

**Communication, Social Justice and the Environment**  
**CMST 5250**

**Instructor:** Jennifer Peeples  
**Office hours:** Weds 10-12  
and by appointment

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**Course Description:**

This course explores one of the most pressing and contentious issues: How humans should relate to the environment. You will be presented with information and critical thinking and production skills necessary to understand the complex and at times contradictory messages presented within large scale, social, political, cultural and/or environmental conflicts.

**By the end of the course, you should have:**

- Gain an understanding of environmental and communication terminology.
- Learn fundamental principles, generalizations, or theories of social justice and environmental communication
- Learn to apply course materials to ongoing social issues in order improve rational thinking, problem solving and decisions.
- Gain a broader understanding and appreciation of public knowledge, conflict, protest, decision-making, ethics, and social justice concerns.
- Develop skills in expressing oneself in writing.
- Develop a clearer understanding of, and commitment to environmental issues, concerns and values.
- Learn to analyze and critically evaluate ideas, arguments, and points of view.
- Acquire an interest in learning more by asking questions and seeking answers.

**Textbook**

Cox, J R. & Pezzullo, P. (2016). 4<sup>rd</sup>. Ed. Environmental communication and the public sphere. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. (Listed as C&P in the schedule)

**Required readings:**

Buell, L. (1998). Toxic discourse. Critical Inquiry 24, 639-665.

Bowers, T. (2013). Mountaintop removal as a case study: The possibilities for public advocacy through virtual toxic tours. Environmental Communication, 7(3), 372-390.

- Carson, R. (1962). Silent spring. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Ceccarelli, L. (2011). Manufactured scientific controversy: Science, rhetoric, and public debate. Rhetoric & Public Affairs 14.2, 195–228.
- Cox, J. R. (1982). The die is cast: Topical and ontological dimensions of the *Locus* of the irreparable. Quarterly Journal of Speech 68, 227-239.
- DeLuca, K. M. & Demo, A. T. (2000). Imaging nature: Watkins, Yosemite, and the birth of environmentalism. Critical Studies in Media Communication. 17, 241-261.
- Lakoff, G. (2010). Why it matters how we frame the environment. Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture. 4.1, 70-81.
- Leopold, A. (1949). A Sand County almanac and sketches here and there. London: Oxford University Press.
- Muir, J. (1912). Yosemite, New York, Century.
- Peeples, J. & K. M. DeLuca. (2006) The truth of the matter: Motherhood, community and environmental justice. Women's Studies in Communication 29, 39-58.
- Pezzullo, P. C. (2004). Toxic tours: Communicating the “presence” of chemical contamination. In Stephen P. Depoe, John W. Delicath, and Marie France Aepli Elsenbeer (Eds.), Communication and Public Participation in Environmental Decision Making. Albany: SUNY Press. 235-254
- Schwarze, S. (2006): Environmental melodrama. Quarterly Journal of Speech, 92:3, 239-261.

### **My Expectations:**

I am at my best as a teacher in situations where students are consistently present, actively participating in the learning process (this includes work done outside the classroom), and taking responsibility for their course-related actions. Our satisfaction with the course depends largely on the extent to which you honor these expectations to the best of your ability.

### **Your Expectations:**

You should also have some expectations of me as an instructor. I believe my responsibilities as a teacher include starting and ending class on time, being prepared to teach, attending office hours, returning your work promptly, grading fairly and fostering a respectful, open learning environment. If at any time you feel I have not met these expectations or if you have any additional concerns, please let me know so that your needs as a student can best be met.

**Grade distribution:**

100-93% = A,	76-73% = C
92-90% = A-	72-70% = C-
89-87% = B+	69-67% = D+
86-83% = B	66-63% = D
82-80% = B-	62-60% = D-
79-77% = C+	59-0% = F

**Assignments:**

**Weekly think papers:** Each week there will be one short written essay that addresses a question posed by the instructor having to do with the reading assignment. Think paper questions will be assigned via email on Friday and will be due Thursday of each week. Papers will be collected during the first five minutes of class. Late papers will not be accepted.

**Critical Analysis paper:** The first assignment for the course will be an analysis of a national or international “environmental message” (pamphlet, editorial, commercial, speech, advertisement, book, protest, website, etc.). In this paper, the class’s discussion of environmental communication and strategies will be applied to a rhetorical text in order to gain further insight into the text’s persuasive appeal.

**Utah Toxic Tour:** In 2015, Utah was #2 in toxic chemical releases. The only state with higher releases was Alaska (<https://www.ksl.com/?nid=148&sid=33186016>). The second assignment will be creative group project in which you construct a persuasive message concerning a source of pollution in Utah for a particular audience. A good place to start: <https://www.epa.gov/superfund-redevelopment-initiative/superfund-sites-reuse-utah> and <https://www.epa.gov/cleanups/cleanups-my-community>. This project will be multi-media (both visual and discursive—either spoken or written).

The second part of the assignment will be a paper in which your group explains the rhetorical choices made in producing your toxic tour while referencing individual research and course materials. Projects and discussions will be presented to the class in the last week of the semester.

**Evaluations:**

Weekly think papers	30%
Midterm Paper (critique)	35%
Toxic Tour Final Project:	35%
Paper (20%)	
Artifact (12%)	
Presentation (3%)	
	100%

## READING THE SCHEDULE

1. This schedule is subject to change if the demands of the course require it.
2. The reading assignment will be **discussed** the day it is listed.
3. Graded assignments are written in **bold type**.

**During the course of the class, reading assignments may be subject to changes by the instructor.**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Reading</u>	<u>Assignment</u>
<b><u>Week 1</u></b> Aug. 29, 31	Tues: Course introduction  Thurs: Environmental Communication	Thurs: C&P, chapter 1.	
<b><u>Week 2</u></b>  Sept. 5, 7	Tues: Contested meanings of environment  Thurs: Visionaries	Tues: C&P, chapter 2.  Thurs: Muir, Leopold and Carson	
<b><u>Week 3</u></b>  Sept. 12, 14	Tues: Social-Symbolic Constructions of nature  Thurs: Environmental melodrama	Tues: C&P, chapter 3  Thurs: Schwarze	Tues: Choose a text for your analysis.
<b><u>Week 4</u></b>  Sept. 19, 21	Tues: Visual and popular culture  Thurs: Visual framing	Tues: C&P, Chapter 4  Thurs Demo and DeLuca	
<b><u>Week 5</u></b> Sept. 26, 28	Tues: Media and the Environment  Thurs: Framing	Tues: C&P, Chapter 5  Thurs: Lakoff	
<b><u>Week 6</u></b> Oct 3, 5	Tues: Scientists, technology and environmental controversies  Thurs: <b>No class</b>	Tues: C&P, Chapter 6	Thurs: Critical Analysis paper work day!
<b><u>Week 7</u></b> Oct. 10, 12	Tues: Manufactured Scientific Controversy  Thurs: Risk Communication	Tues: Ceccarelli  Thurs: C&P Chapter 7	

<b>Week 8</b> Oct. 17, 19	Tues: Irreparable rhetoric Thurs: <b>No class; fall break</b>	Tues: Cox	
<b>Week 9</b> Oct. 24, 26	Tues: Workshop Thurs: Presentations and discussion	Tues: Thurs:	Tues: Paper work day Thurs: <b>Critical analysis paper due</b>
<b>Week 10</b> Oct. 31, Nov. 2	Tues: Toxic Tours Thurs: Advocacy Campaigns	Tues: Pezzullo Thurs: C&P, Chapter 8	Tues: Organize groups for toxic tours
<b>Week 11</b>  Nov. 7, 9	Tues: Digital Media and Activism Tours Thurs: Virtual Toxic	Tues: C&P, Chapter 9 Thurs: Bowers	Tues: Toxic tour site decision due
<b>Week 12</b> Nov. 14, 16	Tues: Toxic Discourse Thurs: <b>No class</b>	Tues: Buell Thurs:	Thurs: Group project work day! Field trip?
<b>Week 13</b> Nov. 21, 23	Tues: Environmental Justice Thurs: <i>Happy Thanksgiving!</i>	Tues C&P, Chapter 10 Thurs:	
<b>Week 14</b> Nov. 28, 30	Tues: Greening corps and campus Thurs: Environmental Jeremiad	Tues: C&P, Chapter 11 Thurs: Wolfe	
<b>Week 15</b> Dec. 5, 7	<b>Tues: Presentations</b>  <b>Thurs: Presentations</b>		Tues: <b>Toxic Tours projects due &amp; presentations begin</b>  Thurs: <b>Presentations</b>
Final Exam Dec. 14, 11:30-1:20	<b>Presentations</b>		

**Please keep in mind the following****Assignments:**

- All presentations must be performed and assignments turned in on the due date in class in order to receive full credit. Exceptions will be made for extreme documented circumstances.
- All assignments must be turned in at the beginning of the class period that they are due or else they will receive 05% off the final grade each day the assignment is late including the due date. Late think papers will not be accepted.
- Plagiarized work will receive an F for assignment and may, depending on the severity of the infringement, receive a failing grade for the course and/or expulsion from the university.
- Students may not use a paper written in another class for credit in this one, or vice versa, without instructor consent.
- Please refer to the university honesty/honor code for further policies pertinent to this class.
- All work is to be typed, double spaced and free of grammatical and spelling errors.

**In the classroom:**

- I encourage all students to take advantage of my offices hours or e-mail if you have any concerns or questions over any aspect of the course. I am here to help you learn!
- If you have a disability, I strongly encourage you to contact the Disability Resource Center or myself so that the classroom environment can be made conducive to your learning style.
- Finally, I try to create a comfortable classroom environment that contributes to learning. For that reason I ask that you turn off telephones and keep them off your desks, no music, no iPods and absolutely no text messaging! Please refrain from bringing anything else to class that may be a distraction for you or any of the other students.

