

Environmental Communication

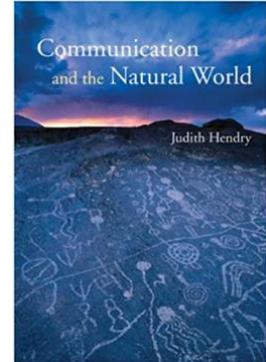
COM 380 | Spring Term 2020

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Online Office Hours: MW 9:00 – 11:00 a.m.
and by email appointment. You can expect to reach me by email or by google chat at these times.

Course Text

Hendry, Judith. *Communication and the Natural World*.
State College, PA: Strata Publishing.



Course Description

The purpose of this course is to introduce students to various communication perspectives on environmental studies with a focus on civic engagement and public participation in environmental decision-making. No prior experience or coursework in Communication or Environmental Studies is necessary. The course helps students critically analyze and assess environmental issues, engage in environmental communication praxis and reflect on their own environmental perspectives and commitments.

Program Learning Outcomes (University Learning Outcome: Inquiry & Analysis)

Communication Studies: Analyze and evaluate messages utilizing appropriate critical tools.

Environmental Studies: Demonstrate knowledge of current environmental issues in a community context.

Course Learning Outcomes

By the conclusion of the course, you will have:

- 1) Examined your own relationships with the natural world,
- 2) Critically analyzed and assessed representations of the environment,
- 3) Engaged in discussions about the communication of risk and the resolution of environmental conflicts,
- 4) Studied scientific, political, economic and activist approaches to environmental issues, and
- 5) Actively participated in an environmental service project, putting communication principles into practice.

Course Assignments

Homework Assignments (5 at 5 points each)	25 points
Participation Points (5 at 2 points each)	10 points
Quizzes (7 at 5 points each)	35 points
Tracking Consumption (Exercise 1)	15 points
Low Impact Day (Exercise 2)	15 points
Project	10 points
Final Exam	40 points
Total Possible	150 points

94 – 100 %	A
90 – 93 %	A-
88 – 89 %	B+
84 – 87 %	B
80 – 83 %	B-
78 – 79 %	C+
74 – 77 %	C
70 – 73 %	C-
65 – 69 %	D+
60 – 65 %	D
≤ 59%	F

Course Policies

- If you need accommodations for any type of disability, contact the Office of Disability Services (838-8250 v/tty) in APS 405. ods@wou.edu
- Assignments and exercises will be docked 1 point per day after a one-week grace period. Academic misconduct (including the sharing of quiz answers with other students while the quiz is still open) will result in a failing grade for the assignment in question and a report to Campus Judicial Affairs.
- You are encouraged to bring your own specific environmental interests, ideas, questions, concerns, and agendas to bear on class assignments and conversations. It is not your perspective on the issues, but your willingness to engage them, that will determine your success in this class.

DESCRIPTION OF ASSIGNMENTS

Quizzes (5 points each)

Quizzes will include multiple choice or true/false covering the assigned readings and films for the week. You are allowed to use your notes while taking the quizzes.

Participation Points (2 points each)

Participation points are earned by posting to Moodle in response to the instructions/prompts provided in the weekly "Hitchhiker's Guide." These opportunities will encourage your participation in discussions and give you an opportunity to share resources with your classmates. Any participation points you earn beyond the required 10 will be counted as extra credit. You may only be credited once for each prompt.

Homework Assignments (5 points each)

1. Environment Experience Narrative

- In 4-6 typed, double-spaced pages, describe in detail a significant experience that you have had in or with the environment. Similar to the passages by Thoreau, Muir, Leopold, and Carson, use imagery and vivid language to bring the reader into the experience. Describe the experience in detail, noting everything you recall, what you heard/saw/smelled/felt/sensed, and why you think the experience stands out to you.

2. Environmental News Reporting

- Visit the sej.org website and choose a news story from the headlines. Read the complete story (follow the links) and answer Discussion Questions #1 & #2 from p. 180 in your text as they pertain to that story. Note: you need only select one story and answer the questions for that story.

3. Green Advertising and Greenwashing

- Chapter 10 includes three "types of green advertising" and four "images of nature" in green ads. Choose an advertisement that features the environment and explain what type(s) of ad it is and what "commonly employed images of nature" appear. Discuss the implications of the representation in your chosen ad, including whether or not it meets Futerra's "greenwashing" definitions. Post the ad (PDF or link) to the Moodle forum before class.

4. Environmental Justice

- Using a website such as sej.org or a database such as Academic Search Premiere, search for a magazine or news article on an issue that fits the definition of environmental justice or environmental racism from Chapter 13 and other assigned readings. Bring a copy of the article to class and be prepared to discuss why the issue it addresses is an "environmental justice" issue

5. Environmental Discourse Analysis

- Using the rhetorical artifact assigned by the instructor, analyze the rhetor's discourse using at least three concepts from the text, especially Chapters 5 – 8, but feel free to draw from other chapters, as well. Define the concepts and explain how the environmental perspectives, philosophies, rhetorical frames, and other facets of the artifact reveal the worldview of its author. Include quotations from, or descriptions of, the artifact to support your claims. Compare the worldview expressed by the author to your perspective on the topic addressed in the artifact after having taken this class.

Tracking Consumption Exercise (15 points)

Over a 6-day period, track your consumption of resources using the exercise instructions posted to Moodle. At the conclusion of the six days, attach to your tracking record a short summary of your "ecological footprint" based on what you observe (see questions on worksheet for details). Set some goals for minimizing your negative impact on the environment based on your observations.

Low Impact Day (15 points)

Now that you are aware of the natural resource requirements your life entails, you have an opportunity to experience living your life with minimal environmental impact. For this "Low Impact" exercise, you must examine and suspend what may have become habits related to gas, electricity, batteries, transportation, food and drink. For one day (from the time you wake up until you go to bed), you should avoid using any gas, electricity, batteries, or a private vehicle. You are permitted to use non-vehicular transportation (bicycle, chair, skateboard) or mass transit. You also may not consume processed foods, drinks or bottled water (unless required for safety) and should avoid anything with packaging unless you recycle or compost it. Try not to consume any foods that come from more than 200 miles away and make a note of it if you do. Finally, for this one day, you must fulfill any social needs without spending money (you are permitted to use money only to purchase mass transit tickets or fresh, local foods on this day).

Journal about your experience throughout the day, noting where you succeeded, failed, and were challenged. If you break one of the rules, explain which rule you broke, why you *chose to* break it, and what would have to happen for you to be able to follow it for even a single day. Include your reactions to each facet of the assignment and any specific difficulties or dilemmas you experienced. The journal will be evaluated based on the extent to which it demonstrates your effort to follow the rules completely and includes responses to the questions provided on the exercise worksheet posted to Moodle.

Exam (40 points)

The final exam will cover the readings, lecture and/or films as listed in the course schedule. Exams will consist of multiple choice or short answer questions worth 1 point each and essays worth up to 5 points each. Students will be allowed to use notes and coursework, but not textbooks, while taking exams.

Environmental Service Project (10 points)

Over the course of the term, you will engage in a service project that benefits a campus or community partner engaged in positive environmental change. Service project options are listed below; in addition, you are welcome to propose your own individual project. All service projects must be approved in advance by the instructor and will be evaluated through completion of the following components: 1) project proposal (see below), 2) completed project and service partner evaluation, 3) 2-3 page reflection paper describing what you did and how the project impacted you and others, and 4) 1 page project summary or PowerPoint presentation explaining your project and outcomes to your classmates.

Project Options

Note: Due to COVID-19, projects should be done remotely, where possible, or involve substantial human distancing (6 feet or greater) and frequent sanitizing of hands.

- **Volunteer for a campus or community-based environmental organization.** Choose an organization that operates in your neighborhood, county, or state; volunteer and serve the organization for roughly 8-10 hours. You must turn in a 2-3 page summary or journal of your time spent with the organization with a focus on the communication dynamics, challenges and strategies of the organization/project. You must also submit a service partner evaluation. Include any other documentation acquired as part of the project (training, certification, materials, etc.).

Campus Garden. Participate in WOU's campus garden. Learn about organic gardening, composting, soil amendment, and pest mitigation all while getting dirty and growing great food. All equipment provided, along with instruction/direction. Contact: Jackson Stalley (stalleyj@wou.edu; 838-8894).

WOU Earth Week. This project requires a tremendous amount of work up front (Earth Day is April 22) but is an excellent way to raise consciousness (and get your project done early!). Brainstorm ways of spreading the message of Earth Day throughout the campus and community and participate in online Earth Day actions. Construct a visual or narrative representation of the history of Earth Day at WOU, in

Oregon, or in the United States to share on the WOU Environmental Club's facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/WOUenvironmentalclub/>)

SOLVE Community Clean-ups. Work with SOLVE (www.solveoregon.org) to improve the environment through beach, community, and stream restoration activities across the state. In addition to volunteering for at least two SOLVE events, assist with the recruitment of other volunteers, photograph and write up the event for a local newspaper, and/or lend your particular talents to the organization in a way that helps them to improve their communication with volunteers and with the public. *SOLVE has cancelled all community events through April but you can do individual cleanups along roadways (contact the LWC below to volunteer for litter removal on their stretch of road!), on beaches, riverways or in the community (streets, parks, etc.). Maintain social distancing and take pics of yourself and the litter you collect on your route(s) to document your project.

Luckiamute Watershed Council. Volunteer with the LWC (www.luckiamutelwc.org) working on a number of community-based environmental initiatives, social media postings, and fundraising/donor identification. Contact: Kristen Larson or Suzanne Teller.

- **Conduct an environmental assessment of your workplace.** Conduct a thorough environmental assessment of your workplace (see the instructor for additional instructions and helpful information). Submit a summary of your findings in a formal proposal. Include an estimation of budget impacts of your recommendations and address the proposal with a cover letter to an organizational leader in a decision-making capacity at your workplace. Conclude the proposal by identifying possible actions that could be taken immediately, and offer an environmental communication plan for encouraging positive environmental behavior change in your workplace. Submit your proposal and contact information (phone or email) for your workplace supervisor (the person to whom the proposal is submitted).

Project Proposals are due by the end of the second week of class and should answer the following questions:

1. What do you plan to do? What communication skills will help you to be successful?
2. Who is your project contact (name, email, phone number, address) and what is your anticipated schedule to complete the work during the term.
3. What community/communities could benefit from your project and how will they benefit? How will you, personally and professionally, benefit from the project?
4. What information have you gathered? Do some research and include a list of resources, websites, etc. that you have consulted or intend to consult for the project.
5. What criteria do you think should be used to evaluate the success of your project? (be specific!)

Class Schedule, Readings, and Due Dates

Week 1

- 4/2 Course Introduction & Overview: What is Environmental Communication?
Start on Assignment 1
Conference call from 2 - 3 p.m. (see Welcome Letter for instructions)
Read Chapter 1 and Appendix
Take Quiz 1 by Sunday at midnight.
View Film: *Bag It* (film worksheet is for note-taking purposes).

Week 2

- 4/7 Read Chapter 2 & Timeline at end of text
Assignment 1 due
Tracking Exercise Assigned
- 4/9 **Project Proposal due**
Take Quiz 2 by Sunday at midnight.
View: The Poisoned Dream

Week 3

- 4/14 Read Chapters 3 & 4
Low Impact Day exercise assigned (due at end of week 9).
View Film: *A Fierce Green Fire* (film worksheet is for note-taking purposes).
- 4/16 View Film: *Necessity* (film worksheet is for note-taking purposes).
Tracking Consumption Exercise due by Sunday at midnight

Week 4

- 4/21 Read Chapter 5 **EARTH DAY is April 22nd!**
View Film: *Chasing Ice* (film worksheet is for note-taking purposes).
- 4/23 View Film: *This Changes Everything* (film worksheet is for note-taking purposes).
Take Quiz 3 by Sunday at midnight.

Week 5

- 4/28 Read Chapters 6 & 7
Conference Call from 2-3 p.m. (workplace assessment) or 3-4 p.m. (all other projects).
See the "Guide to Week 5" for conference call instructions and details.
- 4/30 View Film: *The Last Mountain* (film worksheet is for note-taking purposes).
Take Quiz 4 by Sunday at midnight.

Week 6

- 5/5 Read Chapter 8
View Film: *Gasland II* (film worksheet is for note-taking purposes).
View TedTalks: "The Toxic Baby" & "What's Wrong with What We Eat?" & clip from *Food, Inc*
- 5/7 Read Bloomberg article on Fracking Chemicals
Take Quiz 5 by Sunday at midnight.

Week 7

- 5/12 Read Chapter 9
Assignment 2 due
- 5/14 Read Chapter 10 & Futerra Greenwash Guide
View Film: *Green Marketing: How Green is It?*
Assignment 3 due

Week 8

- 5/19 Read Chapter 11
View Film: *The Lorax*
- 5/21 Review presentation: "Internatural Communication"
View film: *To the Orcas, with Love*
Take Quiz 6 by Sunday at midnight.

Week 9

- 5/26 Read Chapter 12
View Films: *Before the Flood* & *Urban Roots* (film worksheet is for note-taking purposes).
Take Quiz 7 by Sunday at midnight.
- 5/28 Read Chapter 13
Assignment 4 due
View *Environmental Justice* from Meridian Hill Pictures
View "Toxins in Poor Neighborhoods" segment & "Greening the Ghetto"
Low Impact Day exercise due by Sunday at midnight

Week 10

- 6/2 View Film: *No Impact Man* (film worksheet is for note-taking purposes).
Post project presentation or summary. Confirm partner evaluation has been submitted.
- 6/4 Conference Call: Final Exam Review & all other questions! 2 – 4 p.m. See "Guide to Week 10" for details.
Assignment 5 due

Finals Week:

- 6/9 COM 380 final is on Tuesday from 12 – 1:50 p.m. Contact me & ODS if you need additional time to complete the final exam. **Submit project reflection paper (& deadline for all late assignments).**