

Media, Culture and The Environment

COM 3420-01 - Tuesday/Thursday, 2:00-3:15

Syllabus and Course Schedule

Faculty: Andy Opel, Ph.D

Office: 3111 UCC

E-mail: aopel@fsu.edu

Office Hours: Thursday 3:15 - 5:15. Additional hours by appointment.

Phone: (W) 644-8768

(H) 322-3349

Graduate Teaching Assistant: Jennifer Toole

Office: UCC 3137

Office Hours: - Mondays 3:15-4:15pm, Wednesdays 12:45-1:45pm, and by appointment

Email: Jennifer Toole jlm08h@my.fsu.edu

NOTE: Please send all email questions to Jennifer Toole. If she cannot answer the question, she will forward the email to Dr. Opel and he will respond. If you need further help, please come to Dr. Opel's office hours.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

From climate change to species extinction, our planet is facing large scale environmental change. These ecological concerns are often in direct conflict with modern industrialization. At the same time that our scientific understanding of the global environment is increasingly detailed and complex, we are progressively dependent on mediated information for our opinions and public policy decisions. News and entertainment media play a significant role in negotiating the tension between ecological sustainability and rising consumption and resource depletion.

This course will explore our mediated relationship with the natural world. Reading work from a range of theoretical perspectives - social science to post-structuralist – this class will address the following questions: What do we mean by the terms “nature” and “environment?” How do we come to know about the natural world? What does the news media tell us about our global environment? What does commercial culture tell us? What do environmental groups tell us and how do they get their message out? How is our relationship to the natural world shaped by these representations?

Media, Culture and The Environment will explore how media influences culture and in turn how cultural practices regulate our use of natural resources. This course will address specific three content areas: 1) Current research on news media coverage of environmental issues, 2) Commercial culture's relationship to the environment from green washing to green marketing, with a particular emphasis on food, and 3) Media and communication strategies of environmental groups. In addition, this course will attempt to touch on the major themes currently debated within the sphere of “environmental communication” as well as the merging area of “critical food studies.” This course will

emphasize and encourage engaged scholarship that aims to understand and address this issue of global significance.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

- To increase understanding of how language shapes our perception of the natural world
- To critically examine the structures and implications of environmental representation
- To analyze the ways in which environmental issues are framed by the news media.
- To understand the complex relationship between the environment and consumer culture
- To gain a broad understanding of the area of “environmental communication” – the current debates, where these debates take place and how to take part in these debates through the creation of environmental communication scholarship.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Cox, Robert (2010). *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, 2nd Edition. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications
- Pollan, Michael (2006). *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*. New York: Penguin Press.

NOTE: Other readings will be available on the Blackboard website

COURSE WORK

This course will have 2 exams during the semester and a final exam. There will also be a group project where you will have a chance to apply some of the concepts from the course and do some original research/creative work. Details for the group project will be handed out in class. In addition, you are required to attend course lectures.

Attendance: 15%

Exam Number One: 20%

Exam Number Two: 20%

Group Project: 25%

Final Exam: 20%

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Class attendance is required. You should let me or Jennifer know before class if you are not able to attend. One unexcused absence will be accepted. Further absences will reduce your attendance grade by 5 points per missed class.

LATE WORK

Late work will only be accepted when special arrangements have been made prior to the day any assignment is due.

WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

All written assignments should be well edited with clear, concise writing.

ADA STATEMENT

Students with disabilities needing academic accommodations must:

- 1) Register with and provide documentation to the Student Disabilities Resource Center (SDRC).
- 2) Bring a letter to me from the SDRC indicating your needed accommodations. This must be done within the first two weeks of class.

HONOR CODE

Students are expected to uphold the academic honor code published in the *Florida State University Bulletin* and the *Student Handbook*. The academic honor system of The Florida State University is based on the premise that each student has the responsibility to:

- (1) Uphold the highest standards of integrity in your work
- (2) Refuse to tolerate violations of academic integrity in the university community.
- (3) Foster a high sense of integrity and social responsibility on the part of the university community.

GRADING SCALE

100-94 = A	76-74 = C
93-90 = A-	73-70 = C-
89-87 = B+	69-67 = D+
86-84 = B	66-64 = D
83-80 = B-	63-60 = D-
79-77 = C+	59-0 = F

Class Schedule - Media, Culture and The Environment

All assignments are due at the beginning of class on their due date.

Week One - 1/8 Course Introduction

Reading:

Syllabus

Williams, R. (1983). *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society*.
London: Oxford, p. 219-224 (**on BB Site**)

Wed. - 1/10 Symbolic Constructions of Nature

Reading:

Cox, Chapters 1 & 2

Week Two - 1/15 Language, News Media and the Environment

Reading:

Cox, Chapter 3 & 6

Wed. - 1/17 Science and Risk Communication

Reading:

Cox, Chapters 11, 12

Week Three. - 1/22 Social Media and The Environment Online

Reading:

Cox, Chapter 7

Wed. - 1/24 News Media and Climate Change

Readings:

Boykoff and Boykoff (2004). *Balance as Bias: Global Warming and the US Prestige Press*. Global Environmental Change, 14, pp. 125-136. (**on BB Site**)

Romm, J. (2010). *Straight Up*. Island Press: Washington D.C., Chapter 1, pp. 11- 43. (**On BB Site**)

Week Four. - 1/29

Readings: Guest Lecture and Exam Review

Wed. - 1/31

**** First Exam ****

Week Five. - 2/5 Environment, Advertising and Green Marketing

Readings:

Cox, Chapter 10

Wed. – 2/7 Environment, Advertising and Green Marketing Con't

Readings:

- Jhally, S. (2000). *Advertising at the edge of the apocalypse*. in “Critical Studies in Media Commercialism,” edited by Anderson, R. & Strate, L., London:Oxford. **(on BB Site)**
- Smith, T. M. (1998). *The Myth of Green Marketing: Tending Our Goats At the Edge of the Apocalypse*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. Selected Chapters. **(on BB Site)**

Week Six. - 2/12 Environment and Popular Culture

- Hendry, J. (2010). Communication and the Natural World. Strata Publishing: State College, PA. Chapter 11, pp. 199-214 **(on BB Site)**.
- Hansen, A. (2010). Environment, Media and Communication. Routledge: London. Chapter 6, pp. 134-158

Wed. - 2/14 Media, Food and the Environment – Critical Food Studies

Reading:

Pollan, Chapters: Intro, 1, 2 & 3

Week Seven- 2/19

Reading:

Pollan, Chapters: 4, 5, 6, 7

Wed. - 2/21 Media, Food and the Environment - Critical Food Studies Con't

Reading:

Film – in class screening, “Food Inc.”

Week Eight - 2/26

Reading:

Film – in class screening, “Food Inc.” Continued - Discussion

Wed. – 2/28 Nature and Spectacle

Reading:

- Best, S. and Kellner, D. (1997) *The Postmodern Turn*, New York: Guilford Press. Chapter 3, “From the society of the spectacle to the realm of simulation: Debord, Baudrillard and postmodernity” pp.79-123 **(on BB Site)**
- Debord, G. (1967, reprinted 1994). *The Society of the Spectacle*, New York:Zone, p. 11-34 **(on BB Site)**

Week Nine 3/5 Background on the Environmental Movement

Reading:

- Cox, Chapter 8
- Brulle, R. J. (1996). *Environmental Discourse and Social Movement*

Organizations: A historical and rhetorical perspective on the developments of U.S. Environmental Organizations, Sociological Inquiry, v66 n1. (on BB Site)

Wed. - 3/7 **** Second Exam ****

**** One Page Group Project Proposals Due ****

Week Eleven - 3/12 - **Spring Break**

Wed. - 3/14 - **Spring Break**

Week Twelve - 3/19 Media Images and Environmental Activism

Reading:

Deluca, K (1999). *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism*. Lawrence Erlbaum: Mahwah, NJ. - Chapters 1 and 5
(On BB Site).

Wed. - 3/21 **Activism and Reality TV: The Case of Whale Wars**

Reading:

Explore the Whale Wars Website: <http://animal.discovery.com/tv/whale-wars/>

Cox, N. (2010). *Contending with Capitalism: A Political Economic Analysis of an Eco-Activist's "Reality" on Whale Wars*. Unpublished Manuscript

Week Thirteen – 3/26 Documentary and Environmental Activism

Reading: **In-Class Screening – “Gasland”**

Wed. 3/28

Reading: **In-Class Screening – “Gasland” - Discussion**

Week Fourteen - 4/2 - **Communication and Environmental Justice**

Readings:

Cox – Chapter 9

Wed. - 4/4

Reading:

Cox – Chapter 4

Cox, R. (2007). *Golden Tropes and Democratic Betrayals: Prospects for Environmental Justice in Neoliberal “Free Trade” Agreements*, in *Environmental Justice and Environmentalism: The Social Justice Challenge to the Environmental Movement (Urban and Industrial Environments)* by Ronald Sandler and Phaedra C. Pezzullo, MIT Press. **(on BB Site)**

Week Fifteen - 4/9 **Environmental Communication Campaigns and Climate Change**

Readings: 350 Campaign - <http://www.350.org/>

Wed. - 4/11 - Climate Change and the State of Florida: Audiences and Environmental PSAs

Reading:

Maibach , E (2009). Global Warming's 6 Americas 2009: An Audience Segmentation Analysis. **(on BB Site)**

Week Sixteen - 4/16 Looking For Solutions

Reading:

Speth reading, TBA
Cradle to Cradle

Wed, 4/18

Group Projects Due - Selected In-Class Presentations

Week Seventeen

Exam Week

Monday April 29th, 10:00am-12:00noon ** Final Exam **