

## **Communication 306: Environmental Advocacy** **T/TH 1-2:15, Mundelein Center 307**

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### **Course Description**

Ian Hacking, a philosopher of science, explains scientific practice as a dialectic of observing and intervening. Scientists make observations of the natural world, they intervene in the world based on those observations, and then they observe the effects of their interventions. Communication might be viewed the same way. We observe acts of communication, take what we've learned from that communication and form our own responses that intervene in the communication environment. The challenge—for scientists, communicators, and particularly communicators about science—lies in translating the information we observe in the natural world into useful material for meaningful interventions.

In this class, we will develop a capacity for making useful observations about the natural world and the way we communicate the natural world. We will also develop capacities for translating those observations into meaningful interventions as advocates. We will observe the origins of the environmental movement in the United States and of environmental advocacy in general. We will observe various controversies surrounding environmental variables and everyday life. We will observe how choices in language, communication strategy, and media yield meaningful changes in our relationship to the natural world. We will then leverage these observations into meaningful interventions in our communities and natural world.

### **Course Outcomes**

- Students should develop capacities to:
- Identify how symbols (linguistic and otherwise) influence our understanding of the environment
- Map the participatory dynamics that guide environmental decision making, including rights and responsibilities of knowledge and comment
- Guide collaboration and consensus-building strategies for resolving environmental conflict
- Analyze and plan advocacy campaigns
- Articulate the variables of risk, particularly the notion of “acceptable risk”
- Identify, analyze, and inform social movements related to environmental justice
- Identify, analyze, and inform corporate and commercial messaging related to the environment

### **Required Readings**

Robert Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*.

Additional readings posted on Sakai (be sure to check regularly for links or files)

## Assessments

### Class Participation (25 points)

This course depends upon your participation to keep discussion buoyant and progressive. While there is no strict attendance policy, you cannot contribute to the discussion if you are not first present for the discussion. But physical presence is only one component of classroom presence. Full intellectual presence in the classroom requires you 1) responsibly present the ideas of the readings in the classroom, 2) you introduce your own opinions and understandings, and 3) you support and engage the learning of others.

A few helpful tips on participation: I like to begin each class by asking why we read a particular assignment in this particular class. I then like to ask students how they might make use of the information in that assignment in their own lives and careers. Finally, I ask students to triangulate their learning. At one point of the triangle is your own understanding. At another point is the reading. At a third point is some other perspective—other readings, other people, other ideas that you know or can only imagine. If you can explain how these three positions can live in the same conversation or intellectual environment, you'll be well prepared for class.

### Environmental Communication Review Part 1 (25 points)

Once we complete the lessons on the symbolic construction of environmental communication, you will be asked to develop an essay that reviews and analyzes a piece of **public** environmental communication. Ideally, this piece of communication will be a text like Klein's recent *This Changes Everything* or a feature-length documentary like *An Inconvenient Truth*. The review should be between 5 and 7 pages, should conform to the highest academic standards, and should follow a style guide of your choosing. The essays will be due in class on **February 19<sup>th</sup>**.

### Environmental Communication Review Part 2 (25 points)

Once you complete the analysis of a piece of public environmental communication, you will be asked to develop and extend the paper based on a prompt distributed in class on February 19<sup>th</sup>. The extension should stretch your paper to 8-12 pages and should result in a seamless whole. These projects will be due on **March 12<sup>th</sup>**.

### Mid-Term (50 points)

The mid-term will take the form of short answers and essays and ask you to make observations about existing environmental communication using the information and strategies learned over the first half of the semester.

### Group White Paper Project (25 points)

Groups will be formed after break based on your in-class participation and your interests. Your group will be asked to identify a particular environmental communication challenge and develop a policy/campaign proposal white paper. The project should:

- Identify the nature and background of the problem, including appropriate science, policy, stakeholders, and texts that inform the issue.

- Identify the conditions of the problem or challenge, including the degree and magnitude of its impact on the environment, on humans, on economies, and on specific communities.
- Identify a communication solution that resolves (or at least mobilizes a potential resolution to) the issues identified above, such as a new policy, a PSA or advertising campaign, or a not-for profit organization (to name only a few possibilities).
- Explain how that solution will be implemented according to a timeline and accounting for all appropriate stakeholders and anticipating possible resistances or counter-arguments.
- Package the above in a concise white-paper and presentation which will be delivered in-class on April 21<sup>st</sup>.

### Final Exam (50 points)

The format of the final exam will be developed by the instructor in consultation with the class. The exam will measure your ability to identify strategies for intervening in environmental communication issues. We'll begin this consultation on day one and half a plan set in stone by the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> week of the semester.

### **Course Policies**

#### Academic Integrity

Students are expected to be familiar with and abide by the SOC Statement on Academic Integrity. Violations of the statement will result in failure of the course and will be reported to your academic dean.

#### Grade Scale

100-92 (A), 91-90 (A-), 89-87 (B+), 86-83 (B), 82-80 (B-), 79-77 (C+), 76-73 (C), 72-70 (C-), 69-67 (D+), 66-60 (D), 59-0 (F)

#### Late Assignments and Make-Up Work

It is your responsibility to check Sakai for course updates and assignments. There is no adequate substitute for in-class discussion. Dates for assignments are also provided on this syllabus. Barring exceptional circumstances, assignments and examination will not be delayed or rescheduled. In the event of such circumstances, every effort should be made to notify the instructor **prior to** the absence, make up the work as quickly as possible, and document the excuse appropriately.

#### Office Hours

As an adjunct instructor and because the SOC offices are located elsewhere, I have no office space near our classroom. I will attempt to identify a suitable meeting place near class and will schedule office hours based on your needs. Should you wish to schedule a meeting, please notify me and we'll arrange something prior to class on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I will also be available to discuss non-grading issues via email.

#### Disability Statement

Any student with a learning disability that needs special accommodation during exams or class periods should provide documentation from Services for Students with Disabilities confidentially to the instructor. The instructor will accommodate that student's needs in the best way possible, given the constraints of course content and processes. It is the student's responsibility to plan in advance in order to meet their own needs and assignment due dates.

## **PART 1: OBSERVING**

1/13: Introduction

*Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Introduction

1/15: Origins

*Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Chapter 1

1/20: Origins

*Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Chapter 2

1/22: Origins

*Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Chapter 3

1/27: Origins

*Silent Spring* 1-7

1/29: Origins

*Silent Spring* 8-12

2/3: Origins

*Silent Spring* 13-17

2/5: DISCUSSION

2/10: Deliberation

*Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Chapter 4

2/12: Deliberation

Lassen, et al. "Climate Change Discourse and Citizen Participation" **on Sakai**

2/17: Deliberation

*Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Chapter 5

2/19: Deliberation

Prepare the following for class:

- Use the Toxic Release Inventory to check toxic chemicals in the community where your family lives; *be ready to report orally in class*. See: [www.scorecard.org](http://www.scorecard.org)
- Check out the U.S. government's e-Rulemaking Program (<http://www.regulations.gov>), a Web site that provides one-stop, public access to information related to current and forthcoming regulations issued by federal agencies, such as the EPA, Department of Interior (National Parks, Mining and Minerals, etc.), Dept. of Agriculture (Forest Service), and more. Experiment with the site, and examine several agencies and proposed rules. Then, identify *one* "proposed rule" in an agency and explore ways to comment online; be ready to describe your experience orally, in class.

- Case study: *Is carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) an “air pollutant,” under the U.S. Clean Air Act? Who has the “standing” to ask this question?* Read and be prepared to discuss the Supreme Court ruling on global warming in *Massachusetts versus Environmental Protection Agency* (April 2, 2007) and the clash over “standing” at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massachusetts v. Environmental Protection Agency](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Massachusetts_v._Environmental_Protection_Agency).
- (Optional): Text of the Supreme Court ruling in *Massachusetts vs. EPA*, at: <http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/06pdf/05-1120.pdf>

2/24: Review

2/26: MIDTERM

3/3-5: BREAK

## **PART 2: INTERVENING**

3/10: Mediation

*Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Chapter 6

3/12: Mediation

*Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Chapter 7

3/17: Mediation

Remillard, “Picturing Environmental Risk” **on Sakai**

Also explore:

[http://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/icecaps/research/media\\_coverage/index.html](http://sciencepolicy.colorado.edu/icecaps/research/media_coverage/index.html)

3/19: Social Movements

*Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Chapter 8

3/24: Social Movements

*Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Chapter 9

3/26: Social Movements

Cantrill, “Amplifiers on the Commons” **on Sakai**

3/31: Social Movements

*Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Chapter 10

4/2: Screening Excerpts from *Gasland*

Plec & Pettenger “Greenwashing Consumption” **on Sakai**

4/7: Screening Excerpts from *Fracknation*

Read

- [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/george-lakoff/why-environmental-underst\\_b\\_205477.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/george-lakoff/why-environmental-underst_b_205477.html)
- <http://qz.com/71393/question-for-the-shale-industry-do-you-want-to-frack-or->

not/

Also explore:

- [www.350.org](http://www.350.org) and [climate-connections.org](http://climate-connections.org)

4/9: Risk and Crisis

*Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Chapter 11

4/14: Risk and Crisis

*Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Chapter 12

4/16: Risk and Crisis

Ionescu, "Communicating in Germany about the Fukushima Accident" **on Sakai**

4/21: White Paper Presentations

4/23: Conclusion

45/1: FINAL EXAM PERIOD