

**Environmental Communication
COM 274
Spring 2008**

Instructor: Dr. J. L. Courtright

Office: Fell 428

Office Hours: TTh 1:15-3:15 p.m.; other times by
appointment

PLEASE use WebCT Mail to contact!

Course Website: <http://www.communication.ilstu.edu/jlcourt/com274/index.html>

Meeting time: MWF 11:00 – 11:50 a.m.

Classroom: Fell 158

Course Description

Theoretical and practical exploration of environmental issues and the communication surrounding them. Topics include corporate advocacy, grass-roots activism, environmental nonprofit organizations, and governmental influence.

Objectives

All students are expected by the end of the semester to accomplish the following:

- To be able to describe and discuss how environmental communication is inherently rhetorical;
- To research and analyze data regarding an environmental issue, the parties involved in it;
- To appreciate the importance of communication channels and tactics in environmental communication;
- To engage in critical thinking in the application of best practices in environmental communication to case studies; and
- To engage meaningfully in environmental issues in the broader community (Bloomington/Normal and McLean County).

Texts

Cox, R. (2006). *Environmental communication and the public sphere*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Jacobson, S. K. (1999). *Communication skills for conservation professionals*. Washington, DC: Island Press.

A limited number of other readings will become available, announced in class, and made available through WebCT.

Course Grading Standards & Criteria

Class periods will be conducted in a lecture and discussion format. All readings are to be completed prior to the day for which they are assigned.

WebCT Quizzes: There are six opportunities to take quizzes throughout the semester. I will drop your lowest score. Each quiz will be comprised of 20 multiple-choice items worth one point each. Because you can take WebCT quizzes at any computer, you are on the honor system—PLEASE DO NOT take a quiz in the presence of a classmate. Study together, but don't take quizzes together. You will get only one chance to take the quiz and it must be submitted within a time limit—study ahead of time and save yourself frustration!

CLASS PROJECT

In keeping with the university's efforts toward civic engagement, you will work in teams of three to four people and work with committees and members of the Green Team on campus. The project you choose to work with will come from a list that is announced in class the day that we discuss all sections of the project, **Monday, January 28**.

The project will be graded in two parts. Each part will vary according to the project and the progress expectations, to be negotiated between your project team, the Green Team contact(s), and the instructor. Projects will include the following steps in the public relations campaign process:

Research (or Evaluation) Assignment: Your team will first research the environmental issue and campus communication climate surrounding it. Among the questions to be answered: What is the issue, its history, etc.? What communication problems or opportunities exist for the organization in relation to this issue? Who are the organization's target audiences for this issue? (In one campaign opportunity the team will be evaluating the success of an environmental communication event held last fall. The same questions are relevant, however.)

Communication Planning Assignment: Research/Evaluation provides a rationale for a communication campaign that you will propose. Your team will summarize this rationale and set a public relations goal for your campaign. The goal then leads to specific objectives related to audience awareness, opinion, and/or behavior. The assignment concludes with an outline and justification of your proposed campaign's theme and supporting ideas.

Message Design: In this section your team will design—and often implement—the messages intended to accomplish the goal and objectives set during Communication Planning.

PLEASE NOTE: The second part of the project should take into account feedback from the first assignment. Unless otherwise negotiated, the second part of the project will include communication planning and message design.

Oral Presentation: Team members will give a 12-15 minute presentation in front of the class, giving a synopsis of their project followed by a 3-5 minute question & answer session with the class. Going over 16 minutes will result in a penalty due to time constraints of the final exam period. PLEASE send your PowerPoint or other presentation materials via WebCT mail to Dr. C before your team presents to the class! (This way we can make sure that your version of MS PowerPoint functions properly with the one available on the classroom computer!)

IMPORTANT: Each team is **responsible for selecting a team liaison**. The liaison is responsible for communicating the team's needs, questions, suggestions, concerns, etc., to Dr. C. It is much easier and more practical to answer one person's (the liaison's) questions and having that person relay the information to their team members rather than answering the same question to multiple team members at different times.

Peer Evaluations (2 @ 25 points each): At two times during the semester, you will rate yourself and your teammates as you might do in business today. Forms will be available on the Project page of Dr. C's website. Based on the first evaluations, Dr. C will talk privately with students who may be having trouble working within the team. This will serve as a means to help teams work together to the best of their ability but may also result in a warning for any student not "pulling their weight" with the rest of the team. Dr. C may also request to talk to the team before a warning is issued. Individual comments and ratings are confidential, but a summary of comments may be discussed generally with the student or team members prior to meeting with a particular student.

The second peer evaluation not only monitors progress of the team's task and relational dynamics but may serve as a gauge to see if a team member who received a warning has remedied the concerns surrounding the warning. If not, based on the consent of the entire team, Dr. C may recommend and/or facilitate the expulsion of the student from that team. If that occurs, they will work

with the campus sustainability coordinator and the instructor to find a suitable alternative project to fulfill course requirements.

Citizenship: Ten percent (10%) of your grade will be based on class relations. Since this is an elective public relations course, it is expected that students are engaged in building professional relational skills as an important part of your socialization into the field. Your score out of 50 points will be based on the degree to which you participate in discussion and behave professionally in class or when interacting with the instructor. Online discussion via WebCT also will count (each week I will post discussion topics on WebCT—these will focus on current events; students also may generate discussion on subjects related to the course material). Part of your grade may be determined by lack of attendance or excessive tardiness (i.e., often coming in late to class!). [**See Course Policies below.**]

Also, **PLEASE** turn off your cell phone during the class period. It's called etiquette.

COURSE GRADING SCALE

WebCT Quizzes	100
Project, Part One (Research/Evaluation)	100
Project, Part Two: Planning/Message Design	100
Stage Four: Oral Presentation	100
Peer Evaluations (2 @ 25 points each)	50
Citizenship	50

Course Policies

***Student Responsibilities:** All students are expected to have read course material prior to the class period for which the reading has been assigned. Your participation in Class Exercise and Discussion is essential to the course, and failure to prepare for class interaction could affect your grade negatively.*

ABSENCES, TARDINESS: Multiple unexcused absences will negatively affect your Citizenship grade; any student who misses more than one-fourth of the class meetings (eleven classes or more) will fail the course. If you make a habit of coming into the classroom after 11:00 a.m., I will caution you regarding the problem. If the problem can be avoided but continues, such habits will negatively affect your Citizenship grade.

CHANGES in course information are YOUR responsibility. Any changes to the course schedule, information regarding extra-credit opportunities, etc., will be announced in class and WebCT. Also check the instructor's website on the COM 274 announcements page. *Students are accountable for any such information announced in class or on-line.*

If you miss class, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from a classmate. Please do not contact the instructor for notes or to ask what you've missed. *Contact the instructor only for clarifications regarding specific points from lecture.*

***Consultation:** I will be available for questions and comments regarding your progress in COM 274 (see office hours on first page). As a matter of priority, if you have a question or concern, or if you need to notify us about missing a class or assignment, **contact me via e-mail and/or telephone as soon as possible.** If using the phone, please leave a message if I am not in. Use of two channels of communication is also helpful, should one fail to reach me!*

***Academic Dishonesty:** Plagiarism, cheating on exams and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Cheating may result in failure for that particular quiz or assignment.*

Grade Reporting: Each assignment will be graded and returned within 7 to 10 days of its due date. *Do not pester the instructor regarding the results of the examination during the week following the due date!* Once you receive the results, please wait at least 24 hours before contacting the instructor for any questions and concerns you have about your exam. After that date, you have **one week** to discuss the results with the instructor and/or to submit a written grade appeal. (Grade appeals must be in writing and include specific reasons for each contention the student wishes to make.) In short, **15 days after any due date, all grades are final and cannot be appealed.**

The University mails your final grades to you as a service both to you and your instructors. This service, along with WebCT, will constitute THE PRIMARY GRADE NOTIFICATION MECHANISM for this course. Please do not telephone or personally request course grade information. I will NOT mail or e-mail any student notification of grades.

Testing conditions: *Any student needing to arrange a reasonable accommodation for a documented disability should contact Disability Concerns at 350 Fell Hall, 438-5853 (voice), 438-8620 (TDD). Those students who do not do so must expect to take quizzes and exams under the same conditions as their classmates.*

SCHEDULE OF ASSIGNMENTS AND READINGS

Note: The instructor reserves the right to modify the schedule and/or content of the course in order to meet educational objectives. *Students are responsible for adjusting to any changes announced in class, via WebCT, or on the instructor's web site.*

COURSE SCHEDULE

(Subject to change when guest speakers become available.)

M	Jan 14	Introduction to the Course
W	Jan 16	A Rhetorical Approach to Public Relations Message Making
F	Jan 18	Cox, Ch. 1: Conceptual Perspectives on Environmentalism
M	Jan 21	MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY HOLIDAY
W	Jan 23	Cox, Ch. 2: Rhetorically Shaping the Environment
F	Jan 25	Class Exercise and Discussion
M	Jan 28	Discussion of Course Project, Announcement of Project Teams
W	Jan 30	Cox, Ch. 3: Public Participation, Public Decision-Making
F	Feb 1	Jacobson, Ch. 2: Research for Environmental Communication
M	Feb 4	Web CT Quiz #1 due by 10:00 a.m. Cox, Ch. 4: Public Policy & Resolving Conflict
W	Feb 6	Cox, Ch. 8: Activism and Environmental Justice
F	Feb 8	In-Class Team Work Period
M	Feb 11	Jacobson, Ch. 3: Public Information Campaign Design
W	Feb 13	Class Exercise and Discussion
F	Feb 15	In-Class Team Work Period
M	Feb 18	Web CT Quiz #2 due by 10:00 a.m. Jacobson, Ch. 5: Environmental Communication as Interpretation
W	Feb 20	Class Exercise and Discussion
F	Feb 22	In-Class Team Work Period

- M Feb 25 Jacobson, Ch. 4: Using Media to Promote Environmentalism
- W Feb 27 Class Exercise and Discussion
- F Feb 29 **First Peer Evaluations due**
In-Class Team Work Period

- M Mar 3 **Web CT Quiz #3 due by 10:00 a.m.**
Cox, Ch. 5: Media and Environmental Journalism
- W Mar 5 Case Study: Appendix, Jacobson book - the Gray Wolf Reintroduction into
Yellowstone National Park
- F Mar 7 "An Inconvenient Truth" (date and time to be arranged—no class)

Week of Mar 9 SPRING BREAK

- M Mar 17 Cox, Ch. 7: Environmental Advocacy Campaigns
- W Mar 19 Class Exercise and Discussion
- F Mar 21 **Project, Part One due;** In-Class Team Work Period

- M Mar 24 **Web CT Quiz #4 due by 10:00 a.m.**
Jacobson, Ch. 6: Environmental Education Programming
- W Mar 26 Class Exercise and Discussion
- F Mar 28 Team Project Work Day

- M Mar 31 **Second Peer Evaluations due;** Cox, Ch. 10:
Green Marketing, Greenwashing, & Corporate Campaigns
- W Apr 2 Class Exercise and Discussion
- F Apr 4 In-Class Team Work Period

- M Apr 7 **Web CT Quiz #5 due by 10:00 a.m.**
Cox, Ch. 6: Risk Communication
- W Apr 9 Class Exercise and Discussion
- F Apr 11 Team Work Period

- M Apr 14 Cox, Ch. 9: Science and Symbolic Legitimacy
- W Apr 16 Class Exercise and Discussion
- F Apr 18 Detailed Discussion of the Oral Presentation Assignment; or, how to use PowerPoint
properly for a business presentation!

- M Apr 21 **Web CT Quiz #6 due by 10:00 a.m.**
Jacobson, Ch. 7: Campaign Evaluation
- W Apr 23 Class Exercise and Discussion
- F Apr 25 Team Work Period

- M Apr 28 **Stage Four Assignment: Oral Presentations**
- W Apr 30 **Stage Four Assignment: Oral Presentations**
- F May 2 **Stage Four Assignment: Oral Presentations**

- M May 5 FINAL EXAM PERIOD, **7:50 a.m.** Submit Stage Two Assignment **by 9:50 a.m.**