

## COMM 475: Environmental Communication

Spring, 2017  
11:00-12:20 TR  
ASC 228

*Professor:* Dr. Randy Lake  
*Office:* ASC 206C  
*Hours:* TBA & 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](mailto:rlake@usc.edu) (This is the most efficient way to reach me. I check my email regularly during the weekday, when I am in the office. However, weekends and evenings are much more sporadic so, if you email me at these times, please do not expect an immediate reply. Because improper email format is unprofessional, inappropriate, and communicates a poor image of its sender, please use proper grammar, letter format, and “netiquette” when communicating with me.)

### *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](http://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:*

- ☐ [J. Robert Cox and Phaedra C. Pezzullo, \*Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere\* \(4<sup>th</sup> ed.; Sage, 2015\)](#) [REQUIRED] Professor Cox has served three terms as president of the Sierra Club (the oldest environmental organization in the U.S., co-founded by John Muir) and knows what he’s talking about!

- ❑ [Julia B. Corbett, \*Communicating Nature: How We Create and Understand Environmental Messages\* \(Island, 2006\)](#) [SUPPLEMENTAL; required portions will be provided]
- ❑ [Judith Hendry, \*Communication and the Natural World\* \(Strata, 2010\)](#) [SUPPLEMENTAL; required portions will be provided]
- ❑ Additional readings and materials as assigned. You are responsible for the Cox and Pezzullo book; I will furnish PDFs of other readings. Among other materials will be videos, which may be assigned in advance or which we may watch together in class. Readings (and videos) should be completed *before class* on the day assigned. Some readings may be presented to the class in the form of reports, to be assigned at the appropriate time.

*Assignments:* See also the instructions under “Assignments” on Blackboard.

- ❑ Class Project, 200 points. This project may take one of three forms: (A) a traditional research paper, 12-15 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). DUE: April 27
- ❑ Environmental Autobiography, 100 points. DUE: February 2
- ❑ Report on a Key Figure in Environmentalism, 150 points. DUE: February 14 & 16
- ❑ Midterm Exam, 150 points.
- ❑ Final Exam (comprehensive), 150 points.
- ❑ Group Discussion, 100 points. Your task is to become expert on one class session’s readings and then lead the class in vigorous discussion of their main ideas. On the day of your presentation, you may elect to divide up the class into small groups and assign each group questions to work on, or you can show us some media samples and then have us analyze the samples using the ideas from the readings. Or you could do ANYTHING you can creatively devise that will get the class thinking and talking about these provocative readings. You must turn in a one-page summary to Blackboard providing three key ideas from the readings and five questions for class discussion. Hopefully, this will be done in teams of two; once enrollment stabilizes, we’ll work out arrangements and dates.
- ❑ Journal, 100 points (10 @ 10 points each).
- ❑ Participation, 50 points. Included here are contributions in class, any reports that may be assigned, and any unannounced quizzes that may be given during the semester. The quality of your contributions is more important than the quantity.

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.** 1000 total points can be earned in the class. Course grades may be assigned according to the standard curve (900-1000 = A, 800-899 = B, 700-799 = C, 600-699 = D, with appropriate pluses and minuses), but the instructor reserves the right to employ a different curve.

*Participation and Attendance:*

This class emphasizes collaborative learning, in which we jointly ask questions of the

material and each other, and explore possible answers. Lectures will be the exception rather than the rule, may not cover all important aspects of the readings, and may cover materials not in the readings. Thus, it is very important that you be present and prepared to participate appropriately in each class not only as a discussant but also as an audience for others. Also, because some of the issues we'll cover are controversial, we undoubtedly will encounter disagreement. Disagreement need not—and should not—be disagreeable. The best policy is to always **T.H.I.N.K.** before you speak by ensuring that your comment is: **T**houghtful, **H**elpful, **I**nteresting, **N**ecessary, **K**ind.

Roll will be taken in every class. More than three absences for any reason may affect your course grade adversely, as much as **a full letter grade per absence**, and even may cause you to **fail the course**.

Arriving late, leaving early, and other activities not conducive to learning—such as turning off a ringing cell phone or leaving the room to answer it—are extremely disruptive, and may be counted as absences.

### *Technology*

Cell phones are prohibited. Turn them off or put them on silent before class and **put them away**. You may use your laptops. You may not use them to multitask and engage in noncourse-related activities; if you do, this privilege will be revoked and you may be counted as absent.

### *Academic Conduct*

Plagiarism—presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words—is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. Please familiarize yourself with the discussion of plagiarism in *SCampus* in Section 11, *Behavior Violating University Standards*

<https://scampus.usc.edu/1100-behavior-violating-university-standards-and-appropriate-sanctions>.

Other forms of academic dishonesty are equally unacceptable. See additional information in *SCampus* and university policies on scientific misconduct,

<http://policy.usc.edu/scientific-misconduct>.

The Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism is committed to upholding the University's academic integrity code as detailed in the *SCampus* guide. It is the policy of the School of Communication to report all violations of the code. Any serious violation or pattern of violations of the academic integrity code will result in the student's expulsion from the Communication major or minor.

If you have any doubts about what is and is not an academic integrity violation, please check with me. The University presumes that you are familiar with its standards and policies; should you be found to have committed a violation, ignorance of these standards and policies will **not** be accepted as an excuse.

### *Other Conduct*

Discrimination, sexual assault, and harassment are not tolerated by the university. You are encouraged to report any incidents to the *Office of Equity and Diversity* <http://equity.usc.edu/> or to the *Department of Public Safety*

<http://capsnet.usc.edu/departments/departments-public-safety/online-forms/contact-us>. This is important for the safety of the whole USC community. Another member of the university

community - such as a friend, classmate, advisor, or faculty member - can help initiate the report, or can initiate the report on behalf of another person. The *Center for Women and Men* <http://www.usc.edu/student-affairs/cwm> provides 24/7 confidential support, and the sexual assault resource center webpage <http://sarc.usc.edu/> describes reporting options and other resources.

### *Support Systems*

A number of USC's schools provide support for students who need help with scholarly writing. Check with your advisor or program staff to find out more. Students whose primary language is not English should check with the *American Language Institute* <http://dornsife.usc.edu/ali>, which sponsors courses and workshops specifically for international graduate students. The *Office of Disability Services and Programs* [http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home\\_index.html](http://sait.usc.edu/academicsupport/centerprograms/dsp/home_index.html) provides certification for students with disabilities and helps arrange the relevant accommodations. Any student requesting academic accommodations based on a disability is required to register with DSP each semester. A letter of verification for approved accommodations can be obtained from DSP. Please have the letter delivered to me as early in the semester as possible. DSP is located in STU 301 and is open 8:30 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. DSP can be reached at (213) 740-0776 or [ability@usc.edu](mailto:ability@usc.edu). If an officially declared emergency makes travel to campus infeasible, *USC Emergency Information* <http://emergency.usc.edu> will provide safety and other updates, including ways in which instruction will be continued by means of Blackboard, teleconferencing, and other technology.

### *Tentative Daily Syllabus:*

This schedule is organized by week, not by day, so some refinements and additions will be necessary as we proceed; the schedule after spring break is especially subject to revision. Some sessions will include supplementary readings and other materials, which will be provided in advance. Where multiple readings are listed, I recommend reading them in the order listed.

#### **January 10 & 12**

Introduction to the course and to environmental communication  
READ Cox & Pezzullo, Ch. 1

#### **January 17 & 19**

Contested Meanings of Environment  
READ Cox & Pezzullo, Ch. 2

#### **January 24 & 26**

Sources of Environmental Beliefs, Attitudes, and Behaviors  
READ (a) Corbett, Ch. 1; Hendry, Ch. 5 (b) Cox & Pezzullo, Ch. 3

#### **January 31 & February 2**

Sources of Environmental Beliefs, Attitudes, and Behaviors, continued  
READ Cox & Pezzullo, Chs. 4-5  
DUE Environmental Autobiographies

**February 7 & 9**

Collective Beliefs: Environmental Ideologies  
READ Hendry, Chs. 3-4; Corbett, Ch. 2

**February 14 & 16**

REPORTS Key Figures in Environmentalism

**February 21 & 23**

The Contemporary Nexus: Nature, Capital, and Democracy  
READ Corbett, Chs. 4-5

**February 28 & March 2**

Wolf Recovery Exercise  
READ Aldo Leopold, "Thinking Like a Mountain" (in Hendry, Appendix)

**March 7 & 9**

MIDTERM EXAM

**March 14 & 16**

Spring Break–NO CLASS

**March 21 & 23**

Public Participation  
READ Cox & Pezzullo, Chs. 12-13

**March 28 & 30**

Public Participation, continued  
READ Cox & Pezzullo, Ch. 14

**April 4 & 6**

Advocacy Campaigns  
READ Cox & Pezzullo, Chs. 8-9

**April 11 & 13**

Advocacy Campaigns, continued  
READ Cox & Pezzullo, Chs. 10-11

**April 18 & 20**

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.

**April 25 & 27**

Environmentalism and Protest  
WATCH "30 Frames a Second: The WTO in Seattle"

**May 9**

FINAL EXAM (11:00-1:00)