

COM 436: ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION
William Kinsella, Associate Professor of Communication
Syllabus Updated April 2009

* If you print this syllabus, please print double-sided if possible *

Class Meets: Twice Weekly, 75-minute sessions

Prerequisite: COM 230 or STS 214

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Office Hours: As posted for each semester

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

Environmental communication is an area of growing interest within the communication discipline; this course provides an overview of its theoretical approaches, research literature, and practical applications. Topics include:

- The social construction of nature, and human relationships with nature, through discourse, rhetoric, and communication practices
- Critical and cultural approaches to environmental discourse
- Communication about environmental issues in organizational, mass media, political, and international contexts
- Communication in environmental controversies; stakeholder dialog, and conflict
- Public understanding of environmental issues; public participation in environmental decision-making; expert-public-government dialog
- Environmental risk communication
- Communication in environmental advocacy, deliberation, and public relations

STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Identify ways in which public discourses socially construct relationships between nature and humans
- Demonstrate an understanding of critical and cultural approaches to environmental communication
- Identify and implement communication skills relevant to disseminating environmental information in organizational, political, and international contexts
- Identify key issues in environmental conflicts, risk communication, and democratic participation in policy-making
- Demonstrate an ability to critically evaluate environmental advocacy, deliberation, and public relations

COURSE TEXT AND READINGS

Cox, R. (2006). Environmental communication and the public sphere. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
Additional readings on library e-reserve, as listed below.

COURSE COMPONENTS AND GRADING

Readings, class discussions, and overall participation	20 points
First response paper	10 points
Second response paper	10 points
First exam	20 points
Second exam	20 points
Research project	20 point

A+: 97-100 points	A: 93-96.9 points	A-: 90-92.9 points
B+: 87-89.9 points	B: 83-86.9 points	B-: 80-82.9 points
C+: 77-77.9 points	C: 73-76.9 points	C-: 70-72.9 points
D+: 67-69.9 points	D: 63-66.9 points	D-: 60-62.9 points
F: below 60 points		

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Strict standards of academic honesty will be enforced according to the University policy on academic integrity found in the code of student conduct. NC State Students are bound to an honor code, which states: "I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this test or assignment." It is my understanding and expectation that a student's signature on any test or assignment means that you have neither given nor received unauthorized aid. Please consult the following website for further details: http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/student_services/student_discipline/POL11.35.1.php.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for students with verifiable disabilities. In order to take advantage of available accommodations, students must register with Disability Services for Students at 1900 Student Health Center, Campus Box 7509, 515-7653. For more information on NC State's policy on working with students with disabilities, please see the Academic Accommodations for Students with Disabilities Regulation (REG02.20.1):

http://www.ncsu.edu/policies/academic_affairs/courses_undergrad/REG02.20.1.php

DEPARTMENTAL EQUITY STATEMENT

All persons, regardless of age, race, religion, gender, physical disability, or sexual orientation shall have equal opportunity without harassment in Department of Communication courses and programs. Any harassment should be reported immediately to either the classroom instructor or the department head.

STUDENT RESOURCES

Writing and Speaking Tutorial Services: www.ncsu.edu/tutorial_center/writespeak/index.htm

Academic Policies: www.ncsu.edu/policies/sitemap.php#acad-pols_regs

NCSU Energy and Environmental Information: <http://energy.ncsu.edu/>

Wolfpack Environmental Student Association: <http://clubs.ncsu.edu/wesa/>

TOPICS AND READINGS

(Subject to revision throughout the semester)

Part I: Rhetoric, Discourse, and “the Environment”

Session 1: Introduction and Expectations

Session 2: The study of Environmental Communication

Cox, introduction & chapter 1 (43 pages)

Carson, R. (1962). *Silent spring*. New York: Fawcett. [pp. 21-22 & 31-32, excerpt on e-reserve]

Session 3: Communication, Crisis, and *Kairos*

Killingsworth, M. J., & Palmer, J. (1996). Millennial ecology: The apocalyptic narrative from *Silent Spring* to *Global Warming*. In C. J. Herndl & S. C. Brown (Eds.), *Green culture: Environmental rhetoric in contemporary America* (pp. 21-45). Madison: University of Wisconsin Press. [e-reserve]

Session 4: Rhetorically Shaping the Environment

Cox, chapter 2 (33 pages)

Session 5: Concepts of “Nature” and “Environment”

Muir, J. (1911). A wind-storm in the forests. In J. Muir, *The mountains of California*. New York: Century. [pp. 116-121, excerpt on e-reserve]

Oravec, C. (1994). To stand outside oneself: The sublime in the discourse of natural scenery. In J. G. Cantrill & C. L. Oravec (Eds.), *The symbolic Earth: Discourse and our creation of the environment* (pp. 58-75). Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky. [e-reserve]

Session 6: Aesthetics and Ethics

Abbey, E. (1968). *Desert solitaire: A season in the wilderness*. New York: Ballantine. [pp. 1-16 & 48-73, excerpt on e-reserve]

Devall, B., & Sessions, G. (1985). *Deep ecology: Living as if nature mattered*. Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith Books. [pp. 63-77, excerpt on e-reserve]

Session 7: Deep Ecology and Critical Theory

Naess, A. (2005). The basics of deep ecology. *The Trumpeter*, 21(1), 61-71. [e-reserve]

White, L. (1967). The historical roots of our environmental crisis. *Science*, 155(3767), 1203-1207 [direct electronic access]

Session 8: Anthropocentrism vs. Ecocentrism

Hardin, G. (1968). The tragedy of the commons. *Science*, 162(3859), 1243-1248. [e-reserve]

Gelbspan, R. (1998). The coming permanent state of emergency. In R. Gelbspan, *The heat is on: The climate crisis, the cover-up, the prescription* (pp. 153-170). Reading, MA: Perseus. [e-reserve]

Part II: The Environmental Public Sphere; Environmental Conflict and Controversy

Session 9: Public Participation in Environmental Decisions

Cox, chapter 3 (37 pages)

Senecah, S. L. (2004). The trinity of voice: The role of practical theory in planning and evaluating the effectiveness of environmental participatory processes. In S. P. Depoe, J. W. Delicath, & M-F. Elsenbeer (Eds.), *Communication in environmental decision making: Advances in theory and practice* (pp. 13-33). Albany, NY: SUNY Press. [e-reserve]

Session 10: First Exam (readings from sessions 2-8)

Session 11: Environmental Justice (Preview)

Bullard, R. D. (1994). *Dumping on Dixie: Race, class, and environmental quality*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press. [chapters 1 & 6 on e-reserve, 33 pages]

Session 12: Conflict, Collaboration, and Consensus

Cox, chapter 4 (30 pages)

Peterson, M. N., Peterson, M. J., & Peterson, T. R. (2005). Conservation and the myth of consensus. *Conservation Biology*, 19(3), 762-767.

Session 13: Collaborative Learning

Daniels, S. E., & Walker, G. B. (2001). *Working through environmental conflict: The collaborative learning approach*. Westport, CT: Praeger. [excerpt on e-reserve, 42 pages]

Session 14: Environmental Conflict as Moral Conflict

Pearce, W.B., & Littlejohn, S. (1997). *Moral conflict: When social worlds collide*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [excerpt on e-reserve, 33 pages]

Fisher, W. R. (1994). A case: Public moral argument. In R. Anderson, K. N. Cissna, & R. C. Arnett (Eds.), *The reach of dialog: Confirmation, voice, and community* (pp 173-177). Columbia: University of South Carolina Press. [e-reserve]

Short, B. (1991): Earth First! and the rhetoric of moral confrontation. *Communication Studies*, 42, 172-188. [e-reserve]

Part III. Institutional Actors: Journalism, Mass Media, Science, Risk, Advocacy, and Corporations

Session 15: Media Representations

Cox, chapter 5 (30 pages)

Lange, J. I. (1993). The logic of competing information campaigns: Conflict over old growth and the spotted owl. *Communication Monographs*, 60, 239-257. [e-reserve, also direct electronic access]

Session 16: Environmental Journalism

Friedman, S. M. (2004). And the beat goes on: The third decade of environmental journalism. In S. Senecah (Ed.), *Environmental Communication Yearbook, vol. 1* (pp. 175-187). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. [e-reserve]

Shanahan, J., & McComas, K. (1999). Issue cycles and global climate change. In J. Shanahan & K. McComas, *Nature stories: Depictions of the environment and their effects* (pp. 147-168). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press. [e-reserve]

Session 17: Public Sphere or Public Screen?

De Luca, K. M. (1999). *Image politics: The new rhetoric of environmental activism*. New York: Guilford. [excerpts on e-reserve, 53 pages]
Chapter 1: "Making waves"; Chapter 5: "Participatory democracy in enemy territory"

Session 18: Communication, Risk, and Society

Cox, chapter 6 (28 pages)

Hannigan, J. A. (1995). Constructing environmental risks. In J. A. Hannigan, *Environmental sociology: A social constructionist perspective* (pp. 92-108). New York: Routledge. [e-reserve]

Session 19: Response Paper Due; Brief Presentations in Class (Readings from sections 9-17)Session 20: Living in a Risk Society

Beck, U. (1992). On the logic of wealth distribution and risk distribution. In U. Beck, *Risk society: Towards a new modernity* (pp. 19-50). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. [e-reserve]

MacIlwaine, C. (2006). Safe and sound? *Nature*, 442, 242-243 (20 July). [direct electronic access]

Session 21: Two Nuclear Examples

Katz, S. B., & Miller, C. M. (1996). The low-level radioactive waste-siting controversy in North Carolina: Toward a rhetorical model of risk communication. In C. G. Herndl & S. C. Brown (Eds.), *Green culture: Environmental rhetoric in contemporary America* (pp. 111-139). [e-reserve]

Kinsella, W. J. (2001). Nuclear boundaries: Material and discursive containment at the Hanford nuclear reservation. *Science as Culture*, 10(2), 163-194. [e-reserve, also direct electronic access]

Session 22: Environmental Advocacy

Cox, chapter 7 (36 pages)

Session 23: Environmental Justice (continued)

Cox, chapter 8 (34 pages)

Tokar, B (1997). Environmental justice. Chapter 6 in B. Tokar, *Earth for sale: Reclaiming ecology in the age of corporate greenwash* (pp. 125-140). Boston: South End Press. [e-reserve]

Roy, A. (1999). The greater common good. *Frontline*, 16(11) available at www.flonnet.com/fl1611/16110040.htm

Session 24: Second Exam (readings from sessions 18-23)

Session 25: Science, Legitimacy, and the Role of Expertise

Kinsella, W. J. (2004). Public expertise: A foundation for citizen participation in energy and environmental decisions. In S. P. Depoe, J. W. Delicath, & M. A. Elsenbeer (Eds.), *Communication and public participation in environmental decision making* (pp. 83-95). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press. [e-reserve]

Session 26: Advocacy and Engagement in Action

Richardson, M., Sherman, J., & Gismondi, M. (1993). *Winning back the words: Confronting experts in an environmental public hearing*. Toronto: Garamond Press. [excerpt on e-reserve, 32 pages]

Peterson, T. R. (1997). Subverting the culture of expertise: Community participation in development decisions. In T. R. Peterson, *Sharing the Earth: The rhetoric of sustainable development* (pp. 86-118). Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press. [e-reserve]

Session 27: The Corporate Connection

Cox, chapter 10 (38 pages)

Feller, W. Y. (2004). Blue skies, green industry: Corporate environmental reports as utopian narratives. In S. Senecah (Ed.), *Environmental Communication Yearbook, vol. 1* (pp. 57-76). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum. [e-reserve]

Session 28: Going Green vs. Greenwashing

Beder, S. (2002). *Global spin: The corporate assault on environmentalism*. White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green. [chapters 7 & 8 on e-reserve, 40 pages]

Tokar, B. (1997). Trading away the Earth. Chapter 2 in B. Tokar, *Earth for sale: Reclaiming ecology in the age of corporate greenwash* (pp. 33-55) Boston: South End Press. [e-reserve]

Session 29: Second Response Paper Due (Readings from sessions 24-28); Closing Discussion

Final Exam Period: Group Research Project Presentations (activity approved by Communication department head)

WWW: WEBSITES WORTH WATCHING

www.esf.edu/ecn Environmental Communication Network, with links to the National Communication Association's Environmental Communication Division and the Biennial Conference on Communication and the Environment (COCE)

www.uc.edu/cecs/cecs.html Center for Environmental Communication Studies, U Cincinnati

www.nau.edu/~soc-p/ecrc Environmental Communication Resource Center, Northern Arizona U

<http://www.colorado.edu/journalism/cej/> Center for Environmental Journalism, U Colorado, Boulder

<http://www.virginia.edu/ien/> Institute for Environmental Negotiation, University of Virginia

www.ieer.org Institute for Energy and Environmental Research, Tacoma Park, Maryland

www.rachel.org/home_eng.htm Environmental Research Foundation and *Rachel's News*

www.ems.org Environmental Media Services

www.sej.org Society of Environmental Journalists

www.greenpeace.org Greenpeace www.sierraclub.org Sierra Club

www.rmi.org Rocky Mountain Institute www.apolloalliance.org Apollo Alliance

<http://www.bredl.org/> Blue Ridge Environmental Defense League

www.circleoflife.org Circle of Life / Julia Butterfly Hill

www.realclimate.org Climate science and global warming website

www.heatisonline.org Ross Gelbspan's global warming website

www.scorecard.org and www.environmentaldefense.org Environmental Defense

www.epa.gov U.S. Environmental Protection Agency www.nepa.gov National Environmental Policy Act

www.energy.gov U.S. Dept. of Energy www.eia.doe.gov Energy Information Administration

<http://zerofootprint.net/> Zero Footprint global warming solutions

<http://www.earthlab.com/> EarthLab Foundation carbon footprint calculator

<http://envirovideo.com/> Enviro Video

<http://www.ecotopia.org/ehof/timeline.html> Environmental movement timeline

<http://www.ces-surrey.org.uk/> Centre for Environmental Strategy, University of Surrey

http://www.sed.manchester.ac.uk/research/beyond_nimbyism/index.htm Beyond NIMBYism

<http://www.climatechange.gov/> U.S. Climate Change Science Program

<http://www.climatechangecommunication.org/> Center for Climate Change Communication, George Mason University

<http://greencitizenship.blogspot.com/> Electronic Waste and Media Citizenship

<http://www.iap2.org/> International Association for Public Participation

<http://content.usatoday.com/news/nation/environment/smokestack/interactive/4> Air Pollution and Schools

<http://home.ca.inter.net/~greenweb/> Green Web