

New York University
Department of Media, Culture, and Communication & Environmental Studies
Environmental Communication
MCC-UE 1027.001
ENVST-UA 450.003

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Classroom location: Waverly 369

Class meeting times: Tu/Th 9:30 – 10:45am *sharp*

Office hours: immediately after class & other times by appointment

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course will investigate the dominant critical perspectives that have contributed to the development of Environmental Communication as a field of study through hands-on involvement. This course explores the premise that the way we communicate powerfully impacts our perceptions of the “natural” world, and influences, even dictates, how we define and solve environmental problems. The goal of this course is to access various conceptual frameworks for addressing questions about the relationship between culture, communication, and environmental problems. Students will learn to scope problems, frame issues, scale problems, understand the relationships between for(u)m(s) and functions, use environmental tactics, and design metrics to evaluate the success of communication campaigns. We will cover the following topics: advocacy and public participation, awareness and behavior change, consumption and boy/buycotts, environmental justice and sustainability, social media, visual culture, science and policy, and environmental rhetoric. This is a praxis-based course, meaning that a major, hands-on communication project will be based on critical theory.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The course will address the following questions: How are environmental problems mediated and defined within the public realm? How do these rhetorical and visual discourses structure our relationship to environmental crises? How can students create a communication strategy that frames environmental problems in a specific way in order to align the problem with appropriate solutions?

By the end of this course, students will:

- Identify the role of discourse, rhetoric and representation in shaping the way we think about the natural world & environmental problems.
- Describe how communication plays a significant role in the framing and discussion of environmental problems and solutions.
- Analyze and engage in debates about local, national and global environmental solutions.
- Critically examine the way recent environmental concerns are represented to the public.

- Critique contemporary debates about environmentalism by framing them from the perspective of cultural analysis.
- Critically engage with the way problems, solutions, and the mechanisms between them are constructed in environmental discourse.
- Synthesize critical theory in order to create an environmental communication strategy for an environmental cause.
- Learn and practice collaboration.
- Learn, use, and facilitate social justice communication methods.

ASSIGNMENTS AND EVALUATION

You are responsible for the material covered in lecture and in the reading. You will be evaluated on (1) the level of your engagement with the class materials (as evidenced in your written work and class participation) (2) your capacity to explain your ideas and analysis in articulate and well-written forms that address the frameworks learned in class (3) and your ability to creatively explore these theories and methodologies individually and within your group. Rubrics will be used for evaluating all assignments, and they will be available to students when assignments are introduced.

Students are expected to do all readings in preparation for class and to participate fully in class discussions. Work for the class will consist of group-produced blog posts that relate the readings, one analytical assignment, one midterm proposal (which will be the basis of your final project) and a final group communication project on an approved topic of your choosing related to the course materials.

In class participation (including consensus writing project)	10%
Blog posts	10%
Analytical assignment	15%
Midterm Proposal	15%
Final Project	50%

REQUIRED TEXTS

R. Cox. *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*. Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi: Sage, 2010. *Second-hand, please,* which means probably the second, rather than the third, edition. No first editions.

Other texts available as PDFs on Blackboard, or via Bobst's electronic journal collection.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES, READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Section 1: Social-Symbolic Constructions of the Environment, its Problems and Solutions.

Week1: Introducing Environmental Communication

Class 1: Introductions, Overview, Choosing Groups, Collaboration Rubric

Class 2: Introduction to the field

- Tema Milstein, "Environmental Communication Theories," in Stephen W. Littlejohn and Karen A. Foss, eds. *Encyclopedia of Communication Theory*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009. Pp. 344-49.
- Cox, R. *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2010. (Introduction & CH1, "Studying Environmental Communication, pp. 1-43 in second edition, 1-58 in third edition)

Week 2: Discourse and Framing

Class 1: Introduction to Framing

- Lakoff, George (2010). "Why it Matters How We Frame the Environment," *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture*, 4(1): 70-81.
- Cox, "Social/Symbolic Constructions of Environment," pp. 45-79 in second edition, 59-80 in third edition.
- Guest pitch: Jeremy Friedman of NYU Office of Sustainability

Class 2: Defining Environmental Issues: Wicked Problems

- Rittel, H., Melvin Webber. (1973). "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning." *Policy Sciences* 4: 155-169.
- Agyeman, Julian. (2007). Communicating "Just Sustainability", *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture*, 1(2): 119-122.
- Go over analysis assignment

Week 3: Rhetoric

Class 1: Verbal Rhetoric

Killingsworth, M. & Palmer, J. (1992). *Ecospeak: Rhetoric and environmental politics in America*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press. (Ch 1).

Class 2: Visual Culture

- Delicath, J. W. and K. M. DeLuca. (2003). "Image Events, the Public Sphere, and Argumentative Practice: The Case of Radical Environmental Groups." *Argumentation* 17(3): 315-333.
- Watch: Jordan, Chris. (2011). Midway: Trailer: a film by Chris Jordan.
www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ai3IKO_afqs

Section 2: Voices in the Public Sphere

Week 4: Publics

Class 1: What is a public and why do they form?

- Bennett, T., L. Grossberg, et al. (2005). "Public" in *New Keywords: A Revised Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. Malden, MA, Blackwell Pub: 283-285.
- Schollmeier, Paul. (2008). "What is a Public?" *Social and Political Philosophy* 50: 721-728.

Class 2: Framing Publics via Justice

- Cox, "Environmental Justice" pp 263-296 in second edition, pp 245-282 in third edition.
- Look up definitions of justice on Wikipedia and other online sources

Week 5: Forums for Public Participation

Class 1: Forums

- Cox, "Public Participation" pp 81-118 in second edition, pp 81-110 in third edition.

Class 2: Collaboration and Conflict Resolution

- Cox, "Conflict Resolution and Collaboration" pp. 119-148 in second edition, pp. 111-140 in third edition.
- Wooley, A et al. (2010). "Evidence for a Collective Intelligence Factor in the Performance of Human Groups." *Science* 330(6004): 686-688.
<http://www.sciencemag.org/content/330/6004/686.full>
- Workshop on collaboration in our class.

Week 6: Voices in Public

Class 3: News and Journalism

- Cox, "News Media and Environmental Journalism," pp 141-170 in third edition.

Class 4: Science and Scientists

- Cox, "Science Communication," pp 297-330 in second edition, pp 317-348 in third edition.
- O'Brien, M. (1993). "Being a Scientist Means Taking Sides," *BioScience* 43(10): 706-708.
- Optional: Ozawa, C.P. (1996). "Science in environmental conflicts." *Sociological Perspectives* 39(2): 219-230

Class 5: Corporations/advertising

- Cox, "Green Marketing and Corporate Campaigns," pp 283-312

Social Media

- Cox, "Social Media and the Environment Online," pp. 177-206 third edition only. PDF online for those with the second edition.
- Optional- D. S. Bortree and T. Seltzer "Dialogic strategies and outcomes: An analysis of environmental advocacy groups' Facebook profiles", *Public Relations Review* Volume 35, Issue 3, September 2009, Pages 317-319

Section Three: Communication for Action

Week 8: Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Tactics

Class 1: Message Construction

- Cox, "Advocacy Campaigns and Message Construction," pp. 223-254 in second edition, 207-240 in third edition.
- Crompton, Tom. (2008). "Weathercocks and Signposts," World Wildlife Fund Strategies for Change Project.

Class 2: Mechanisms for Change: Awareness and Behaviour Change

- Jacquet, J. and Daniel Pauly. (2006). "The rise of seafood awareness campaigns in an era of collapsing fisheries," *Marine Policy* 31: 308-313.
- Gregory, G, Michael DiLeo (2003). "Repeated Behavior and Environmental Psychology: The Role of Personal Involvement and Habit Formation in Explaining Water Consumption." *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 33(6): 1261-1296.

Week 9: Other strategies and tactics:

Class 1: Consumption, or not

- Dauvergne, P. (2008). *The Shadows of Consumption: Consequences for the Global Environment*. Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press. (selection)
- Pezzullo, P. (2011). "Contextualizing boycotts and buycotts: The impure politics of consumer-based advocacy in an age of global ecological crisis," *Communication and Critical/Culture Studies*, 8(2): 124-145.
- Optional: Cohen, L. (2003). *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*. New York, Knopf: Distributed by Random House. (Chapter 8)

Class 2: Scaling Up

- Jensen. (2012). "Forget Shorter Showers." Self-published pamphlet.
- Maniates, M. (2002). "Individualization: Plant a Tree, Buy a Bike, Save the World?" in *Confronting Consumption*. T. Princen, M. Maniates and K. Conca. Cambridge, Mass; London, MIT Press.

Week 10 & 11: Group work on projects

Class date TBD: How to evaluate success

- Pastor, M. et al. (2011). "Trasactions, Transofrmations, Translations."

Week 12: Present Projects