

COMM 475: Environmental Communication

Summer, 2015

12:30-4:40 M

ASC 240

Professor: Dr. Randy Lake

Office: ASC 206C

Hours: By appointment

Telephone: (213) 740-3946

E-mail: 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. 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.

There is a forum for each class under the Discussion button. Each forum is an opportunity to seek clarification, to ask questions, to share your thoughts, and to expand upon that week’s materials, both before and after class. For those who are less comfortable speaking up in class, this is an alternative way to participate, and contributions to these threads will be considered when assigning participation grades (see below).

Readings:

- ❑ [Robert Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere* \(3rd ed.; Sage, 2013\)](#) [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; portions required]
- ❑ [Judith Hendry, *Communication and the Natural World* \(Strata, 2010\)](#) [Supplemental; portions required]
- ❑ [MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers \(7th ed.; 2009\)](#) [RECOMMENDED]
- ❑ Additional readings and materials as assigned. You are responsible for the Cox book; I will furnish PDFs of others. Among other materials will be several videos; some may be assigned in advance while we may watch others together in class.

Readings (and videos so assigned) 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: Detailed instructions for all assignments will be provided in due course.

- ❑ Environmental Autobiography, 10%. DUE: May 26
- ❑ Report on a Key Figure in Environmentalism, 20%. DUE: June 9
- ❑ Book Report, 20%. DUE: June 30.
- ❑ Class Group Project, 15%. The entire class, including your instructor, will work on this project together, for the duration of the course. Details to follow.
- ❑ Final Exam, 20% (comprehensive; essay; open-book).
- ❑ Class Discussion and Participation, 15%. Included here are contributions in class, to discussion forums on Blackboard, in-class activities, and any other reports that may be assigned 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.**

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. Because we meet only once a week and miss three weeks of class for holidays, time is at a premium: Any absence 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. We will take a break roughly midway through each class session; please plan your personal affairs accordingly.

Technology: “Topless”

No electronic devices, including laptops, notebook computers, iPods, and iPads, are allowed in class at any time unless giving a presentation, or in order to accommodate a registered disability, or otherwise approved in advance by me. Cell phones also are prohibited unless otherwise indicated. **Turn them off before class.** According to the [Wall Street Journal](#): “In Silicon Valley itself, as the *Los Angeles Times* reported last year, some companies have installed the ‘topless’ meeting—in which not only laptops but iPhones and other tools are banned—to combat a new problem: ‘continuous partial attention.’ With a device close by, attendees at workplace meetings simply cannot keep their focus on the speaker. It’s too easy to check email, stock quotes and Facebook. While a quick log-on may seem, to the user, a harmless break, others in the room receive it as a silent dismissal. It announces: ‘I’m not interested.’ So the tools must now remain at the door.”

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/department/department-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 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. 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 *extremely* tentative; adjustments and changes definitely will be made, of which you will be notified in advance. 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.

Session 1: **May 21**

Introduction to the course
READ Cox, Ch. 1

Session 2: **May 26**

Sources of Environmental Beliefs, Attitudes, and Behaviors
READ Corbett, Ch. 1; Cox, Ch. 3; Hendry, Ch. 5
DUE Environmental Autobiographies

Session 3: **May 28**

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

Session 4: **June 2**

Wolf Recovery Exercise
READ Aldo Leopold, "Thinking Like a Mountain" (in Hendry, Appendix)
Antagonisms and the Rise and Fall of Environmental Ideologies
READ Cox, Ch. 2

Session 5: June 4

The Contemporary Nexus: Nature, Capital, and Democracy

READ Corbett, Chs. 4-5; Cox, Ch. 9; Nixon, Intro, Chs. 1-2

Session 6: June 9

REPORTS Key figures in environmentalism

Session 7: June 11

Public Participation and Conflict Management

READ Cox, Chs. 4-5

Session 8: June 16

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 9: June 18

Advocacy Campaigns

READ Cox, Chs. 8-9

Session 10: June 23

Environmentalism and Protest

WATCH “30 Frames a Second: The WTO in Seattle”

Session 11: June 25

Media Coverage of the Environment

READ Cox, Chs. 6-7

Session 12: June 30

Communicating Science and Risk

READ Cox, Chs. 11-12

Case Study: Climate Change

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

READ Thomas Rosteck 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.