

University of Calgary
Department of Communication and Culture

Communications Studies COMS 401.33 L02
Environmental Communications
Sept. 2 – 6, Fall (Block Week)
Fall 2014

Instructor: Edna Einsiedel

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Office Hours: TBA during Block Week; Wed 10-11 post block-week

Course Description:

Societal discussions on environmental issues have been growing in importance as we navigate our way around a variety of issues, global and local. From more recent issues such as climate change, biodiversity, genetic modification to long-standing issues around environmental conservation, animal rights and welfare, scientific knowledge and uncertainty, processes of communication are central to how environmental problems are constructed, debated and solved. The course will explore the different viewpoints on some of these key issues from a variety of interdisciplinary perspectives, keeping the communications lens as central to these explorations.

Course Objectives:

- To explore how ideas such as “nature”, “environment”, ‘sustainability’, and ‘development’ have been conceptualized and in turn, how these different understandings inform discursive positions on key environmental issues
- To investigate how different stakeholder positions are articulated and enacted
- To examine how different modes of communication are employed in addressing environmental problems
- To analyze how key theoretical ideas are conceptualized and applied to environmental communication contexts.

Textbook and Readings:

Cox, Robert (2013) Environmental communication and the public sphere,
3rd Ed. Los Angeles: Sage publications [in bookstore]

Other readings as provided in daily schedule and on D2L

Assignments and Evaluation:

- **Group Analysis and Presentation – 25%**
 - Students will work in groups of 5 and will choose an environmental issue to analyze. A short 15-minute group presentation will be held on the last day of class. The presentation will summarize the issue and key actors, the

communication strategies employed by each side or position, and an analysis of the case in the context of some key concepts from the readings or as discussed in class. Please submit a copy of your powerpoint slides.

- **Exams –**
 - **In-class exam on Day 4 (Friday) -- 15%**
 - **Take-home examination – 10%** -- Question to be distributed Saturday, Sept. 6th, due Monday noon, Sept. 8.
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- **Research paper – 35%**
 - 10 pp. double-spaced,(approx. 2500 words, referenced APA style) due Sept. 26, 4 pm
- **Participation – 15%**
 - .Active participation in class is encouraged

Registrar-scheduled Final Examination: No

All assignments and exams must be completed or a course grade of F may be assigned at the discretion of the instructor.

Submission of Assignments: You may hand in your essays directly to your instructor or if it is not possible to do so, a daytime drop box is available in SS320; a date stamp is provided for your use. A night drop box is also available for after-hours submission. Assignments will be removed the following morning, stamped with the previous day's date, and placed in the instructor's mailbox.

Please include your name and ID number on all assignments, and be prepared to provide picture ID to pick up assignments or look at final exams in SS 320 after classes have ended. Personal information is collected in accordance with the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy (FOIP) Act*. For more information, see <http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>

Note: It is the student's responsibility to keep a copy of each submitted assignment. For courses in which assignments are submitted electronically, it is the student's responsibility to ensure that the correct copy of the assignment is submitted. (Including the version date or version number in your file name may help you avoid submitting the wrong version of your written assignments.)

Policy for Late Assignments:

Assignments submitted after the deadline may be penalized with the loss of a grade (e.g.: A- to B+) for each day late.

Students with Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability who may require academic accommodation, it is your responsibility to register with the Student Accessibility Services (220-8237, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/access/>) and discuss your needs with your instructor no later than 14 days after the start of the course.

Writing Skills Statement

Department policy directs that all written assignments (including, to a lesser extent, written exam responses) will be assessed at least partly on writing skills. For details see <http://comcul.ucalgary.ca/needtoknow>. Writing skills include not only surface correctness (grammar, punctuation, sentence structure, etc) but also general clarity and organization. Sources used in research papers must be properly documented. If you need help with your writing, you may use the Writing Centre. Visit the website for more details: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>

Grading System:

Work in this course will be graded using percentage and letter grades.

Grade Point Value	Description	Grade	Department grade scale equivalents	Letter grade % equivalent for calculations
4.00	Outstanding	A+	96 - 100%	98.0%
4.00	Excellent—superior performance, showing comprehensive understanding of subject matter.	A	90 - 95.99%	93.0%
3.70		A -	85 - 89.99%	87.5%
3.30		B+	80 - 84.99%	82.5%
3.00	Good--clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete.	B	75 - 79.99%	77.5%
2.70		B-	70 - 74.99%	72.5%
2.30		C+	65 - 69.99%	67.5%
2.00	Satisfactory—basic understanding of the subject matter.	C	60 - 64.99%	62.5%
1.70		C-	55 - 59.99%	57.5%
1.30	Minimal pass—marginal performance; generally insufficient preparation for subsequent courses in the same subject	D+	53 - 54.99%	54.0%
1.00		D	50 - 52.99%	51.5%

0.00	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.	F	00 - 49.99%	0%
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Plagiarism

Using any source whatsoever without clearly documenting it is a serious academic offense. Consequences include failure on the assignment, failure in the course and possibly suspension or expulsion from the university.

You must document not only direct quotations but also paraphrases and ideas where they appear in your text. A reference list at the end is insufficient by itself. In-text citations must be provided, and readers must be able to tell exactly where your words and ideas end and other people's words and ideas begin. Wording taken directly from a source must be enclosed within quotation marks (or, for long quotations, presented in the format prescribed by the documentation style you are using). Paraphrased information must not follow the original wording and sentence structure with only slight word substitutions here and there. These requirements apply to all assignments and sources, including those in non-traditional formats such as Web pages or visual media.

For information on citation and documentation styles (including APA, Chicago, IEEE, MLA, and others), visit the links provided at <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/node/208> . If you have questions about how to document sources, please consult your instructor or the Writing Centre (3rd Floor TFDL, <http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support>).

Academic Misconduct

For information on academic misconduct and the consequences thereof please see the current University of Calgary Calendar at the following link:

<http://www.ucalgary.ca/pubs/calendar/current/k.html>

Research Ethics

Whenever you perform research with human participants (i.e. surveys, interviews, observation) as part of your university studies, you are responsible for following university research ethics guidelines. Your instructor must review and approve of your research plans and supervise your research. For more information about your research ethics responsibilities, see <http://arts.ucalgary.ca/research/research/research-ethics>

Important information, services, and contacts for students

For information about . . .	Visit or contact . . .
ARTS PROGRAM ADVISING (PIC)	SS 102 403-220-3580 picarts@ucalgary.ca
CAMPUS SECURITY	http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/ 403-220-5333

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calgary Police Service • Emergency Text Messaging • Emergency Evacuation & Assembly • Safewalk Program 	<p>403-266-1234 Emergency: call 911</p> <p>http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/textmessage</p> <p>http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints</p> <p>If you feel uncomfortable walking alone at any time, call Campus Security for an escort (220-5333). For more information, see http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/</p>
<p>DESIRE2LEARN (D2L) Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IT help line 	<p>http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/desire2learn/home/students</p> <p>403-220-5555 or itsupport@ucalgary.ca</p>
<p>STUDENT SUCCESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Support Services • Student Services Mobile App 	<p>http://ucalgary.ca/ssc</p> <p>http://www.ucalgary.ca/ssc/writing-support</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/currentstudents</p>
<p>STUDENTS' UNION CONTACTS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty of Arts Reps • Student Ombudsman 	<p>http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/governance/elections/home.html</p> <p>http://www.ucalgary.ca/provost/students/ombuds</p>
<p>SU WELLNESS CENTRE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counselling Services • Health Services • Distress centre 24/7 CRISIS LINE • Online resources and tips 	<p>403-210-9355 (MSC 370), M-F, 9:00–4:30 pm</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/counselling</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/health</p> <p>403-266-HELP (4357)</p> <p>http://ucalgary.ca/wellnesscentre/healthycampus</p> <p>If you're concerned about a friend or your own well-being, it is important to seek help early. Call or visit the SU Wellness Centre or the 24-hour crisis line.</p>

Schedule of Lectures and Readings

Pre-session readings:

Cox, Ch. 1-3
Meadowcroft, J. 2005), Sustainable development: a new(ish) idea for a new century?

Sept. 2, Tue

Introduction, course expectations

Key concepts and a historical context

G. Hardin, The tragedy of the commons. Science, 162:3859, 1243-

- 48
- Sept. 3, Wed** **Key actors; dueling science**
Cox, 8-10
Wickman, Rhetorical framing in corporate press releases: the case of BP and the gulf oil spill
Yearley, Environmental groups as communicators of science
- Sept. 4, Thu** **Media and environment; Science and risk communication**
Cox, Ch 6-7; 11-12
Leiss, A diagnostic for risk communication failures, in Mad cows and mother's milk
Cone, Fear is toxic too: communicating risk to Canada's Inuit
- Sept. 5, Fri** **Reimagining Communication approaches – from tweets to cafes, deliberations to decision-making**

Cox, Ch 4-5
Einsiedel, Publics and their participation on science and technology
Bennett & Segerberg, The logic of connective action

First Exam
- Sept. 6, Sat** Group presentations
Take-home questions

References for Readings

Bennett, L. and A. Segerberg (2012) The logic of connective action. *Information, communication and society*, 15:5, 739-768

Cone, M. (2006). Fear is toxic, too: communicating risk to Canada's Inuit (ch. 7). In M. Cone, *Silent snow: the slow poisoning of the Arctic*. New York: Grove press.

Cox, R. (2013) *Environmental communication and the public sphere*. 3rd ed. Los Angeles: Sage publications

Einsiedel, E. (2014) Publics and their participation on science and technology. M. Bucchi and B. Trench, eds., *Handbook of Public Communication on science and technology*. London: Routledge.

Hardin, G. (1968). The tragedy of the commons. *Science*, 162:3859, 1243-1248.

Lewis, RC and M. Tyshenko (2009). The impact of social amplification and attenuation of risk and the public reaction to mad cow disease in Canada. *Risk analysis*, 29:5, 714-28.

Meadowcroft, J. (2005). Sustainable development: a new(ish) idea for a new century? In Dryzek, J. and D. Schlosberg, eds., *Debating the earth: the environmental politics reader*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Powell, D. and W. Leiss (1997) A diagnostic for risk communication failures. In D. Powell and W. Leiss, *Mad cows and mother's milk: the perils of poor risk communication*. Montreal: McGill-Queens Univ. Press

Wickman, C. (2014) Rhetorical framing in corporate press releases: the case of BP in the Gulf Oil spill. *Environmental communication*, 8:1, 3-20.