

CMN 4030: Environmental Communication

Fall 2012

Dr. Marita Gronnvoll

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Class meets: T/TH 9:30-10:45, Coleman 1210

Office: Coleman Hall 1753

Office Hours: Tuesday 12:30-2:30, Thursday 2:30-4:30, and by appointment.

Course Overview

This course investigates environmental communication, focusing on persuasive efforts by institutions, corporations, movement leaders, scientific experts, politicians and citizens to describe, persuade, and shape human interactions with the environment. As we move toward the twenty-first century, it is critically important that citizens are able to assess competing claims and appeals about the environment.

Course Objectives

- To develop your ability to describe, analyze, and evaluate public communication. To enable you to ask questions about the nature of communication and media that reflect a developed schema of understanding.
- To increase your awareness of environmental issues, including the strategies and arguments used by groups, institutions, the media, and key individuals.
- To empower action in the face of highly complex and often puzzling ecological relationships. Rather than teaching you science, this course seeks to increase your understanding of how scientists and politicians persuade the public about environmental issues, thereby enhancing your effectiveness as a citizen (Action).

Readings

Readings must be completed before you attend class on the day that they are scheduled. Currently, I do not have reading quizzes scheduled, but reserve the right to institute them if it becomes apparent that students are not keeping up with their reading.

Required Readings

Cox, Robert, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, 3rd Edition

Other readings uploaded to D2L

Policies

The Department of Communication Studies has published a document outlining student standards and expectations. All students are expected to be familiar with this document. It can be accessed by following this link:

<http://www.eiu.edu/~commstudies/documents/Student%20Expectations%20and%20Standards.pdf>

Class Climate

Because of the ways in which nature and the environment have been framed for millennia, some of you will undoubtedly have strong reactions to some of our readings and issues—strong reactions are not discouraged. However, the ways in which reactions get framed and presented must be respectful and civil. In order for us all to glean the most from this course, we must create an environment in which individuals feel comfortable speaking their minds and relaying their experiences. Constructive criticism and responses are welcome (and expected). Disrespect of any kind—including discriminatory speech that creates a hostile environment with respect to race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, national origin, age, religion, or ability—cannot be tolerated.

Attendance

I do not have an attendance policy for this class. Come to class, don't come to class, it's entirely up to you. Participation points are given for both the quality and quantity of your participation. Quality means that you are attentive, respectful, and not engaging in so-called multi-tasking during class (e.g., texting, internet surfing, doing homework for other classes, sleeping, etc.). Quantity means that I expect every student to contribute to class discussions on a regular basis. So if you are not here habitually, your participation will necessarily suffer. You may not make up any work you have missed in class, including quizzes, so it is in your best interest to be present in class. Participation grades are given at my discretion and are not subject to dispute. You begin this class with 100 points in participation and they are yours to lose.

Academic Integrity

It is expected that all students have read and understood the University Student Conduct Code. If you have misplaced your copy, you can obtain one at <http://www.eiu.edu/~judicial/conductcode.pdf>. It is of utmost importance that you understand what is meant by cheating, facilitating academic dishonesty, fabrication, plagiarism, etc. It is also important for you to understand your rights should I, or any other instructor, accuse you of academic dishonesty. Every graded assignment, unless otherwise indicated, requires you to do original, independent, and creative work. In addition to copying someone else's words or ideas, reusing your own work from other courses is considered academic dishonesty. At various times in the semester, you will be asked to summarize the materials of others – if you are using more than 3 words that text, they need to be in quotation marks and include the corresponding page number. Violation of the Code will result in swift and severe consequences – typically, failure for both the assignment and the course. All cases of academic dishonesty will be reported to

Student Judicial Affairs where they will become part of your permanent academic record. Cheating is just not worth it.

Electronic Devices

Electronic devices such as cell phones, laptop computers, and iPods have made our lives much easier and more enjoyable. But they have also become a scourge in the classroom. Texting, surfing the Internet (such as Facebooking or downloading music), and “discreetly” listening to iPods shows great disrespect for me and for your fellow students who are distracted by this conduct. In keeping with this climate of respect, **please turn off all phones and iPods (or similar clones) before class begins. If you take notes on a laptop, I expect you to show respect for me and your classmates by not surfing the internet during class.** If you absolutely must make a call or send a text, leave the room. Please do not think you can discreetly text in class and that I won’t notice. I do notice, and few things as an instructor irritate me more than students who blatantly demonstrate their lack of engagement with class discussion.

Trust me, you can disconnect from your friends for 75 minutes and nothing terrible will happen to you. If your friends cannot understand this, you need new friends.

Disability Concerns

If you have a documented disability and wish to discuss academic accommodations, please contact the Office of Disability Services at 581-6583.

E-Mail Policy

Students are expected to check their Panther e-mail on a frequent and consistent basis in order to stay current with departmental and course communications. I send out e-mail reminders and announcements on occasion so please check your e-mail daily. Students have the responsibility to recognize that certain communications may be time-critical. “I didn’t check my e-mail,” errors in foreign mail accounts, or e-mail that is returned to the professor/department with “mailbox full” or “use unknown” are not acceptable excuses for missing course/department communications sent via e-mail.

Deadlines

Please pay close attention to deadlines as you will be held to them. Assignments will be due at the beginning of class on the days listed. Late work slipped under my door, in my mailbox, or sent by e-mail attachment will not be accepted. This policy is in place to assist you in your life—deadlines are important and reflect on your credibility and professionalism. We all depend upon machines to get our work done. We all know that machines break down. When they do, it does not constitute an “excuse” or an “emergency.” It is expected that you will prepare your assignments far enough in advance so that when your computer or printer malfunctions (as they

inevitably will) you will still have time to rectify the problem and turn in the assignment **on time**. “On Time” means at the beginning of class on that specific due date.

If you have something truly catastrophic happen in your life, I am willing to work with you. However, **you** must take the professional steps of contacting me **before** the deadline to make arrangements with me personally. Please do not wait until the night after your scheduled deadline to call and tell me that you were feeling ill – this is not professional or respectful and will not result in lenience.

Grading/Quality of Work

Grade Disputes: Grade disputes are rare, but they do happen. I am certainly willing to discuss graded materials with you. It is expected that you approach a grade dispute being completely aware of the requirements for the assignment, and having read my argument for why you received the grade in the first place. I also expect you to have a well-articulated argument for why you believe the grade you received was unfair. We will abide by the **“24-hour rule.”** This means that after you’ve received the grade, you must reflect upon it for 24 hours before you attempt to e-mail me or talk to me about your grade. After one week, all grades are final.

Please note: I will not discuss grades over e-mail or telephone, and I will not discuss your grades in reference to anyone else in the class. You are not graded against others, and everyone is evaluated based on their individual contributions to the learning environment. If you are concerned about your progress for any reason, please come talk to me so we can determine how best to augment your learning.

All written assignments need to follow these basic guidelines (unless otherwise noted):

- Your layout should include 1” margins, a 12 point font, and be double-spaced.
- Use quotations meaningfully. While you are strongly encouraged to incorporate helpful quotations and passages, they do not substitute for your analysis of the materials.
- Proofread your paper carefully for language choices, grammar, and spelling.
- Include a bibliography that follows MLA format.

Assignments

Please note: All assignments are mandatory. Failure to turn in any assignment, regardless of where you stand in the class, will result in receiving a failing grade for the entire course.

Response Papers (10 due, total 200 points): These 1-2 page journal-type papers will react to the readings from that week. “A” quality papers engage in higher level thinking, making connections between readings for the week, and between readings and class discussions, and make applications to issues in the world (NOT your personal life). Please note: Simply writing one paragraph and filling the rest of the page with “packing peanuts” (e.g., big heading, lots of white space) will earn a zero for the assignment, no matter how insightful that paragraph is. You have a response paper due for the readings on your schedule that are followed by an asterisk.

Critical Film Review (100 points): There are numerous films that have environmental issues as their themes, and thus communicate a particular worldview about the environment/nature. For this assignment, you will watch one film on your own (which you have cleared with me first), and write a critical analysis of that film using class concepts to guide your criticism. Note: I am not asking you to write a review of the film like you would see in a newspaper or on-line. The issue is not whether you would recommend the film to others. Your task is to critically reflect on the messages in the film and what those messages communicate about the environment. On the days the papers are due, we will take time in class to discuss your key findings.

Class Facilitation (100 points): You will select one day where you will lead the class discussion on the reading(s) for that day. Your job is to teach the readings, but more importantly to engage the class in discussion about the central arguments of the article/book chapter. You are encouraged to incorporate multimedia in your presentation to make it more interesting to the class. No later than the class period prior to your presentation, you will upload discussion questions to the appropriate discussion thread in D2L for the entire class to access.

Course Paper & Presentation (150 paper, 50 presentation): This 8-12 page research paper will examine a particular environmental controversy of your choosing (although you will clear your topic with me ahead of time). There are many environmental controversies both presently ongoing and in the past. Your research will provide a history/overview of the controversy, examine the rhetoric emerging from all sides of the controversy, and critically analyze the arguments. Your job is NOT to attack one side or the other in an effort to support your personal belief. If one side has a weaker argument than the other, it will be obvious through your scholarly analysis, supported by your research.

Class presentation: 50 points of your course paper will rest upon your presentation of your work to the class. Presentations are mandatory, and no final papers will be accepted without accompanying presentations. Presentations will be scheduled for the day the university has scheduled a final exam for our class.

Participation (100 points): This course will be a challenging one and will benefit students who are motivated to read, write, and engage in discussion. Merely attending class is not the same as actively participating. If you attend everyday but rarely engage in the materials in a way that is responsive to others in the class, you will earn a poor participation grade by the end of the semester. Likewise, if you are not in class, you certainly cannot engage our discussions fully. So, come to class PREPARED – meaning having read and ready to speak about what you have read in an engaged manner. Since there is no attendance policy for this class, this category is where you feel a tangible result if you do not attend class.

Reading Schedule

Note: It is expected that you will read the text(s) BEFORE coming to class for the day, that will take notes on your readings, and that you will bring the readings with you to class so we can discuss them fully. We may alter some of the readings as the semester progresses depending upon the needs of the class.

Cox: *Environmental Communication* D2L: Readings uploaded to Desire2Learn

8/21: Introductions and course overview

8/23: Cox, Introduction and Chapter 1

8/28: Cox, Chapter 2

8/30: D2L: Oravec, "To Stand Outside Oneself"*

9/4: Tour of Renewable Energy Center*

9/6: Discussion of tour

9/11: Cox, Chapter 3

9/13: D2L: DeLuca & Demo, "Imaging Nature"*

9/18: Cox, Chapter 4

9/20: D2L: Peterson, Peterson, & Peterson, "Conservation and the Myth of Consensus"*

9/25: Movie: *Wall-E*

9/27: Finish movie and discuss

10/2: Cox, Chapter 5

10/4: D2L: Lange, "The Logic of Competing Information Campaigns"*

10/9: Cox, Chapter 6

10/11: D2L: Kim, "Public Understanding of the Politics of Global Warming in the News Media"*

10/16: Cox, Chapter 7

10/18: **Critical Film Review paper due, and discussion**

10/23: Cox, Chapter 8

10/25: D2L: DeLuca, “Unruly Bodies”*

10/30: Movie

11/1: Finish movie and discuss

11/6: Cox, Chapter 9

11/8: D2L: Pezzullo, “Touring ‘Cancer Alley’, Louisiana”*

11/13: Cox, Chapter 10

11/15: D2L: Pezzullo, “Resisting National Breast Cancer Awareness Month”*

11/19-11/23 NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

11/27: Cox, Chapter 11

11/29: D2L: Ceccarelli, “Manufactured Scientific Controversy”*

12/4: Cox, Chapter 12

12/6: Reflection & review

Final Presentations and Course Papers due, Wednesday, December 12, 2012, 8:00-10:00 am