

COMM 475: Environmental Communication

Spring, 2012

2:00-4:50 M

ASC 223A

Professor: Dr. Randy Lake

Office: ASC 206C

Hours: TBD & by appointment (Typically, I will be in the office four days a week, so appointments should be fairly easy to obtain.)

Telephone: (213) 740-3946

E-mail: rlake@usc.edu (This is the most efficient way to reach me. I check my e-mail regularly during the weekday, when I am in the office. However, weekends and evenings are much more sporadic so, if you e-mail me at these times, please do not expect an immediate reply.)

Objectives:

- ☐ to understand how nature and the environment influence communication and society;
- ☐ to understand how we construct “nature” through symbols, both discursive and visual;
- ☐ to learn about significant environmental controversies, from toxic waste to climate change, to lifestyle choices;
- ☐ to explore key issues raised in environmental controversies, such as public participation in environmental decision-making, the role of media, movements for environmental protection, environmental racism and justice, and corporate responsibility and “green” marketing; and
- ☐ to put theories into practice through service learning, by participating and intervening strategically in the public aspects of an environmental controversy

Website:

There is a course website, located at blackboard.usc.edu. All students enrolled in this course have access to the website through their USC username and password. This website is an official place for posting information relevant to the class, such as announcements, assignments, and grades, for discussing lecture materials, and so on. You are as responsible for knowing any material posted to the website as you would be responsible for material distributed or discussed during class. Because the University does not unequivocally recognize material placed on this website as the intellectual property of its creator, copies of my lecture notes, etc., will not be made available here.

Readings:

- ☐ [Robert Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere* \(2nd ed.; Sage, 2009\)](#) [REQUIRED]. Professor Cox has served three terms as president of the Sierra Club and knows what he’s talking about!
- ☐ [Timothy Egan, *The Big Burn: Teddy Roosevelt and the Fire that Saved America* \(Mariner Books, 2010\)](#) [REQUIRED].
- ☐ [MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers \(7th ed.; 2009\)](#) [RECOMMENDED]

- ❑ Other readings as assigned

Readings should be completed *before class* on the day assigned. Some readings will be presented to the class in the form of reports, to be assigned at an appropriate time, which will comprise part of students' "class discussion" grade (see below). Because this class will be conducted as a seminar, which places a premium on discussion, lectures will be infrequent. Lectures may not cover all portions of the assigned readings, and may cover additional materials not in the assigned readings; exams will cover all materials, including lectures, readings, and reports.

Assignments: Detailed instructions for all assignments will be provided in due course. Due dates are noted on the tentative syllabus, below.

- ❑ Class Project, 50%. This project may take several forms, including: (A) a traditional research paper, 20-25 pages, on a topic approved in advance; (B) participation in an environmental organization or campaign that includes a written, analytical journal applying class concepts to your experience and activities; and (C) an online project, such as a blog or website that gathers together resources in order to facilitate public understanding and involvement in an environmental controversy. Projects may be individual or group (approved in advance).
- ❑ Midterm Exam, 15%
- ❑ Final Exam, 15%
- ❑ Reaction Papers, Reports, and Class Discussion, 20%

All assignments must be the original work of the student and cannot have been used previously or concurrently in any other course. **All assignments must be attempted and turned in to pass the course.**

Tentative Daily Syllabus:

Session 1: January 9

Introduction to the course

READ Cox, Ch. 1

Session 2: January 23

Roots of Environmentalism and Environmental Communication

READ Egan (all)

DUE Environmental Autobiographies

Session 3: January 30

Roots, continued

READ (a) Cox, Ch. 2. (b) Oravec, Christine. "Conservationism vs. Preservationism: 'The Public Interest' in the Hetch Hetchy Controversy." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 444-58. (c) Dorsey, Leroy G. "The Frontier Myth in Presidential Rhetoric: Theodore Roosevelt's Campaign for Conservation." *Western Journal of Communication* 59 (1995): 1-19.

Session 4: February 6

Roots, continued

READ Hendry, Judith. *Communication and the Natural World*. State College: Strata, 2010.

Chapters 3-4.

REPORTS on key figures in early environmentalism (choose one of: Ansel Adams; Rachel Carson; Aldo Leopold; Bob Marshall; John Muir; Olaus Johan Murie; Sigurd F. Olson; Calvin Rutstrum; Robert W. Service; Henry David Thoreau; Wallace Stegner; Carleton Watkins)

Session 5: February 13

Forms of Environmental Rhetoric

READ Hendry, Judith. *Communication and the Natural World*. State College: Strata, 2010.
Chapters 5-7.

Session 6: February 27

Case Study: “An Inconvenient Truth” and Its Critics

VIEW “An Inconvenient Truth”; “An Inconvenient Truth . . . or Convenient Fiction?”

READ Rosteck, Thomas, and Thomas S. Frenz. “Myth and Multiple Readings in Environmental Rhetoric: The Case of ‘An Inconvenient Truth’.” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95 (2009): 1-19.

Session 7: March 5

MIDTERM EXAM

Session 8: March 19

Voices for Change

READ Cox, Chs. 7-8

Session 9: March 26

Citizen Voices and Public Forums

READ Cox, Chs. 3-4

Session 10: April 2

Case Study: “The Fire Next Time”

READ Forester, John. “Making Participation Work When Interests Conflict.” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 72 (2006): 447-56.

Session 11: April 9

Case Study: “30 Frames a Second: The WTO in Seattle”

Session 12: April 16

Media Coverage of the Environment

READ Cox, Chs. 5-6

Session 13: April 23

Environmental Discourses of Science and Industry

READ Cox, Chs. 9-10

Session 15: May 7

FINAL EXAM (2:00-4:00)