



Environmental Communication

CAS NS 332 (3 credits)

Course Catalog Description:

Seminar focusing on communication skills development for environmental scholars. Introduces the field of environmental communication, examines environmental attitudes and behaviors, and develops a toolkit of communications strategies. Includes projects in data visualization, multi-media presentation and digital storytelling.

Instructors: Sea Education Association Maritime Studies and Oceanography Faculty; Visiting Scholars.

Location: SEA campus in Woods Hole, MA, on shore at field sites and port stops, and aboard SEA sailing school vessel at sea.

Prerequisites: Admission to SEA Semester. Junior standing or consent of instructor.

Course Philosophy and Approach:

In this course, students will develop the skills necessary to effectively communicate environmental concepts and issues to a broad audience of stakeholder groups, community and business leaders, and the public. The course surveys current scholarship and expertise to find the most effective techniques for communicating environmental information and identifies common difficulties in informing and persuading others and advancing environmental dialogue. Key areas of inquiry include strategies for selecting appropriate media, assessing attitudes within and across target groups, developing framing strategies for persuasive messaging, responding to opposing views, and understanding how communication fits within the broader field of environmental engagement, including research. Students will build a communications toolkit that includes skills in public speaking, podcasting and broadcasting, social media, data visualization, and the ability to gauge the effectiveness of internet materials and film in conveying environmental messages. The course consists of 22 hours of seminars, 18 hours of faculty-guided project workshops, 14 hours of field trips, 4 hours of presentations, and 4 hours of topic discussion.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand key theories and strategies in the field of environmental communication.
2. Interact with communities in other societies and understand the role of beliefs, practices, and worldviews in shaping communication goals and strategies.
3. Acquire skills in visual and aural framing: drawing on photographs, graphic art, infographics, and recorded interviews to focus attention on specific points of an issue.



4. Explore how racism, gender bias, and differences in economic and educational opportunities influence access to media and public fora.
5. Prepare for communication opportunities with advocacy organizations, businesses, and government agencies, and develop skills that lead to further participation in environmental research and outreach.

Evaluation:

Data Visualization Assignments (2)	20%
Reading Response Paper	10%
Communication Response Project	30%
Digital Storytelling Project	40%

Assignments:

Data Visualization Assignments

Each student will produce two graphics projects with the guidance of the instructor. Projects will be based on data taken from students' projects in concurrent program courses and will employ graphic design techniques learned in class. The first assignment is due in week 4 and the second in week 6. Each assignment is worth 10% of the total course grade.

Reading Response Paper

Each student will write a brief (600-700 words) response to a prompt provided by the course instructor, based on course readings. The paper will explore cultural and gender biases in environmental communication. The reading response paper is due in week 3 and is worth 10% of the total course grade.

Communication Response Project

The course instructor will assign an environmental issue and a target audience to student teams of two or three. The goal of the assignment is to design a communications piece such as a podcast/radio spot or a newspaper op-ed that considers environmental attitudes, existing media coverage of the problem, and anticipated audience responses and subsequent actions. The assignment will be a time-sensitive response to an issue, allowing students 48 hours to develop an effective communications strategy. Each team will submit a brief (2-3 pages) written summary that addresses each of the considerations listed above, and teams will present their projects to the class. The team communication project, including the communications piece, class presentation, and written summary is worth 30% of the total course grade and is due in week five.

Digital Storytelling Project

Students will explore how audio, visual, and text convey environmental information, ideas and issues through storytelling. In teams of two or three and guided by the course instructor, they



will identify environmental issues in one or more of the places visited during the second shore and sea components of the program. Student teams will develop communication pieces in media of their choice (e.g., podcast, video, documentary-style report, multi-media press kit) which they will present to the class in the final week of the semester. Program faculty and ship staff will provide content guidance and will advise students on the appropriate size and scope of their projects. The digital storytelling project is due in week 12 and is worth 40% of the total course grade.

Expectations and Requirements:

- Punctual attendance is required at every class meeting.
- Active participation in class discussion is expected.
- Late assignment submissions are not accepted.
- The policy on academic accuracy, quoted below, will be strictly followed in this class.
The papers that you submit in this course are expected to be ***your original work***. You must take care to distinguish your own ideas and knowledge from wording or substantive information that you derive from one of your sources. The term “sources” includes not only published primary and secondary material, but also information and opinions gained directly from other people and text that you cut and paste from any site on the Internet.

The responsibility for learning the proper forms of citation lies with you.

Quotations must be placed properly within quotation marks and must be cited fully. In addition, all paraphrased material must be acknowledged completely. Whenever ideas or facts are derived from your reading and research, the sources must be indicated. (Harvard *Handbook for Students*, 305)

- Considerations for use of internet sources: As you browse websites, assess their usefulness very critically. Who posted the information and why? Can you trust them to be correct? Authoritative? Unbiased? Your annotation should include the name of the author or organization originating any material that you reference. If you can't identify the source, don't use it!
- *Please consult information in the SEA Student Handbook on Academic Integrity and direct any questions to SEA Semester faculty.*

Readings:

Arendt, Florian, and Jörg Matthes. Nature Documentaries, Connectedness to Nature, and Pro-environmental Behavior. *Environmental Communication* 10(4):453-472. 2016.

Barber, John F. Digital storytelling: New opportunities for humanities scholarship and pedagogy. *Cogent Art & Humanities* 3:1181037. 2016.



European Environment Agency (EEA). Communication, environment and behaviour. EEA Report 13: 23 pp. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union. 2016.

Franz-Balsen, Angela. Gender and (Un)Sustainability: Can Communication Solve a Conflict of Norms? *Sustainability* 6:1973-1991. 2014.

Jurin, Richard R., Donny Roush, and Jeff Danter. *Environmental Communication*. Second Edition. New York: Springer. 2010.

Klößner, Christian A. *The Psychology of Pro-Environmental Communication*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 2015.

Lakoff, George. Why it Matters How We Frame the Environment. *Environmental Communication* 4(1):70-81. 2010.

Nisbet, Matthew C., and Todd P. Newman. Framing, the Media, and Environmental Communication. In: *The Routledge Handbook of Environment and Communication*, Anders Hansen and Robert Cox, eds. Pp. 325-338. New York: Routledge. 2015.

Norton, Todd, and Natalie Grecu. Publics, communication campaigns, and persuasive communication. In: *The Routledge Handbook of Environment and Communication*, Anders Hansen and Robert Cox, eds. Pp. 354-367. New York: Routledge. 2015.

Pezzullo, Phaedra C., and Robert Cox. *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere* (Fifth Edition). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. 2018.

Russill, Chris, and Zoe Nyssa. The tipping point trend in climate change communication. *Global Environmental Change* 19:336-44. 2009.

White, Michael. Susan Joy Hassol and climate communication. *Forecast* July 14, 2016. <http://forecastpod.org/index.php/2016/07/14/susan-joy-hassol-and-climate-communication/>

Course Calendar:

Topic	Readings/Assignments Due
Week 1 (4 hours) – on shore at SEA campus in Woods Hole	
<p>Seminar: Introduction to the themes, readings, and expectations for the course</p> <p>Workshop: Assessing what we know (and don't know)</p>	<p>Readings: Pezzullo & Cox 2018 (Ch. 1, "Defining Environmental Communication"); Jurin et al 2010 (Ch. 3, "Developing Your Environmental</p>

when we communicate about the environment	Literacy")
Week 2 (6 hours) – on shore at SEA campus in Woods Hole	
<p>Seminar: Changing environmental attitudes and behaviors</p> <p>Workshop: Persuasive communication</p>	<p>Readings: Klöckner 2015 (Ch. 4, “Decision Models”); EEA 2016 (Ch. 3, “What Does Behavioral Science Say?”); Pezzullo & Cox 2018 (Ch. 2, “Contested Meanings”)</p>
Week 3 (6 hours) – on shore at SEA campus in Woods Hole	
<p>Seminar: Data Communication and Visualization 1</p> <p>Seminar: The power of storytelling</p>	<p>Readings: Lakoff 2010; Jurin et al 2010 (Ch. 12, “Communicating Across Cultures”); Franz-Balsen 2014</p> <p>Due: Reading Response Paper</p>
Week 4 (8 hours) – on shore at SEA campus in Woods Hole	
<p>Seminar: Media</p> <p>Workshop/field trip: WCAI Radio visit</p>	<p>Readings: Nisbet & Newman 2015; Klöckner 2015 (Ch. 6, “Traditional and New Media”); Pezzullo & Cox 2018 (Ch. 10, “Digital Media”)</p> <p>Due: Data Visualization Assignment 1</p>
Week 5 (6 hours) – on shore at SEA campus in Woods Hole	
<p>Seminar: Building a communication strategy</p> <p>Field Trip: Visit to Falmouth/Woods Hole environmental groups</p>	<p>Readings: Jurin 2010 (Ch. 13, “Speaking to an Audience”; Ch. 17, “Managing Conflict”); Norton & Grecu 2015</p> <p>Due: Communication Response Project</p>
Week 6 (8 hours) – on shore at SEA campus in Woods Hole	
<p>Seminar: Data Communication and Visualization 2</p> <p>Workshop: Environment and film</p>	<p>Reading: Arendt & Matthes 2016</p> <p>Due: Data Visualization Assignment 2</p>
Week 7 (8 hours) – on shore in New Zealand	
<p>Second shore component</p> <p>Field Trip: Meetings with climate researchers</p>	

<p>Seminar: Environmental communication and field research</p> <p>Topic Discussion: What it's like being there: Integrating research and experience in communication</p>	
--	--

Week 8 (4 hours) – at sea	
<p>Sea component</p> <p>Workshop: Developing Digital Storytelling Projects 1</p> <p>Topic Discussion: Introduction to Digital Storytelling</p>	<p>Reading: Barber 2016</p>
Week 9 (2 hours) – at sea	
<p>Seminar: Tipping points and framing strategies</p>	<p>Reading: Russill & Nyssa 2009</p>
Week 10 (2 hours) – at sea	
<p>Workshop: Developing Digital Storytelling Projects 2</p>	
Week 11 (4 hours) – at sea	
<p>Field Trip: Assessing environmental attitudes in media</p> <p>Seminar: Communicating optimism</p>	<p>Audio: White 2016</p>
Week 12 (4 hours) – at sea	
<p>Digital Storytelling Presentations</p>	<p>Due: Digital Storytelling Project</p>