

## **CMNS 326: Environmental Politics and Rhetoric**

DePaul University, College of Communication

Section 201, Class 26387, Winter Quarter 2017

Arts & Letters Hall Room 408, LPC Campus, Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:40 p.m. - 4:10 p.m.

Instructor: Dr. Jill Hopke, Assistant Professor of Journalism

Contact: [jhopke@depaul.edu](mailto:jhopke@depaul.edu) (*I strive to respond to emails within one business day, excluding weekends*); 312-362-7641 (office)

Office location: 1123 Daley, 14 E. Jackson, Loop Campus

Office hours: Tuesdays 10:30 to 11:30 a.m. and Thursdays 11 to 11:30 a.m. (*and by email appointment in LPC, Byrne 466*)

Twitter: [@jillhopke](https://twitter.com/jillhopke)

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jillhopke>

### **Course description and learning objectives**

The idea of nature and the way in which we relate with the environment are intertwined with human communication. Our social constructions of nature and environment ultimately result in a material reality when these ideas directly influence environmental policy (e.g. the Endangered Species Act) and environmental practices (e.g. recycling). The purpose of this course is to analyze the discourse that has influenced environmental policy and practice. We will explore both the more formal aspects of environmental communication (federal, state, and local policy) as well as the less formal (representations of nature in mediated contexts, social movement rhetoric, and corporate communication about the environment).

This course provides a rhetorical perspective on environmental public discourse. The course also explores the relationship between rhetorically constituted ideas about nature and the development of political and social ideas, institutions, and practices that inform our understanding of the human place in the environment. Students should leave this course with a heightened critical sensibility about the ways in which our language not only shapes our understanding of the environment but also influences political and personal action.

#### Learning Objectives:

By the successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain the function of communication in shaping environmental attitudes, values, practices and policy;
2. Demonstrate the role played by foundational rhetoric in the birth and continuation of the environmental movement;
3. Analyze key rhetorical texts that have had profound impact on environmental policy;
4. Identify and evaluate rhetoric generated and used by those communicating about environmental issues.

## Course materials

### 1) **Required text** – There is one required textbook:

Cox, R. & Pezzullo, P. C. (2015). *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere* (fourth edition). London: SAGE.

**D2L Material** – Additional readings and examples will be posted to d2l during the course under weekly “content” modules.

### 2) **Monitor and participate on class D2L site** – Regularly check the class D2L site for updates. You will turn in your assignments via the D2L dropbox.

## Grading and assignments

The conventional 10-point letter-grade scale will be used. The specific grading scale follows the recommendation of the College of Communication: A (93-100), A- (90-92), B+ (87-89), B (83-86), B- (80-82), C+ (77-79), C (73-76), C- (70-72), D (60-69), F ( $\leq$  59).

Late work is not accepted. All assignments will be turned-in via the class D2L site dropbox.

**10% of your grade comes from participation.** This includes in-class participation, attendance and active engagement in our shared learning community. This includes in-class activities and discussions, as well as keeping-up with course material and updates on the d2l site.

**10% of your grade comes from discussion leadership.** Once in the quarter you will be responsible to be a discussion leader (in groups of 2-3 students). When you are assigned to be discussion leader, you will be expected to provide a 1 to 2-page double-spaced summary of the class period’s readings in ADVANCE of class via d2l. The reading summaries will be shared with the class under the week’s “content” module on d2l.

Reading summaries should be turned-in via the d2l dropbox for that week by 11:59 p.m. the day BEFORE your assigned discussion leadership slot. So if you are discussion leader for a Tuesday class, your reading summary is due at the end of the day Monday.

Working with your partner, or small group, you will prepare 3 to 5 discussion questions on the readings and lead the class in a discussion, with my guidance, on the readings. You are encouraged to consult with me on your discussion topics and the reading’s themes in advance of your assigned discussion leadership class period.

**25% of your grade comes from the in-class midterm exam.** The exam will include multiple choice, short answer, and essay questions. Midterm is in week 6 of the quarter.

**15% of your grade comes from an annotated bibliography and final project proposal.** Your annotated bibliography will include at least 10 scholarly, peer-reviewed sources related to your

final research paper topic. You will include a list of the citations in APA format. For each entry, you will provide an approximately 300-word summary of the citation in your own words. In addition, you will turn in a short two-page double-spaced research paper proposal outlining your topic, thesis statement and major arguments. You may also include a paper outline.

The annotated bibliography and final research paper proposal are due in week 8, on Tuesday, February 21.

**40% of your grade comes from the final research paper.** You will write a research paper on some aspect of environmental communication. The paper can be historical in nature, examining the rhetorical history of a particular environmental policy. The paper could also be critical in nature, critiquing the rhetorical effectiveness of a particular persuasive strategy used by environmental advocates. The paper could also identify and critique the rhetoric of a particular person or organization.

The paper should be double-spaced, 7 to 10 pages (plus references, not included in the page count), well-written and proof-read for grammatical and spelling errors and including at least 10 scholarly, peer-reviewed sources (building on your annotated bibliography), plus any additional reputable sources (e.g. think tanks, nonprofit organizations, Pew Research Center).

The paper is due by 11:59 p.m. on Monday, March 13 via the d2l site dropbox.

**Late work** – Late work is not accepted. I will only consider exceptions to this policy in cases that are verified as excused absences by the Dean of Students Office for a “medical, mental health or personal reason.” It is your responsibility to submit documentation to the Dean of Students office.

Information on the Dean of Students Office’s “absence notification” policy and the form to submit to their office can be found at: <http://offices.depaul.edu/student-affairs/support-services/academic/Pages/absence-notification.aspx>

If you have a personal situation affecting your performance and engagement in our class, please contact me so that I can help identify campus resources that could be of assistance.

If you have a scheduled reason for which you need to miss class on the day an assignment is due (or something that could be reasonably foreseen), it is YOUR responsibility to complete the work and submit it IN ADVANCE of the deadline.

**Grading** – An overview of the grading expectations is as follows:

**A-level work:** An “A” designates work of extraordinarily high-quality that consists of unusual comprehensiveness, cogency and clarity in the development of ideas, and critical reflection and conceptual sophistication. Oral and written work should be well organized, clearly argued and free of serious grammatical, spelling and syntactical errors. Students who receive an A will consistently come to class prepared to engage with the daily reading assignments and have a near perfect attendance record. They will regularly participate in class discussions and often initiate class discussion.

**B-level work:** A “B” designates work of high quality regarding the organization and development of ideas. Work substantively addresses the main issues/topics/questions of the assignments. Oral and written work is relatively well organized and free of serious grammatical and spelling as well as syntactical errors. Students who receive a B will contribute regularly to class discussion and/or have a near perfect attendance record.

**C-level work:** A “C” designates work that minimally meets acceptable requirements as stated in guidelines for assignments. Oral and written work is loosely organized, ideas are less clearly stated, and there will be grammatical, spelling and syntactical errors. Students who receive a C will infrequently participate in class and often wait until they are called on to do so. Students who have three unexcused absences will likely receive a C.

**Unsatisfactory-level work (D or F):** A “D” designates work that does not meet minimum acceptable requirements of the assignment(s). Oral and written work is poorly organized and has poorly developed ideas. Grammar, spelling and syntax are weak. Work may only address a part of the assignment. Students who do not complete all assignments and that have four unexcused absences are likely to receive a D. An “F” designates a failure to complete all assignments and/or a failure to demonstrate a minimal degree of engagement with the readings or the written assignments. Students who have five unexcused absences are likely to fail the course.

## **Plagiarism and academic integrity**

Plagiarism means taking someone else's work or ideas and passing them off as your own. You are expected to provide sources for all material that cannot be reasonably considered common knowledge (e.g. Chicago is located in IL; Chicago has two baseball teams). This includes any idea or piece of information that is not original to you. Plagiarism will result in an “F” for the assignment and for the course. It may lead to dismissal from the university.

Failing to act with academic integrity is detrimental to DePaul’s values, including the pursuit of knowledge and the transmission of ideas. University academic integrity violations include, but are not limited to, the following: cheating; plagiarism; fabrication; falsification; misuse of academic resources; alteration or falsification of academic records; and academic misconduct.

Conduct that is punishable under the Academic Integrity Policy could result in additional disciplinary actions by university officials. Furthermore, all work done for this course should comply with the University Academic Integrity Policy available in the student handbook or at <http://academicintegrity.depaul.edu>.

## **Sexual harassment**

This class will faithfully follow university guidelines on sexual harassment. Such behavior will not be tolerated and may lead to dismissal from the university.

## Writing support

The Writing Center, at the Lincoln Park and Loop campuses, is available for consultation on all aspects of writing assignments. Writing Center tutors are specially trained undergraduate and graduate students who can help at any stage of the quarter or in your process. Visit <http://www.depaul.edu/writing> for more information.

## Attendance

Doing well in this class requires you to be in class and actively participate. Class attendance is mandatory, except in the case of university-authorized absences. More than two (2) absences will negatively impact your course grade. In addition, “phoning” (see below) in class will result in you being counted absent for the class period.

Your attendance and active participation are expected and required. Participation grades are factored by considering how often you participate in class and how that participation advances our overall learning (i.e., I will consider how your questions help lead us to a greater understanding of concepts and technical skills, as well as how your contributions further discussion). If you miss very few classes and your participation level is excellent, you can expect an “A” for this portion of your grade. If you miss very few classes and your participation level is above average (i.e., you participate during most class sessions rather than every class session), you can expect a “B” for this portion of your grade. If you miss very few classes and your participation level is average (i.e., you contribute sometimes or your contributions don’t elevate our thinking enough), you can expect a “C” for this portion of your grade. If you miss a significant number of class meetings and your participation level is average, you can expect a “D” for this portion of your grade.

If you miss class, please talk with me to follow-up on what you have missed.

## Classroom etiquette

No *phoning* (aka, non-course related device usage) in class! It is a distraction to your classmates and disrespectful to me—the instructor—and will lower your course grade.

In the interest of supporting a focused, engaged learning community this quarter ALL devices (computers, tablets, mobile phones) are to remain in your backpacks, bags, etc. (i.e. in silenced mode, out of your hands and out of sight) throughout each class period, unless specifically required for a classroom activity. Disregarding this rule will negatively impact your grade.

For background on my rationale for banning non-classroom activity usage of electronic devices, and the ways in which multi-tasking impedes learning, please read this *Medium* piece by NYU professor Clay Shirky:

Shirky, C. (2014, Sept. 4). Why I just asked my students to put their laptops away. Retrieved from <https://medium.com/@cshirky/why-i-just-asked-my-students-to-put-their-laptops-away-7f5f7c50f368>

## **Academic accommodations**

Students who require accommodations for any type of disability should contact me privately to discuss their specific needs. All discussions will remain confidential. To ensure that you receive the most appropriate reasonable accommodation based on your individual situation, it is preferable if you contact me during the first week of class. Also, make sure that you have contacted the Center for Students with Disabilities. They are located at (and reachable via email at [csd@depaul.edu](mailto:csd@depaul.edu)):

### Lincoln Park

Center for Students with Disabilities  
2250 North Sheffield Avenue - Student Center 370  
Chicago, Illinois 60614-3673  
773.325.1677 main phone  
773.325.3720 fax  
773.325.7276 TTY

### Loop

Center for Students with Disabilities - Lewis Center 1420  
25 East Jackson Boulevard  
Chicago, IL 60604-2287  
312.362.8002 main phone  
312.362.6544 fax

On a personal note, I am hard-of-hearing and may request that you speak-up during classroom discussions, because I want to hear from you!

**CMNS 326 Course Schedule** (*subject to change with advance notice*):

**WEEK 1 – Course Overview and Introduction to Environmental Communication**

***Reading(s):***<sup>1</sup>

Tuesday: Introduction (pp. 1-10)

Thursday: Chapter 1 (pp. 11-30)

**Tuesday (1/3):**

Introduction to course and meet colleagues in the class.

**Thursday (1/5):**

Foundations of environmental communication.

**WEEK 2 – Competing Meanings of Nature, Society and the Environment**

***Reading(s):***

Tuesday: Chapter 2 (pp. 31-52)

Thursday: Chapter 3 (pp. 53-68)

**Tuesday (1/10):**

Meanings of “nature” as contested and “justice” in the environment.

**Thursday (1/12):**

Social constructions of the environment and framing.

**WEEK 3 – The Environment in Popular Culture and Journalism**

***Reading(s):***

Tuesday: Chapter 4 (pp. 69-88)

Thursday: Chapter 5 (pp. 91-117)

**Tuesday (1/17):**

Visual rhetoric and the environment in popular culture.

---

<sup>1</sup> You are expected to complete the assigned readings *before each class meeting* so that we can build on this material in our discussions and in-class activities.

**Thursday (1/19):**

Media theory and challenges for conducting environmental journalism.

**WEEK 4 – Risk Communication and Science in Environmental Controversies**

***Reading(s):***

Tuesday: Chapter 7 (pp. 149-174)

Thursday: Chapter 6 (pp. 121-146)

**Tuesday (1/24):**

Models of risk communication and acceptable risk, as well as citizen science in risk assessment.

**Thursday (1/26):**

Communicating about environmental controversies, with case studies of fracking and climate science.

**WEEK 5 – Public Participation and Environmental Movements**

***Readings:***

Tuesday: Chapter 12 (pp. 289-312)

Thursday: Chapter 8 (pp. 177-206)

**Tuesday (1/31):**

Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and traditional approaches to public participation in environmental decision-making.

**Thursday (2/2):**

Framing environmental advocacy messages and critical rhetoric.

**WEEK 6 – Midterm Review and In-class Midterm**

***Reading(s):***

No new readings. Review and study for exam.

**Tuesday (2/7):**

In-class midterm review and discussion of major themes to-date.

**Thursday (2/9):**

In-class midterm exam.

**WEEK 7 – Digital Media and the Climate Justice Movement**

***Reading(s):***

Tuesday: Chapter 9 (pp. 209-232)

Thursday: Chapter 10 (pp. 235-260)

**Tuesday (2/14):**

Digital media and the changing nature of environmental activism.

**Thursday (2/16):**

Global organizing for climate justice and fossil fuel divestment.

**WEEK 8 – Social Marketing and Sustainability**

***Readings:***

Both days: Chapter 11 (pp. 263-285)

**Tuesday (2/21):**

Introduction to social marketing and public relations and advertising on the environment.

**\*\*\*DUE\*\*\***

Annotated bibliography and final research paper proposal.

**Thursday (2/23):**

Introduction to sustainability, with a focus on college campus efforts.

**WEEK 9 – Environmental Conflicts and Environmental Law**

***Reading(s):***

Tuesday: Chapter 13 (pp. 315-340)

Thursday: Chapter 14 (pp. 343-360)

**Tuesday (2/28):**

More on decision-making in environmental governance.

**Thursday (3/2):**

Right of Standing and key aspects to environmental law.

**WEEK 10 – Special Topics and Where We Go from Here**

***Reading(s):***

TBA.

**Tuesday (3/7):**

Special topics to be decided on by the class and reflection on where we go from here. In class time for course evaluations. Start student presentations on final research papers.

**Thursday (3/9):**

Students present on final research papers and get feedback from colleagues.

***FINAL RESEARCH PAPERS DUE by 11:59 p.m. Monday, March 13:*** Turn in final research paper via D2L dropbox by 11:59 p.m. No late work will be accepted.