Course Description
This class will examine the intersections of communication studies, environmental studies, and social justice primarily—but not exclusively—from a rhetorical perspective. We will consider the “environment” as inclusive of the places we live, work, and play. Our relationship to the environment profoundly shapes our opportunities, health (mental and physical), and ways of living. Further, humankind’s relationship to the environment is shaped by social factors including racism, sexism, and cultural norms (e.g., consumerism). Topics covered will include:

- Social justice approaches to environmentalism
- Rhetorical constructions of “wilderness” and the impacts of early White North American environmentalists’ constructions for indigenous peoples
- Symbolic constructions of the environment, sustainability, and human/nature relationships
- The relationship between the environment and social injustices including (but not limited to) racism, sexism, culture, and classism
- Visual imagery in environmental rhetoric and the problem of communicating invisible toxins
- The rhetoric of science in environmental controversies, including manufactured “controversies”
- The relationship between gender and environmental problems/rhetoric
- Toxins, human health, and rhetorics of risk
- Greenwashing rhetoric in corporate communication

Specific Objectives
Upon completion of this course, students should:

- Understand the ways in which environmental issues are inextricably linked to other social problems such as racism, sexism, and consumerism.
- Understand how human use of symbols (rhetoric) plays a key role in constructing the environment and environmental issues.
- Be able to apply course material to ongoing environmental issues toward the goal of mitigating and/or solving environmental struggles.
- Have improved communication skills (analytical and practical) in the context of environmental issues.
- Have a strong understanding of environmental problems, specifically the ubiquity of toxins.
Hybrid Structure
This class involves asynchronous work time mixed with synchronous Zoom meetings once a week. Typically, I will send out an email early in the week laying out the week’s focus and offering any important notes on the readings. Most weeks, you will submit a set of abstracts on the week’s readings by Wednesday at 8am, after which I will read everyone’s abstracts and offer personalized feedback. This is the general format for the asynchronous work.

Our synchronous meetings will occur on Thursdays. Most weeks, I will offer a 20-30 minute lecture overviewing the week’s topic and key terms. Your abstracts will in part shape the lecture, as they will allow me to get a good sense of the class’s comprehension of the material. Next, we will have discussions that will again be guided by your own work. This structure will occasionally vary and it will be flexible, but overall this is how our hybrid class will function.

Required Text

Additional readings will be uploaded to Canvas under “files.”

Point Distribution
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Points</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading abstracts</td>
<td>40% (grade partially dependent on attendance, see below)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Critical analysis paper</td>
<td>30% (5% proposal, 25% final paper)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group project</td>
<td>30% (5% proposal, 25% presentation and outline)</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>100%</td>
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Grading Scale and Policies

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grading Scale</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>72.95-76.94%</th>
<th>C</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>92.95-100%</td>
<td>A-</td>
<td>69.95-72.94%</td>
<td>C-</td>
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<td>89.95-92.94%</td>
<td>B+</td>
<td>59.95-69.94%</td>
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<td>86.95-89.94%</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>59.94% and below</td>
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<td>79.95-82.94%</td>
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<td>76.95-79.94%</td>
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*Grades are rounded to the nearest tenth. That means that an 89.95 is an A- and an 89.94 is a B+. This policy is non-negotiable and there will be no exceptions.*

In order to uphold a fair standard for all students, I do not change or reconsider a grade unless there has been a mathematical or clerical error. All grades are considered final 48 hours after posting to Canvas. Feel free to discuss your progress in the course with me at any time.

Specific Course Assignments
Reading Abstracts and Related Attendance Policy
To ensure your completion and comprehension of the readings, you will submit an abstract to Canvas for each reading. *Abstracts are due by no later than 8 am the day before class.* This will
give me time to read and offer feedback on your abstracts and thus get a better sense of how to craft our Zoom meeting on Thursday.

If we have more than one reading on any given day, combine abstracts into one file (Word or PDF). An excellent abstract will clearly show that the reader has both completed and thoughtfully considered the reading(s). Abstracts will look different depending on whether we have read a chapter from the course text (5 points), a reading for a primarily academic audience (10 points), or a reading for a primarily public audience (8 points). Each reading on the week-by-week schedule below is marked with a T, A, or P to indicate to you which type of abstract to write. You will not write abstracts for the first week’s readings. Use the following format for abstracts, and label each section:

**Pezzullo and Cox Chapters (T):** Readings from the textbook (5 points, roughly ½ page)
- **Top of page:** Name and title of chapter
- **Summary:** A one paragraph summary of the overall purpose and/or main message of the chapter
- **Terms:** Identify and explain two of what you thought were the most interesting or important terms discussed in the chapter (this don’t necessarily need to be bolded in the text)

**Scholarly Articles & Book Chapters (A):** Writings for a primarily academic audience (10 points, roughly one page)
- **Top of page:** Name and title of reading
- **Thesis:** Identify the author’s thesis statement/main argument and briefly explain what it means in your own words.
- **Key Points:** Identify 3-5 of what you perceive to be the most important points or ideas in the reading and explain the points/ideas in your own words.
- **One question/thought:** What is a specific question or though do you have upon completing the reading? Questions/thoughts should be designed to elicit discussions (not necessarily answers).

**Articles & Chapters in Popular Press (P):** Writings for a primarily public audience (8 points, roughly one page)
- **Top of page:** Name and title of reading
- **Summary:** A 1-2 paragraph summary of the reading, including the main claim/thesis
- **Key Strategies:** Identify and briefly discuss 1-2 of what you perceive to be the most important persuasive strategies exemplified in the artifact. Put otherwise, how does the author persuade the reader to agree with her/his/their thesis? You can draw upon the rhetorical strategies noted in Chapter Three (or other terms of rhetoric/persuasion you have learned in this class or others).
- **One question/thought:** What is a specific question or thought you have upon completing the reading? Questions/thoughts should be designed to elicit discussions (not necessarily answers).
Our Thursday discussions are an important supplement to the guided responses. Accordingly, attendance in these meetings is required. You can miss two classes with no penalty before you will no longer earn credit for a set of abstracts for which you miss the discussion.

**Critical Analysis Paper**
For your midterm assignment, you will offer a critical analysis of an environmental artifact that sends a persuasive message to a public audience. Examples include (but are not limited to) book chapters, news articles, essays, advertisements, commercials, protests, and websites. Drawing heavily on Pezzullo and Cox’s chapter “Symbolic Constructions of the Environment,” you will use the resources of rhetorical criticism to explain the persuasive appeal of your text. A detailed prompt and video explanation will be provided on Canvas. You will have a proposal due by 8am on February 17. On February 18, you will workshop your ideas in small groups. The final paper is due by **12pm on March 4**. You are welcomed and encouraged to set up a Zoom appointment to have a one-on-one discussion of your paper.

**Group Project: Communicating Environmental Dangers to the Public**
Your second major assignment is a group project designed to inform the class of a specific environmental threat to public health and pose a solution. Groups will need to carefully consider the rhetorical situation before identifying a series of strategies that will motivate your audience to care about the problem, and you will propose a well thought out policy solution or a set of direct action strategies. This project involves a proposal, a full sentence outline, and a presentation. I will form groups based on interests, availability, and preference based on information you turn in to me by no later than **Friday, March 5**. Proposals will be due Thursday, March 18 and presentations will begin on April 15. Detailed guidelines will be provided on Canvas.

**Course Policies**

**Attendance**
I expect students to attend the entirety of the Thursday Zoom meetings. As noted, you can miss up to two classes with no formal penalty. If you miss class on a day there is an abstract or series of abstracts due after you already have two absences, you will not receive points for the abstract(s). These two allotted absences are set aside in order to recognize hardships, illness, and potential WiFi issues due to the pandemic, so do not squander them.

You must attend group presentation days at the end of the semester. While you obviously need to attend the day your group presents, missing the class period in which other groups present will result in a 5% deduction of your presentation grade (the absence will affect only your grade, not your group mates’). This penalty will not be applied in the case of excusable, documentable absences.

For missed classes, it is the student’s responsibility to get class notes and other materials from a classmate. **The instructor does not provide notes for missed classes.**

**Plagiarism**
Students must complete their own work and give credit to any outside sourced used to complete an assignment. Lack of knowledge of the academic policy is not a reasonable explanation for any form of academic misconduct. Plagiarism includes—but is not limited to—copying and pasting
another person’s work, failing to give credit to information derived from another person’s work, paraphrasing another persons’ work in a way that misrepresents the original claims, having another student complete your work, and completing another student’s work. Questions related to the course assignments and the academic honesty policy should be directed to the instructor.

**Learning Accommodations**
This class welcomes students with disabilities. Any student who needs special accommodations for learning is invited to meet with me. Disabilities must be documented through the Disability Resource Center. Formal requests for accommodations must be completed before the scheduled assignment.

**Discussion Guidelines**
A supportive environment is critical to everyone’s learning and success in the course. Accordingly, I have a series of guidelines for classroom etiquette to help foster this type of environment.

- When another student or the professor is speaking, avoid interrupting.
- If you take umbrage with an argument or point being made, feel free to express your concerns but focus on critiquing the idea (not individuals).
- Ask questions when you do not understand something, and don’t assume you know what others are thinking or what motivates them.
- Do not expect individuals to speak on behalf of their gender, race, culture, class status, or sexuality. It is unfair to expect someone to be a spokesperson for an entire identity group.
- Commit to learning, not debating.

**Email**
You may address me as Mollie or Dr. Murphy. Write an email similar to how you would write a letter (include salutation: “Hello Dr. Murphy/Dear Mollie” sign your name “Regards, Nadia/Best, Miguel”). I will typically respond to an email within 24 hours. If you email me in the evening, expect that I will reply the following day. There is no set turn-around time on weekends. I would ask that you, too, check and respond to email in a similar time frame.

**Online Learning and Zoom Etiquette**
Much of our course will involve asynchronous learning, which necessitates some extra responsibility and organization on your end. Students are responsible for becoming familiar with Canvas, where much of our course materials will be available. If you cannot locate a reading or video, notify me at least 48 hours in advance of any related assignment deadline. *Being unable to locate the reading or a video is not an excuse for submitting work late.* If for some reason you have issues submitting an assignment, you may email the assignment to me by the deadline. I will also be corresponding via USU email, and I expect that you will also be regularly checking your email linked up to your Canvas page.

I also have a few guidelines for our weekly Zoom meetings.

- Do not record any part of the meeting. If I discover that a meeting has been recorded, the student who recorded the meeting (and/or the student who shared the recording with others) will automatically fail the course.
• I would appreciate if you kept your camera on during our meetings so we can all see each other and best approximate the sense of community offered in a regular classroom. With that said, I understand that turning one’s video off might be necessary for some people and at certain times.

Written Assignment Guidelines and Late Work
All written assignments must adhere to the most recent edition of APA or MLA. Reference pages do not count as part of your paper’s page limit, nor do heading material or title pages (if relevant). Additionally, all written assignments must:

• Be in Times New Roman, 12 point font
• Have standard margins (1” top, bottom, and sides)
• Be double spaced
• Have no extra white space between paragraphs (if you have trouble with this, check your format settings)
• Devote minimal space to heading material (no more than 3 single-spaced lines)

Work submitted after a ten-minute grace period will receive a 10% deduction and an additional 10% will be deducted for every 24 hours it is not turned in.

Course Schedule
Notes
• This is a general plan for the course. Deviations may be necessary and will be announced either during our weekly meetings or via email.
• Abstracts are always due at 8am the day before we meet. This is so I can read your work, understand where the class is at and offer feedback beforehand to make the most of our short time together.
• I strongly recommend starting the readings for the next week shortly after our Thursday meeting. Some weeks will demand more reading than others, and at the 5000 level I expect thorough engagement with each reading.
• We meet synchronously on Thursdays 12:00-1:15pm. I will provide a Zoom link on Canvas under the Zoom tab.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1: Course Intro and Key Definitions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, January 21: Zoom lecture and discussion 12:00-1:15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Before class meeting</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Read the syllabus</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Read Pezzullo and Cox, Chapter 1 (T)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Read Agyeman, “Toward a ‘Just’ Sustainability?” (A)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• *No abstracts due this week</td>
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Week 2: Contested Meanings of the Environment
Abstracts for the following readings are due by **8am on Wednesday, January 27**
- Pezzullo and Cox, Chapter 2 (T)
- Spence, *Dispossessing the Land*, “Introduction” (A)
- DeLuca, “Trains in the Wilderness: The Corporate Roots of Environmentalism” (A)

Thursday, January 28: Zoom lecture and discussion 12:00-1:15pm

Week 3: Symbolism in Environmental Communication
Abstracts for the following readings are due by **8am on Wednesday, February 3**
- Pezzullo and Cox, Chapter 3 (T)
- Carson, “A Fable for Tomorrow” (P)
- Oravec, “An Inventional Archaeology of ‘A Fable for Tomorrow’” (A)

Thursday, February 4: Zoom lecture and discussion 12:00-1:15pm

**Before class meeting**
- Read prompt for critical analysis midterm paper
- Watch video recording on Chapter 3 and the critical analysis paper (posted to Canvas discussion board by Wednesday at 8 am)

Week 4: Visual Constructions of the Environment
Abstracts for the following readings are due by **8am on Wednesday, February 10**
- Pezzullo and Cox, Chapter 4 (T)
- Peeples, “Toxic Sublime: Imaging Contaminated Landscapes” (A)

Thursday, February 11: Zoom meeting and discussion 12:00-1:15 pm
- Dr. Peeples will guest lecture
- Be prepared to ask Dr. Peeples a question or thought you raised in your abstract

Week 5: Critical Analysis Paper Focus Week
Before **8am on Wednesday, February 17**
- Submit your proposal for your critical analysis paper (directions on the prompt)

Thursday, February 18: Zoom critical analysis paper discussion and workshop 12:00-1:15pm

Week 6: Gender, Sex, and Environmental Justice
Abstracts for the following readings are due by **8am on Wednesday, February 24**
- Pezzullo, “Resisting ‘National Breast Cancer Awareness Month’: The Rhetoric of Counterpublics and their Cultural Performances” (A)
- Malkan, “Not Too Pretty” (P)

Thursday, February 25: Zoom meeting and discussion 12:00-1:15 pm
Week 7: Finalizing Your Paper and Looking Ahead to the Final Project
Spend the early part of the week finalizing your critical analysis paper!

Thursday, March 4: Zoom meeting and discussion 12:00-1:15 pm
Before class meeting
- Submit your critical analysis paper (due at 12pm)
- Read the group project prompt
- Be prepared to tell me when you are available/unavailable to meet with group mates

Week 8: Science, Technology, and (Manufactured) Environmental Controversies
Abstracts for the following readings are due by 8am on Wednesday, March 10
- Pezzullo and Cox, Chapter 6 (T)
- Oreskes and Conway, “The Denial of Global Warming” (A)

Thursday, March 11: Zoom meeting and discussion 12:00-1:15 pm
Week 9: Science, Technology, and (Genuine) Environmental Controversies
Abstracts for the following readings are due by 8am on Wednesday, March 17
- Murphy, “Scientific Argument Without a Scientific Consensus” (A)
- Steingraber, “Trace Amounts” (P)

Thursday, March 18: Zoom meeting and discussion 12:00-1:15 pm
Before class meeting
- Submit your group project proposal! (directions on prompt)

Week 10: Human Health and Ecological Risk Communication
Abstracts for the following readings are due by 8am on Wednesday, March 24
- Pezzullo and Cox, Chapter 7, p. 149-166 (T)
- Davies, “The Birth of the U.S. Environmental Health Movement” (A)

Thursday, March 25: Zoom meeting and discussion 12:00-1:15 pm

Week 11: Environmental Justice and Environmental Racism
Abstracts for the following readings are due by 8am on Wednesday, March 31
- Pezzullo and Cox, Chapter 11 (T)
- Washington, “The Lead Age: Heavy Metals, Low IQs” (A)

Thursday, April 1: Zoom meeting and discussion 12:00-1:15 pm

Week 12: Greenwashing and Corporate Environmental Rhetoric
Abstracts for the following readings are due by 8am on Wednesday, April 7
- Pezzullo & Cox, Chapter 8, pp. 177-193 (T)
- Dahl, “Greenwashing: Do You Know What You’re Buying?” (A)

Thursday, April 8: Zoom meeting and discussion 12:00-1:15 pm
Week 13: Communicating Environmental Dangers Presentations
Work on group project outlines and presentations; set up a Zoom meeting with me if desired

Thursday, April 15: Group project presentations begin

Before class
- All groups must submit their full sentence outlines and visual aids by 12pm

Week 14: Communicating Environmental Dangers Presentation
Thursday, April 22: Finish group project presentations