked the College to endorse it and promote its use. The Code exists to remind you: (1) to work as hard as you can; (2) to learn as much as you can; and (3) to always ensure that the work you submit is your own (or that those portions of it that have been based on outside sources are appropriately acknowledged). Please follow the Code.

Academic/Personal Misconduct

You are expected to abide by University rules and regulations. All violations will be referred to appropriate people for specific disciplinary action. Examples of violations include, but are not limited to, cheating, plagiarism, and any behavior obstructing or disrupting the classroom teaching and learning environment. Academic dishonesty will not be tolerated; all documentation submitted to your instructor may be checked for verification. Any form of cheating or plagiarism may result in a grade of “F” for the

assignment, and may result in an “F” for the course. For details, consult the *Bulletin* and the *Handbook* (<http://www.Creighton.edu/Registrar/Bulletin/COURSES/administrationandsuper.htm>).

Generally, if you include a direct quotation of a sentence or phrase without quotation marks but with a citation, I will deduct 5%. This is because you are communicating that you have paraphrased a source when in fact you have not. If you do this multiple times, I will deduct 10%. If you include a direct quote of a sentence or phrase without quotation marks and without a citation, I will deduct 10%. If it happens multiple times, I will deduct 20%. If it is more than a paragraph, I will deduct 50%. And if it is most of the paper, you will get a zero. If you are at all unsure about how to correctly cite sources, ask me.

Evaluations

Course evaluations will be conducted online during the last 2 weeks of the semester, prior to final exams, using the online IDEA system (for large courses of 10+ students) or a link to an online version of the small course evaluation form of the College of Arts and Sciences (courses of less than 10). Under the IDEA system, I have determined specific learning objectives relevant for this course that will enable me to better understand how well the objectives are being achieved by the students. When you receive the email to complete the online surveys, click on the link, complete the survey, and submit it. While your individual responses cannot be seen by anyone in the University, the College office does receive data on completion rates for each course. Your participation provides valuable feedback for me, the department, and the College of Arts and Sciences. If 85% of you complete course evaluations, everyone will get 5 bonus points.

Class Policies

Attendance

I will keep a record of attendance, and this will be factored into your participation grade. If you miss 3 classes, you cannot earn higher than a B in participation. If you miss 4 or more classes you cannot earn higher than a C in participation.

Class Cancellation

If the university closes, you will be notified through email and text (if you have signed up for the service). Under those circumstances, class will be cancelled whether or not you hear from me. If I need to cancel class for any other reason, I will call the Communication Studies office and ask them to put a note on the door and email you through BlueLine.

Computers

Occasionally, I will ask you to use a computer for a classroom activity. However, most class periods, you will not need one and therefore, I expect you to keep phones, laptops, and tablets out of sight. Please print out our course readings and bring materials to hand write notes.

Course Assignments: (500 total points)

All papers will be turned in using BlueLine. You do not need to turn in a paper copy as well, although you may want to bring it in to reference it during class. Please submit your

document using the assignment function in BlueLine. All submissions should be in .doc or .docx format. If I cannot open your document, I consider it late. Double check that you have submitted the document you intended to submit.

All assignments are due by the date and time listed on BlueLine. Late assignments in this class will result in a loss of 10% of the assignment's total points the first 24 hours, 20% in the second day (25-48 hours) and 50% of the assignment's total points after that time. After one week, there will no longer be credit awarded for an assignment. If you have an emergency, please notify me as soon as possible. Emergencies do not include computers and printers that crash or otherwise do not work.

All papers should conform to the standards of one particular style (such as MLA, APA, or Chicago). Finally, be sure that your essays are mechanically correct; spelling and grammar should be accurate.

1. Participation (50 points)

The readings in this class are meant to develop your understanding of our study of communication practices by adding to your vocabulary, providing examples and studies of notions of communication practice in use and/or provide the tools you need for your own observations, descriptions and evaluations. Participation is a good opportunity for you to test your understanding of course material and develop a deeper understanding of it. Three times during the semester, you will get grades. Around the four week mark, you will get a grade out of 10 points. At the midpoint, you will get a grade out of 15 points. At the end of the semester, you will get a grade out of 25 points. Use the descriptions below for guidance.

A Level: These students contribute consistently, regularly and enthusiastically to class discussion. But such students also do not dominate. Talking a lot doesn't guarantee an A. Rather, talking in a way that develops the conversation, builds on the comments of others, and is thoroughly grounded in the text under discussion will lead to an A. A-level participants don't ramble. Perhaps the most noteworthy characteristics of the A participant is that s/he always has very clear evidence from the text when relevant (being able to point to relevant passages and concrete details). Moreover, s/he doesn't just talk to the instructor. S/he engages everyone in the class, asks questions or builds on the comments of others, and addresses others' remarks as well as promoting his or her own position. These students are excellent and exceptional in their performance in **every class**.

B Level: These students contribute regularly to each class meeting. The B-level student has much in common with the A student; what differentiates the two is the degree of consistency of performance. The B student is sometimes engaged, but not always. The B student is reliable in giving concrete evidence and details, but less specific than the A student. S/he always does good work, usually engages others, but may not do so **every class meeting**. These students are above average in their contributions in terms of both content and delivery.

C Level: These students give useful and relevant ideas and opinions; however, they may not tie their ideas with evidence from the text or they may not contribute very frequently. The C student only rarely engages others in the class by asking questions or furthering points. Although they come prepared to all class meetings and are productive members of the class, they remain on the outskirts of discussions. They are average in their work, doing only what is required but no more.

D Level: These students are physically present and actively listen, but do not contribute with any regularity, or if they do, their contributions are vague and not carefully articulated. Their preparation and participation is never reliable and they do not make an effort to engage with others in the class.

F Level: These students are often absent. If they attend regularly, they are obviously and frequently unprepared and inattentive. An F-level student may also be one who makes insulting and unproductive comments, talks while others have the floor, or engages in other disruptive or disrespectful behavior. Numerous absences or flagrant rudeness should guarantee a failing grade.

2. Exams (2 at 50 points each, total 100 points)

Both exams will be comprised of different-length responses, ranging from short answer to essay. They will both be open-book and open-note but not open laptop. So, print off whatever you will use during the exam.

3. Field Trip Project – Data Collection

Paper – 25 points

Revision – 75 points

Cover Letter – 25 points,

You will go on a field trip to a grocery store of your choice to collect data. You will make observations and record those as field notes. If you are feeling bold, you can ask people some questions and note their answers. You will submit the field notes with your essay. You should develop a clear thesis statement that advances an argument about your interpretation of the communication in this space. Since this store will have many different forms of communication, you should focus on one aspect, analyze your field notes systematically, and develop a clear interpretation of that communication using evidence from your field notes as support for your interpretation.

This assignment is not only building your capacity to competently analyze communication, it is also advancing your understanding of academic writing. Therefore, you should use an academic format (introduction, literature review, description of the method, findings of the analysis, and discussion). Additionally, you should have six academic, communication-focused sources and your paper should be 1000 words long.

This course satisfies the Designated Writing component of the Magis Core and as such, this assignment is designed to not only help you understand the process of writing (before you must submit your final paper) but also to give you the space to document your

writing process. For this assignment, you'll submit your paper, and I'll give you feedback on that. Then, you'll revise your paper and submit the revision along with a cover letter describing the changes that you made. The cover letter should demonstrate that you understand the feedback that you received by not only summarizing the comments but addressing the deeper issues revealed through the surface problems. Additionally, it should detail the specific changes that you made to your essay, giving examples from the paper to show what you have done. It should be about 500 words.

4. *Social Science Application Paper and Presentation*

Paper – 75

Presentation – 50

This course satisfies the Doing Social Science component of the Magis Core. The assignments this semester give you a sense of the range of social science approaches – from collecting your own data for analysis to analyzing in more depth a large-scale data set and understanding that data sets have multiple interpretations. I will provide you with a large data set about communication in Zion National Park, and you'll analyze this before class. This step is called *initial coding*. Then, we will spend class time going through additional analysis steps in small groups and individually. The goal of this assignment is to evaluate social science data in your small groups by (1) analyzing the data using qualitative methods, (2) proposing potential research questions based on the data, and (3) interpreting the data in a variety of meaningful ways. After class you will individually write up a 1500-word paper (following the outline – introduction, literature review, description of method, findings of the analysis, and discussion) that contains eight academic, communication-focused sources. At the end of your literature review, you should include your research question. Additionally, you will read an academic article based on the data you analyzed during class and address it in your paper.

Based on your findings and literature review, you will create a presentation with a visual aid. Your visual aid can have pictures and information but should strive to represent some aspect of your examination visually. Graphs and charts are useful, for example. You should prepare a synopsis of your project and your findings. Each student will have 7-9 minutes to present his/her paper. Afterwards, we'll have a discussion with the presenters.

Grading Scale

A = 94-100%

A- = 90-93%

B+ = 87-89%

B = 84-86%

B- = 80-83%

C+ = 77-79%

C = 74-76%

C- = 70-73%

D = 60-69%

F = 0-59%

General Grading Standards

An “**A**” is awarded to efforts that not only demonstrate advanced understanding, but show superior performance and achievement. An “**A**” grade indicates that the performer is superior and likely to be “unimprovable” in any significant way.

A “**B**” is awarded to efforts that not only demonstrate competence, but shows advanced understanding or quality. A “**B**” grade indicates that the performance is significantly better than adequate.

A “**C**” is awarded to efforts that result in accomplishing all expectations of the assignment. A “**C**” grade indicates that the performance is fully adequate and shows that the performer has accomplished a satisfactory level of competence in whatever activity is observed, evaluated, and measured.

A “**D**” is awarded to efforts that fail to demonstrate an acceptable level of competence but suggest that genuine effort has been made in that regard. A “**D**” grade suggests that, with additional effort, relevant competence is attainable.

An “**F**” is awarded in cases where no effort to reach competency or the demonstration of potential competency is apparent.

Tentative Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
H, 1/16	Welcome		
T, 1/21	Speaking for/about the Environment	Pezzullo & Cox (P&C), Introduction	
H, 1/23	Jesuit Connections	Introduction to Pope Francis’s Encyclical	
Communicating for/about the Environment			
T, 1/28	Defining Environmental Communication	P&C, 1	
H, 1/30	Contested Meanings: A Brief History	P&C, 2	
Constructions of the Environment			
T, 2/4	Symbolic Constructions of the Environment	P&C, 3	
H, 2/6	Collecting Data and Writing in Social Sciences		
T, 2/11	The Environment at the Grocery Store	Raska, Nichols, & Shaw	
H, 2/13	The Environment in/of Visual and Popular Culture	P&C, 4	
T, 2/18	Environmental Journalism	P&C, 5	
Communicating in an Age of Ecological Crises			

H, 2/20	Scientists, Technology, and Environmental Controversies	P&C, 6	Field Trip Paper
T, 2/25	Human Health and Ecological Risk Communication	P&C, 7	
H, 2/27	Risk Communication at National Parks	Rickard	
T, 3/3	Midterm Exam		Midterm Exam
H, 3/5	No Class: Sam at a Fulbright Training		
3/9-3/13	No Class: Spring Break		
T, 3/17	Sustainability and the “Greening” of Corporations and Campuses	P&C, 8	
Environmental Campaigns and Movements			
H, 3/19	Advocacy Campaigns and Message Construction	P&C, 9	
T, 3/24	Oral Presentation of Field Trip Papers and Revisions		Field Trip Revision and Cover Letter
H, 3/26	Digital Media and Environmental Activism	P&C, 10	
T, 3/31	Environmental Justice and Climate Justice Movements	P&C, 11	
H, 4/2	In-Depth Data Analysis	Data Set (Zion National Park Interviews)	Initial Coding
F, 4/3	Last Day to “W Drop”		
T, 4/7	Developing Coding into Published Research	Senda-Cook and Senda-Cook & Endres	
H, 4/9	No Class: Easter		
Environmental Laws and Engagement			
T, 4/14	Public Participation in Environmental Decisions	P&C, 12	
H, 4/16	Environmental Conflict Management and Collaboration	P&C, 13	
T, 4/21	Conflict Application		Bring in an articulation of your position and research
H, 4/23	Legal Arguments for the Standing of Citizens and Nature	P&C, 14	
T, 4/28	Presentations		Social Science

			Application Paper and Presentation
H, 4/30	Presentations		
T, 5/5 @ 1:00-2:40 pm	Final Exam		Final Exam

Course Bibliography

Phaedra C. Pezzullo and Robert Cox. *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, 5th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2018.

David Raska, Bridget S. Nichols, and Doris Shaw. "When Descriptive Norm Cues Fail As Persuasion Agents in Green Supermarket Advertising." *Journal of Promotion Management* 21 (2015): 721-738.

Laura Rickard. "Mountains and Handrails: Risk, Meaning, and Responsibility in Three National Parks." *Environmental Communication* 8, no. 3 (2014): 286-304.

Samantha Senda-Cook. "Experiential Degradation: It's Not Just the Environment that's in Danger." *Communication Currents* 7, no. 3 (2012).

Samantha Senda-Cook and Danielle Endres. "A Place of One's Own," in *Environmental Rhetoric: Ecologies of Place*, ed. by Peter Goggin (London: Routledge, 2013), 143-154.