

**COM 274**  
**Environmental Communication**  
**Fall 2013**

Instructor: Dr. J. L. Courtright

Office: Fell 428

Office Hours: MTR 1:15-2:45 p.m.;

*other times by appointment*

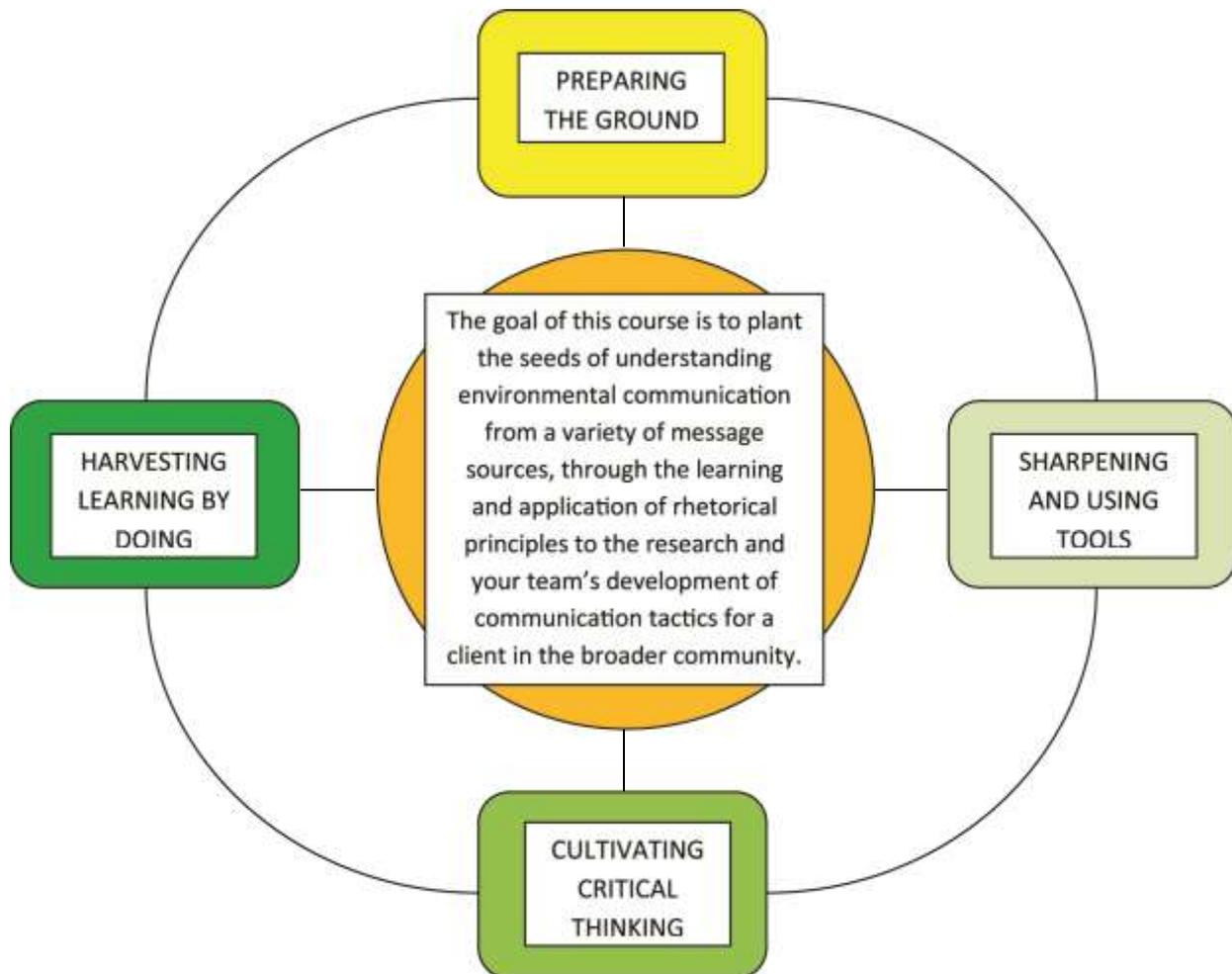
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MWF 11:00-11:50 a.m.

Fell 152

Welcome to COM 274, Environmental Communication! I'm very excited to work with you this semester as we work with several organizations on campus and in the Bloomington-Normal area to help them plan green message campaigns for 2014. The foundation for the course is Kenneth Burke's approach to communication as "symbolic action," and you'll work in teams to apply these rhetorical principles and others you'll learn as you produce the research, planning, and discursive and visual tactics necessary for an environmental campaign. Take a look at the lay of the land for COM 274:



## **Texts**

Cox, R. (2013). *Environmental communication and the public sphere* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.  
Jacobson, S. K. (2009). *Communication skills for conservation professionals* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Washington, DC: Island Press.

### *Optional Texts:*

Lederer, R., & Dowis, R. (1999). *Sleeping dogs don't lay: Practical advice for the grammatically challenged*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

Lederer, R., & Shore, J. (2005). *Comma sense: A fun-damental guide to punctuation*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

A limited number of additional handouts will be available on Reggienet and announced in class throughout the semester. These will be distributed through Reggienet.

## **Transformational Goal & Objectives**

As you'll notice on the previous page, the goal for this course is to plant the seeds of understanding environmental communication from a variety of message sources (real-live examples), through the learning and application of rhetorical principles to the research and your team's development of communication tactics for a client in the broader community.

### *Objectives*

By the end of this course, you will:

- have a working knowledge of the history and foundations of environmental communication;
- learn and apply the principles of communication campaigns and message design;
- gather and critique examples of environmental messages; and
- provide environmental communication assistance to a campus or local client.

## **Activities**

The primary project for the term will be team research of environmental issues at Illinois State University and in McLean County, resulting in communication campaign proposals for local clients. We'll rotate through several activities and assignments toward that end:

### *Preparing the Ground*

During the first weeks of the course, we will cover fundamental principles of rhetoric, the "voices" of environmental communication, and civic engagement, particularly the rights of individuals, groups, and organizations to address environmental issues in a variety of forms. We'll also use Friday sessions for material and in-class work that will assist you in your project groups (see next page).

***Class Relations:*** Class periods will be conducted in mini-lecture and discussion formats. Since this is an elective course, it is expected that students are engaged in building professional relational skills as an important part of socialization into your chosen field. Your score will be based on the degree to which you participate in discussion and behave professionally in class or when interacting with the instructor. More than three unexcused absences will affect your grade.

### *Cultivating Critical Thinking*

***Personal Environmental Ethics Statement:*** Toward the end of the course, you will develop, submit, and refine a personal statement regarding your view of environmental issues and the role of communication

in guiding public debate about them and their resolution. You'll also be graded on a **Personal Environmental History Statement** toward the beginning of the course, which serves as a rhetorical resource before you write the Ethics Statement.

**Reflection Papers:** Throughout the semester you will have several opportunities to reflect on your learning over the course of the semester, particularly to discuss how the course assignments and activities have affected your views of the environment and sustainability. These papers are to be 1½-2 pages long, single-spaced, with a single blank space in between paragraphs.

The previous subsection's assignments and the reflection papers are "medium stakes" assignments because I will grade for mechanics (spelling, grammar, etc.) and critical thinking, commenting on your ideas and asking questions for further, deeper reflection.

**Class Activities:** For some class meetings, students are expected to be active participants in individual, paired, and group exercises designed to complement the week's readings. When an exercise requires minor advance preparation, I will announce such requirements with enough advance notice that you may be prepared for the planned exercise. Other activities may require only that you've done the reading for the day and will not be announced in advance.

In either case, all students should read the assigned chapters and any supplemental articles **prior to coming to class**. Come prepared to each class period with any questions or comments you have regarding the readings. After those are addressed, I will build upon specific ideas in the readings with material drawn from other sources.

After the first unit of course material, we'll also focus on the strategies behind environmental messages from a variety of sources: the voices of government, corporations, nonprofits, activists, individuals, and the disenfranchised (those who must depend on others to speak for them; e.g., the poor, animals).

Such activities occasionally will serve as stimuli for individual reflection papers.

### ***Pinterest Message Collection & Analyses***

Over the term you will upload, or hyperlink to, **at least** five (5) environmental messages from a variety of sources (e.g., pictures, webpages, YouTube videos, tweets). We'll apply course principles from both textbooks as we analyze these. At least three points in the semester, you'll submit a written analysis for a particular artifact that you've shared with the class.

**PLEASE EMAIL ME YOUR CURRENT PINTEREST EMAIL ADDRESS OR, IF YOU'RE NEW TO PINTEREST, CREATE AN ACCOUNT AND PLEASE EMAIL THE ADDRESS YOU'VE ASSOCIATED WITH YOUR ACCOUNT.**

**Team Project:** In keeping with the university's efforts toward civic engagement, Teams of 5 students each will work with organizations on campus or in the broader community. Students this term will prepare campaigns for, among others, Antiquity Oaks, the Illinois Prairie chapter of Wild Ones, ISU Health Promotion and Wellness, and Sugar Grove Nature Center (tentative). Team members may have opportunities to implement campaign message recommendations during this semester or through directed study with me in the spring and summer semesters in 2014.

- **Research Assignment:** Your team will first research the environmental issue and community's communication climate surrounding it. Among the questions to be answered: What is the issue, its history, etc.? What communication problems or opportunities exist for the organization in relation to this issue? Who are the organization's target audiences for this issue? Teams will prepare a best draft of this section of the project prior to midterm.

- The emphasis on research sections will be the focus of several Friday sessions.
- The key research concerns that each team will have are the client's organization, the particular issue the client wants to address, the organization's key audiences, and past messages and media regarding the organization and the issue.

**PLEASE NOTE:** The second part of the project should take into account feedback from the first assignment. (Please [see](#) the next subsection.)

### Sharpening and Using Tools

The research assignment and the remainder of the team project fulfill this objective as well as *Cultivating Critical Thinking* and *Harvesting by Doing*.

The second part of the team project is as follows:

- *Communication Planning Assignment & Message Design:* Research provides a rationale for a communication campaign that you will propose. Your team will summarize this rationale and set a communication goal for your campaign. The goal then leads to specific objectives related to audience awareness, opinion, and/or behavior. The assignment concludes with an outline and justification of your proposed campaign's theme and supporting ideas. Your team also will design—and perhaps implement—the messages intended to accomplish the goal and objectives set during Communication Planning.

The two major elements of the written portion of the team project form a final written report to be turned in after Thanksgiving Break.

Written components of the project are to be written in a business report format.

**IMPORTANT:** Each team will have a liaison **responsible for meeting at least every other week with Dr. C.** I also will work with your team during Friday in-class work days.

### Harvesting Learning by Doing

The elements of the team project naturally fit under this category as well. These include two additional forms of assessment:

- *Team Presentation.* The team orally will present **recommended communication tactics** in the form of a poster presentation drawn from the written team report. Representatives from the organizations that teams work with this semester, along with Communication faculty and others interested in Environmental Communication may visit the poster sessions as well. Your team will be judged on the quality of your poster, how well it reflects the elements of the written report, and your interactions with clients and visitors.
- *Peer Evaluations.* After midterm and at the end of the semester, you will evaluate your teammates regarding how well team members are performing and contributing to the project tasks. This includes a self-evaluation.

**Exams:** Three exams will be used to demonstrate your personal understanding of environmental communication principles. Exams will be comprised of SHORT ANSWER ITEMS.

## COURSE GRADING SCALE

<i>Class Relations</i>	50
<i>Personal Environmental History and Ethics Statements</i>	50
<i>Class Activities &amp; Reflections</i>	50
<i>Pinterest Collection &amp; Analyses</i>	100
<i>Team Project: Research Assignment – best draft</i>	50
<i>Team Project: Revised Research Section; Communication Planning/Message Design</i>	100
<i>Team Poster Presentation</i>	50
<i>Client Feedback</i>	25
<i>Peer Evaluations (2 @ 100 points each)</i>	200
<i>Exams (4 @ 25 points each)</i>	100
<i>Final Reflection Paper</i>	25
<b>TOTAL POINTS AVAILABLE</b>	<b>800</b>
Unexcused Absences	-15 each →
Perfect Attendance Bonus	30

You are allowed 3 unexcused absences before point deductions.

Total points for the semester are 800. Only top-quality work on any assignment warrants a grade of 90% or more. The final grades for the term are based on a 90-80-70-60 scale. A grade of D will indicate that the student’s effort did not approach the minimum requirements for the assignment or examination. Failure for the course is any score below 480 points for the semester.

**How You Can Do Well in this Course.** There are a few things that you can do to get the most out of this course and do well in it. First, purchase the required textbook and packet readings, and read them prior to coming to class. Brief lectures and PowerPoint presentations will not highlight every key point from the readings that you need to know for exams. Indeed, you will be able to contribute meaningfully to class discussion by being prepared so that the instructor and the class are starting, literally, from the same page(s). Discussion will extend beyond assigned material. Second, learn from each other through class activities and the team project. Be willing to receive constructive criticism from your peers as well as give it.

**Writing Standards.** All written assignments must be completed before the beginning of the class period for which they are due. Moreover, as with all budding professionals, students should submit written work in legible, standard book-sized font, prepared on a laptop, PC, or other form of word processor. Most important, these assignments should be largely free of errors, be they typographical, grammatical, or orthographical (i.e., spelling). **So please spell check and proofread!** Following formatting instructions are also part of this. Your future employers expect you to be good communicators, and so should you! (This means that you should go beyond the basic computer spell check, although that’s a good start.)

To that end, such errors will result in a deduction of 0.2 points for each error. Repeated errors will receive deductions of no more than ½ point. All reference lists should be in American Psychological Association (APA) style guide; any campaign message writing will conform to the Associated Press (AP) Style Guide. Sources:

**A note about sources:** Wikipedia and online dictionaries are not acceptable sources but can be good places to start. ALWAYS confirm information found in these sources with others more credible.

## SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS AND READINGS

Note: The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule and/or content of the course in order to meet educational objectives. Students are responsible for adjusting to any changes announced in class, via Reggienet, or on the instructor's web site.

### COURSE SCHEDULE

(Subject to change when guest speakers become available.)

M	Aug 18	Introduction to the Course
W	Aug 20	Cox, Introduction: Speaking for and About the Environment, Jacobson, Ch. 1: Communicating for Conservation
F	Aug 22	Cox, Ch. 1: Studying Environmental Communication; Personal Environmental History assigned
M	Aug 25	Cox, Ch. 2: Contested Meanings of Environment
W	Aug 27	Cox, Ch. 3: Social-Symbolic Constructions of Environment; read <b>HANDOUT</b> on <i>Reggienet</i> (Apocalyptic & Jeremiad genre characteristics); <b>UPLOAD Pinterest examples of genres &amp; stylistic messages for Friday's discussion</b> ; <b>Personal Environmental History assigned</b>
F	Aug 29	Class Discussion & Activity: Identifying Environmental Genres
<b>M</b>	<b>Sept 1</b>	<b>Labor Day Holiday – No Classes</b>
W	Sept 3	<b>Personal Environmental History due</b> ; (Jacobson, Ch. 3: Designing a Public Information Campaign) Presentation of client options, Day 1
F	Sept 5	Discussion of Course Project and Research Teams Presentation of client options, Day 2
M	Sept 8	Review for Exam #1; In-Class Team Work Period
W	Sept 10	<b>Exam #1</b>
F	Sept 12	Researching Your Client's Organization
M	Sept 15	Cox, Ch. 9: Environmental Justice
W	Sept 17	Class Discussion & Activity: Climate Justice and the Green Jobs Movement
F	Sept 19	In-Class Team Work Period: Jacobson, Ch. 5, Audience Research
M	Sept 22	Cox, Ch. 4: Public Participation in Environmental Decisions
W	Sept 24	Jacobson, Chs. 6, 8: Communication Strategies and Actions & Using "Mass" Media; <b>In-class analysis of Pinterest uploads</b> ; <b>first analysis paper assigned</b>
F	Sept 26	In-Class Team Work Period: Researching Environmental Issues
M	Sept 29	Jacobson, Chs. 9 & 7: Communicating with Groups; Methods and Materials for Interpreting the Environment; read <b>HANDOUT</b> on <i>Reggienet</i> on <i>Public Forums</i> <b>Supplemental Readings (optional; see folder on Reggienet for link):</b> Brulle, R. J. (2010). From environmental campaigns to advancing the public dialog: Environmental communication for civic engagement. <i>Journal of Environmental Communication</i> , 4, 82-98. <b>FIRST ANALYSIS PAPER DUE</b>

W	Oct 1	Cox, Ch. 5: Managing Conflict: Collaboration and Environmental Disputes; <i>Read <b>HANDOUT</b> on Reggienet: Removing Bias from Group Communication</i>
F	Oct 3	In-Class Team Work Period: Implementing Interpretive Tactics & Managing a Public Forum
M	Oct 6	Jacobson, Ch. 10: Conservation through Education <i>In-class analysis of Pinterest uploads</i>
W	Oct 8	Reading on Reggienet; Class Discussion & Activity
F	Oct 10	Review for Exam #2; In-Class Team Work Period: Jacobson, Ch. 3, Designing a Communication Program; Setting Goals & Objectives
M	Oct 13	<b>Exam #2</b>
W	Oct 15	Cox, Ch. 6: News Media and Environmental Journalism
F	Oct 17	Class Team Work Period: Media Relations and Environmental Communication
M	Oct 20	Cox, Ch. 7: Social Media and the Environment Online; <i>In-class analysis of Pinterest uploads; second analysis paper assigned</i>
W	Oct 22	In-Class Team Work Period: Social Media Selections <b>SECOND ANALYSIS PAPER DUE</b>
F	Oct 24	Cox, Ch. 8: Advocacy Campaigns and Message Construction
M	Oct 27	Review for Exam 3; <i>Team Project: Research Assignment – best draft DUE</i>
W	Oct 29	<b>Exam #3</b>
F	Oct 31	<i>First Peer Evaluations due</i> ; In-Class Team Work Period: Media Selections
M	Nov 3	Cox, Ch. 10: Green Marketing and Corporate Advocacy; <i>in-class analysis of Pinterest uploads; third analysis paper assigned</i>
W	Nov 5	Class Activity and Discussion
F	Nov 7	Detailed Discussion of the Oral Presentation Assignment; or, how to use posters properly for a business presentation!
M	Nov 10	Cox, Ch. 11: Science Communication and Environmental Controversies; <b>THIRD ANALYSIS PAPER DUE</b>
W	Nov 12	Cox, Ch. 12: Risk Communication – Environmental Dangers and the Public
F	Nov 14	Review for Exam #4; In-Class Team Work Period
M	Nov 17	<b>Exam #4</b>
W	Nov 19	<i>Read Reggienet reading</i> from Cox (2 <sup>nd</sup> ed.), Epilogue: Imagining a Different World
F	Nov 21	In-Class Team Work Period: Meet in classroom with Dr. C for any questions you have
<b>Nov 22-28</b>		<b>Thanksgiving Break – No Classes</b>
M	Dec 1	Team Prep Day – attendance required
W	Dec 3	<b>Team Poster Presentations; TURN IN WRITTEN PROPOSALS</b>
F	Dec 5	<b>Team Poster Presentations</b>

TBA FINAL EXAM PERIOD: **Second Peer Evaluations and the Final Reflection paper are due at the beginning of the period.**

### **Course Policies**

**Student Responsibilities:** All students are expected to have read course material prior to the class period for which the reading has been assigned. Your participation in class discussion is essential to the course, and failure to prepare for class interaction could affect your grade negatively.

Multiple unexcused absences will negatively affect your grade; any student who misses more than one-fourth of the class meetings (11 classes or more) will fail the course. **Students are allowed three unexcused absences before absences begin to affect your class relations grade.**

Any changes to the course schedule will be announced in class and through Reggienet. Students are accountable for any such information announced in class or online.

**If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from a classmate.** Contact the instructor only for clarifications regarding specific points from lecture.

**Use of Technology:** Laptops and other electronic devices are to be used only for class notes or searching for information to contribute to class discussion or assignments. Use of technology for playing games, e-mailing, texting, or other non-class related activities is inappropriate. Such incidents will cost a student major points on the Class Relations grade, particularly during the last weeks of class during team presentations.

Also, please turn your cell phone to “vibrate,” “silent,” or off. Ringtones are unnecessary distractions.

**Consultation:** I will be available for questions and comments regarding your progress in COM 274 (see office hours on first page). As a matter of priority, if you have a question or concern, or if you need to notify me about missing a class or assignment, **contact me via e-mail and/or telephone as soon as possible.** If using the phone, please leave a message if I am not in my office. Use of two channels of communication is also helpful, should one fail to reach me! I will use university e-mail rather than Reggienet.

**Attendance & Make-up Work:** Your presence in class is your responsibility. Examinations cannot be made up in the case of unexcused absences.

Should an illness or family emergency prevent your attendance on the day of an examination, documentation will be required in order for you to make up an exam. An individual’s participation in a team oral presentation cannot be made up.

**Assignment Deadlines & Late Work:** All written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the day listed in the syllabus schedule. This means that any item turned in after 11:00 a.m. will be counted late and deducted 5% of the total points possible. Assignments turned in late will receive a 5% deduction for each day they are late, including weekends. After one week, any assignment, turned in or not, will be given a zero.

**NOTE: No extra credit is offered in this course, unless announced for everyone, not just one person. When students will benefit from changes to the schedule, assignments, and grading, the instructor reserves the right to make any adjustments so that all students are treated in a fair and equal manner.**

**Academic Dishonesty:** Plagiarism, cheating on exams and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Any of these will result in failure for that particular assignment or the entire course.

**Grade Reporting:** All assignments will be graded and returned within one week after the due date. Once you receive the results, please wait at least 24 hours before contacting the instructor for any questions and concerns you have about your exam. After that date, you have **one week** to discuss the results with the instructor and/or to submit a written grade appeal. (Grade appeals must be in writing and include specific reasons for each contention the student or team wishes to make.) In short, **15 days after any due date, all grades are final and cannot be appealed.**

The University posts your final grade on My.IllinoisState.edu as a service both to you and your instructors. This service, along with Reggienet, will constitute the PRIMARY GRADE NOTIFICATION MECHANISMS for this course. Student privacy laws prevent me from communicating grades via e-mail or telephone.

**Testing conditions:** Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TDD). Those students who do not do so must expect to take quizzes and exams under the same conditions as their classmates.