

COMM 447 – Communicating Science, Environment, and Health

INTERTERM 2013

Monday-Friday, 1-4 p.m.

Classroom: Memorial 13

Instructor: Dr. Bernardo H. Motta

Contact Information:

The best way for students to contact me is via e-mail.

Email: bmotta@bridgewater.edu

Office Phone: 540-828-5758

Campus Mailbox: 91

Office hours: Mondays to Fridays 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Course description:

Catalog: This course examines the role of news, advocacy, scientific analysis, decision making, policy, risk perception, politics and other related instances in the communication of issues related to science, environment, and health.

Instructor: The course will follow how information created by scientists in environmental and health issues is used by the media, public relations practitioners, law makers, regulators, and decision makers in governments, organizations and corporations, and, finally, by lay citizens. We will analyze strategies to get scientific knowledge to the public arena in ways that inform, educate and empower the public and in ways that can mislead or confuse the public.

Course objectives:

At the end of this course, students should have a better understanding of the scientific communication processes including political influence, funding systems, corporate-driven research v. public interest-driven research, and the role of the different types of media and public relations professionals. Students should also learn basic practical techniques to analyze, evaluate, and produce news stories and public relations and social marketing campaigns.

Resources for class:

Textbook: Blum, D., Knudson, M. and Henig, R. M. *A field guide for science writers: The official guide of the National Association of Science Writers*. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press.

All other readings will be available through the course folder.

You can find the list of readings in the course schedule at the end of this syllabus.

Grade Distribution:

Class Project: 60%

In-class participation, presentations, quizzes, and discussions: 40%

Grading Scale:

Students' work will be evaluated on the following scale:

Grade	Performance Level	Quality Points / %
A	Superior - This grade will only be given to those who demonstrate Excellency in all assignments and discussions and bring new and original information* to class that is not found in the required materials.	4 / 96 – 100
A-	Excellent	3.7 / 90– 95
B+	Very good	3.3 / 86 – 89
B	Good	3 / 80 – 85
B-	Fair	2.7 / 76 - 79
C+	Satisfactory	2.3 / 70 - 75
C	Mediocre	2 / 50 - 69
F**	Unsatisfactory = Failed	0 – 49

*New and original information can be from any academic research or fieldwork that presents relevant and correlated topics for discussions. The instructor reserves the right to evaluate relevance and correlation.

** Students who failed to turn in one of the assignments or do not achieve the minimum quality requirements (50%) will not pass this course. Therefore, the lowest passing grade is C.

Expected Class Behavior:

The instructor works with the assumption that all students in this course are **independent adult professionals** and will behave appropriately to an academic setting. The following are a few ground rules to promote the best learning environment to all students in the class:

- **ETHICAL CONDUCT:**

- As future professionals and representatives of Bridgewater College, you are expected to conduct yourselves within the highest ethical standards (see College Honor Code below). I give little opportunity for plagiarism and cheating in this class and **I refuse to deal with unethical people**. If you are caught participating in any unethical or unlawful activity, I will refer you directly to the Honor Council, which may result in **your expulsion and legal prosecution**. In case you are not sure if an activity is illegal or unethical, **talk to me** before you engage in it.
- You can find information about the Bridgewater College's Code of Ethics on page 66 of the Eagle Student Handbook: <http://www.bridgewater.edu/files/EagleStudentHandbook.pdf>.
- As communicators, you will also be held to the highest ethical standards in the profession. Refer to the [SPJ's Code of Ethics](#).

College Honor Code:

Ethics, honor, and integrity are the fundamental principles at the core of the Bridgewater College experience. Our community can only flourish in an environment of trust and respect and these notions of personal honor, integrity, and faith are the fundamentals of the Bridgewater Honor System. The Code of Honor prohibits lying, cheating, and stealing and Bridgewater College's commitment to ethics, integrity, and values is embodied in the Code of Ethics. Violation of these Codes demonstrates harm to the community and an all-student Honor Council administers regulation of this Honor System. It is the goal of our Honor Council to assist in the development of students' ethical and moral base. 2006-2007 Academic Catalog, Bridgewater College

- The Bridgewater College Plagiarism Policy, adopted 23 August 2005. It may be found at <http://bridgewater.edu/WritingCenter/BCplagiarism.htm>

- **COMMUNICATION:**

- I sincerely believe that almost all problems can be avoided if we maintain an **open and honest channel of communication**. I am here to help you learn and succeed and not to punish and judge. Any time you have a question or concern, please don't hesitate to contact me. If I can't help, I may be able to help you find someone who can.

- **ASSIGNMENTS:**

- **Time management:** This course demands a lot of out-of-class assignments, which are **very time consuming**. You should reserve a **minimum** of 2 hours of out-of-class study/assignment time for each in-class hour.
- **Course readings:** You can find the list of class readings below, in the class schedule. You are expected to show up to all class with all readings up to date. **If you attend a class and you are not prepared, you will lose points. If you show up unprepared for an assignment, you will be excused from class and fail the assignment and the course.** Each class on the schedule shows the readings for **that day and not for the following class. Readings are subjected to change accordingly to the needs of the course.**
- **Emails:** Reading your emails **at least twice a day** is part of your responsibilities in college. Many of the assignments will be sent by email or will have a component explained through an email. Failing to do an assignment properly because you didn't read an email will be considered the same as not doing the assignment, which can result in an **"F" for the entire course**.

- **GENERAL IN-CLASS BEHAVIOR:**

- **Cell phones and text messaging:** Cell phones should be **turned off or put in silent mode** before entering the class environment. If you expect an emergency call, keep the cell phone in silent mode and **sit close to the door**. Emergency calls are only calls related to **life-threatening situations**. The **instructor** has the discretionary power to decide what a life-threatening situation is in this case.
- **Proper dress code:** You can wear anything that is commonly seen as **appropriate** in an academic and/or professional environment. Avoid clothes that are too revealing as they may distract or offend your colleagues.

When you are conducting interviews or meeting with people as part of your reporting responsibilities, you should dress accordingly. If you are not sure, ask me.

- **Attitude towards the course:** Try as best as you can to keep a positive attitude towards your colleagues, instructor and class materials. If you have any concerns, discuss the problem with your instructor (if related to the class), your advisor (if related to your academic experience in the college), or either the [Associate Dean for Academic Affairs](#) or [Counseling Services](#) (if you need help with a personal/private issue). We are all here to help you enjoy and get the most out of your experience in the college.
- **Attendance:** You should not miss class. I reserve the right to **fail any student who misses 3 classes without justification**. Every class you will have to answer a quiz test based on the readings for that day, getting the wrong answer equals being absent. Also, you will have assignments or extra-credit opportunities in class. Most of them cannot be done at any other time. If you miss an assignment, you will lose assignment points. If you plan to miss any specific class, you must contact me in advance, so we can make arrangements. If you have an emergency and cannot contact me prior to class, you must contact me (or your advisor/counselor/the Associate Dean for Academic Affairs) **as soon as possible**.
- **Participation:** **All** students are expected to participate in class discussions, critically engage class materials and complete assignments. If you are shy, likes to take time to think before making comments, or for any other reason prefers not to voice your opinions in front of your colleagues, you can participate by discussing class topics directly with me (including writing emails and/or short papers) and talking to me about opportunities to approach class assignments in a more in-depth way. However, some mandatory assignments for grade will require you to make presentations in front of a live audience.

Notification of Student Support Services:

The Academic Support Center, located in Bicknell House, promotes learning skills and personal development through academic counseling, advising, tutoring services, disability services, and a transition program for selected new students. Further information may be found at <http://www.bridgewater.edu/StudentServices>.

Special Accommodations:

Students that have registered 504 plans must schedule a time to meet with the instructor in order to discuss the necessary accommodations.

“Bridgewater College is committed to providing all students equal access to the college’s academic programs and activities. Students who have or think they may have a condition (attentional, learning, visual, hearing, physical, psychological or chronic medical) that impacts learning and for which an accommodation may be desired, are encouraged to contact the Director of Academic Support, Dr. Chip Studwell, 540-828-5370 or cstudwel@bridgewater.edu. A letter is required from the Academic Support Office, each semester, in order to receive accommodations at Bridgewater.”

Use of the Bridgewater College Writing Center (BCWC):

The Bridgewater College Writing Center (BCWC) can and should be used as a support for writing assignments for this course. Students may access the web link of the Writing Center: <http://www.bridgewater.edu/StudentServices/WritingCenter>, or go directly to the Writing Center (Bowman 310 - Phone: 5708).

Assignments:

All due dates and deadlines are in the Class Schedule section of this syllabus.

Class Schedule:

Date	Topic and Readings	Assignments and Notes
<p>Jan 3 THURSDAY (1 h)</p>	<p>Introduction: Overview of course syllabus and requirements, students' expectations and needs. Description of assignments. Littman's: Hubble v. Clark and "Thoughts about Science Writing"</p> <p>Bryson, B. (2004). "Introduction," in <i>A short history of nearly everything</i>. New York: Broadway Books, pp. 1-6.</p> <p>Readings for tomorrow: Vickery, B. C. (2000). "Preface," in <i>Scientific communication in history</i>. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press.</p> <p>Wyss, R. (2008). "Understanding science," in <i>Covering the environment: How journalist work the green beat</i>. New York: Routledge, pp. 54-68.</p> <p>Textbook: Cope, L. (2006). "Understanding and using statistics," in Blum, D., Knudson, M. and Henig, R. M. <i>A field guide for science writers: The official guide of the National Association of Science Writers</i>. 2nd ed. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 18-25.</p>	<p>Homework: find a news story about a health or environmental issue and bring it to class.</p>
<p>Jan 4 FRIDAY (3 hs.)</p>	<p>Understanding Science The process of science communication: from discovery to the public's ears.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific discovery and evaluation • Publication • Primary publics • Secondary publics <p>Readings for Monday: Rosenbaum, W. A. (2008). "Making policy: The process," in <i>Environmental politics and policy</i>. Seventh edition. Washington: CQ Press, pp. 27-64.</p> <p>Geist-Martin, P., Ray, E. B., and Sharf, B. F. (2003). "Political complexities of medicine and healing," in <i>Communicating health: Personal, cultural, and political complexities</i>. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, pp. 95-130.</p> <p>Taubes & Couzens (November-December, 2012). "Sweet little lies," <i>Mother Jones</i> (37, 6).</p> <p>Holmes, T. (2009). "Balancing acts: PR, 'impartiality,' and power in mass media coverage of climate change," in T. Boyce & J. Lewis (Eds.) <i>Climate change and the media</i>, New York: Peter Lang, pp. 92-100.</p>	<p>Planning your final projects</p> <p>Movie: National Geographic: Stress, Portrait of a Killer (2008) Director/Writer: John Hemingway Star: Dr. Robert Sapolsky, Stanford University and MacArthur Genius grantee</p> <p>Final Project: STEP 1: Choosing a topic</p>
<p>Jan 7 MONDAY</p>	<p>The politics of science communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scientific need v. Funding • Public funding v. Private funding • Public interest v. Private interest • The "cool factor" – popularity v. importance • Long term v. short term • Philosophical inquiries 	<p>Movie: PBS: Frontline, Sick Around the World (2008) Written by Jon Palfreman and T.R. Reid ; produced and directed by Jon Palfreman.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Science and Religion <p>Readings for tomorrow: Textbook “Part Three: Varying your writing style” – pp. 111-154 – Special attention to “Investigative Reporting.”</p>	Correspondent: T.R. Reid.
Jan 8 TUESDAY	<p>Readings for tomorrow: Wyss (2008). “Covering the environment,” in <i>Covering the environment: How journalist work the green beat</i>. New York: Routledge, pp. 3-19.</p> <p>Wyss (2008). “Interviewing scientists,” in <i>Covering the environment: How journalist work the green beat</i>. New York: Routledge, pp. 69-84.</p> <p>1.</p>	<p>Movie: “Promised Land”</p> <p>Directed by Gus Van Sant Writing credits: John Krasinski & Matt Damon (screenplay) Dave Eggers (story)</p>
Jan 9 WEDNESDAY	<p>Covering the Science Beat</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning • Information gathering • Evaluating information • Organizing information • Communicating science <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Writing ○ Visual Comm. ○ Spoken Comm. ○ Multimedia and convergent reporting • Delivery and publication <p>Covering the Environmental Issues</p> <p>Readings for tomorrow: West, B. M. et al. (2003). Handling an environmental emergency: A case study in finding sources,” “The language of risk,” Tracking down a company’s environmental record,” “Finding an expert,” in <i>The reporter’s environmental handbook</i>. Third edition. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, pp. 5-36.</p> <p>Selected news stories: http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ Selected news stories: SEJ</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pufffish Preservation (Wired) 2. Killer App (mother Jones) – related to Maxwell & Miller (2009). “Talking rubbish: Green Citizenship, media, and the environment,” in T. Boyce & J. Lewis (Eds.) <i>Climate change and the media</i>, New York: Peter Lang, pp. 17-27. 	<p>Final Project: STEP 2: Research 1 – Primary sources: News stories, documents, interviewees, etc.</p> <p>STEP 3: Research 2 – Secondary sources: Journal articles, book chapters, commentary, textbooks, etc.</p>
Jan 10 THURSDAY	<p>Covering Environmental Health Issues</p> <p>Readings for tomorrow: Wright, K., Sparks, L., and O’Hair, H. D. (2008). “Health news stories in the media,” in <i>Health communication in the 21st century</i>. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 193-198.</p> <p>Selected news stories: Best science writing</p>	<p>Movie: A Civil Action (1998) Director: Steven Zaillian Writers: Jonathan Harr (book), Steven Zaillian (screenplay) Featuring: John Travolta, Robert Duvall and Kathleen Quinlan</p>
Jan 11	Covering Health Issues	Movie:

<p>FRIDAY</p>	<p>Readings for Monday:</p> <p>Read chapters 8, 9, and 16 of your textbook and, then, pick a chapter from parts 4 and 5.</p>	<p>NOVA: Dying to Be Thin (2004) Written, produced, and directed by Larkin McPhee Narrated by Susan Sarandon</p> <p>Final Project: STEP 4: Organizing information – Writing an annotated bibliography and a literature review.</p>
<p>Jan 14 MONDAY</p>	<p>Final Project Workshops: Literature Review and Reporting</p> <p>Readings for tomorrow: Cox, R. (2013). "Advocacy campaigns and message construction," in <i>Environmental communication and the public sphere</i>. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 208-242.</p>	<p>Final Project: STEP 5: Reporting – Building a case study narrative</p>
<p>Jan 15 TUESDAY</p>	<p>Environmental Advocacy</p> <p>Readings for tomorrow: Wright, K., Sparks, L., and O’Hair, H. D. (2008). "Health campaigns and community health initiatives," in <i>Health communication in the 21st century</i>. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 233-261.</p>	<p>Strategic Plans and PR Campaigns</p> <p>Movie: Toxic Sludge is Good for You : The Public Relations Industry Unspun (2003) Media Education Foundation</p>
<p>Jan 16 WEDNESDAY</p>	<p>Health Campaigns</p> <p>Readings for tomorrow: List of readings based on topics for tomorrow’s discussions.</p>	<p>Movie: Thank you for Smoking (2006) Written for the screen and directed by Jason Reitman. Featuring: Aaron Eckhart, Maria Bello, Cameron Bright, Adam Brody, Sam Elliott, Katie Holmes, David Koechner, Rob Lowe, William H. Macy, J.K. Simmons, Robert Duvall.</p> <p>Strategic Plans and PR Campaigns (Cont.)</p>
<p>Jan 17 THURSDAY</p>	<p>Issues in Environmental and Health Comm. Research STUDENTS WILL PRESENT AND DEBATE TOPICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental and Health Risk Comm. • Environmental Justice • Health justice • Infectious diseases, epidemics, and pandemics • Mental Health • Climate change and pollution • Nutrition and the origin of food • Genetics: human and plant GMOs • Health advancements and faith choices • Technological advancement and cultural disparities • Global v. Local solutions: Glocal movements • New technologies and health information (WebMD) 	

	<p>Readings for tomorrow: Strategic plan and Social Marketing texts</p>	
<p>Jan 18 FRIDAY</p>	<p>Preparing a Science-based Campaign Hands-on activity based on yesterday's topics</p> <p>Readings for Monday: Wright, K., Sparks, L., and O'Hair, H. D. (2008). "Overview of communication and health," in <i>Health communication in the 21st century</i>. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, pp. 1-16.</p> <p>Cox, R. (2013). "Chapter 1: Study and practice of environmental communication," in <i>Environmental communication and the public sphere</i>. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 9-37.</p> <p>Extra readings: Corbett, J. B. (2006). "Battle for spin: The public relations industry," in J. B. Corbett <i>Communicating nature: How we create and understand environmental messages</i>. Washington, D. C.: Island press, pp. 247-79.</p>	<p>Final Project: STEP 6: Campaign – Information and advocacy STEP 7: Formatting and finalization – Cover, Abstract, TOC (pagination), and List of Reference STEP 8: Presenting</p>
<p>Jan 21 MONDAY</p>	<p>Topics in Science, Environment, and Health Communication Research</p> <p>PRESENTATIONS OF FINAL PROJECTS</p> <p>Readings for tomorrow: Cox, R. (2013). "Chapter 11: Science communication and environmental controversies," in <i>Environmental communication and the public sphere</i>. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 319-346.</p>	<p>FINAL PROJECTS DUE TODAY</p>
<p>Jan 22 TUESDAY</p>	<p>And back to politics: The politics of scientific discovery and dissemination</p> <p>What have we learned? What else can we learn? How? What can we do with this information?</p>	
<p>Jan 23 WEDNESDAY</p>	<p>Recapitulations, evaluations and open discussions about course's goals and future endeavors.</p>	