

Course Syllabus

COMM 4292, Number 1, Senior Seminar: Environmental Communication
Spring, 2003

Department of Communications, Dr. Steve Snyder, Department Chair

PERSON RESPONSIBLE FOR DEVELOPING SYLLABUS

Dr. Marie A. Mater

STATEMENT AS TO THE FREQUENCY WITH WHICH REVIEW OF THIS COURSE OCCURS

This course is reviewed on an annual basis.

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

Name: Dr. Marie A. Mater
E-mail: mmater@hbu.edu
Office Phone: (281) 649-3000 ext. 2516
Office Location: A218D
Office Hours: T 1:30-6:30, Th 5:00-8:00, and other times by appointment
Web Page Address: http://fc.hbu.edu/~mmater/

TEXTBOOK

Course Text	<i>COMM 4292: Environmental Communication Coursebook</i> (Available at the bookstore)
Supplementary Texts	American Psychological Association. (2001). <i>Publication manual of the American Psychological Association</i> (5 th ed.). Washington, DC: author.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course analyzes and critiques environmental communication in the United States. It will help students to conceptualize environmental communication through an examination of landmark essays on such topics as environmental discourse, environmental conflicts, environmental use, environmental disasters, environmental social movements, and environmental texts. Additionally, students will determine their own position on the nature of the nature-society relationship.

COURSE SEQUENCE IN CURRICULUM

This course is required of all undergraduate students (see note 7 of Undergraduate Degree Requirements) seeking a major in Speech Communications.

PRE-REQUISITE INFORMATION

This course requires permission of the instructor.

RELATION TO THE PURPOSE STATEMENT OF THE UNIVERSITY

This course relates to HBU's purpose statement on several levels. First, the ability to critique communication in both private and public contexts contributes to the students' personal growth and prepares them for service and leadership in a diverse, global and interconnected world. Moreover, the course promotes the development of critical and creative thinking, compassion and responsibility. Finally, it fosters intellectual and social interaction in the teaching-learning processes.

RELATION TO COLLEGE GOALS AND PURPOSES

This course relates to the College of Arts and Humanities' goals and purposes on several levels as well. It promotes the development of students' intellectual, moral and aesthetic growth by examining how our society communicates about the environment in which we all live.

RELATION TO DEPARTMENTAL GOALS AND PURPOSES

This course is directly related to the Department of Communications' goals and purposes. It prepares students for participation in our dynamic economy and democratic society by examining how our society communicates about the environment in which we all live.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

Overview/ purpose of the course: This course involves intensive, directed research in the area of environmental communication.

Aims for the course: The primary aim of this course is to provide students with the opportunity to analyze and critique environmental communication in the United States.

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of environmental communication issues in the United States
- Demonstrate the ability to describe, analyze and evaluate landmark essays in environmental discourse, environmental conflicts, environmental use, environmental disasters, environmental social movements, and environmental texts in both an oral and written form
- Present and defend their own position on the nature of the nature-society relationship

College requirements: To be eligible to register for a senior seminar, a student must have a 2.00 cumulative quality point standing and must have completed a total of 80 semester hours, 15 of which must be in the field studied.

Technology, writing, or oral objectives: This course reinforces HBU's competency requirements in technology, writing and oral communication.

TOPICAL OUTLINE

Class Date or Meeting	Topic: Class Assignment
Thursday, March 13	Course and Colleague Introductions & Guided Freewriting
Thursday, March 20	The Nature-Society Relationship: Guided Freewriting in the Houston Arboretum and Nature Center
Thursday, March 27	Critical Abstracts Due, Seminar Discussions of "John Muir, Yosemite, and the Sublime Response: A Study in the Rhetoric of Preservationism", "Imagining Nature: Watkins, Yosemite, and the Birth of Environmentalism", and "The Discourse of 'Environmental Hysteria'", & Guided Freewriting
Thursday, April 3	Critical Abstracts Due, Seminar Discussions of "Conservationism vs. Preservationism: The 'Public Interest' in the Hetch Hetchy Controversy", "Rooted in the Soil: How Understanding The Perspectives of Landowners Can Enhance the Management of Environmental Disputes", and "The Logic of Competing Information Campaigns: Conflict Over Old Growth and the Spotted Owl", & Guided Freewriting
Thursday, April 10	Critical Abstracts Due, Seminar Discussions of "Constructing Irreconcilable Conflict: The Function of Synechdoche in the Spotted Owl Controversy", "The Will to Conservation: A Burkeian Analysis of Dust Bowl Rhetoric and American Farming Motives", and "Telling the Farmer's Story: Competing Responses to Soil Conservation Rhetoric", & Guided Freewriting
Thursday, April 17	Critical Abstracts Due, Seminar Discussions of "Accidental Rhetoric: The Root Metaphors of Three Mile Island", "Chernobyl: The Packaging of Transnational Ecological Disaster", and "Earth First! And the Rhetoric of Moral Confrontation", & Guided Freewriting
Thursday, April 24	Critical Abstracts Due, Seminar Discussions of "From Public Sphere to Public Screen: Democracy, Activism, and the 'Violence' of Seattle", "The Evolutionary Sublime and the Essay of Natural History", and "Perils of a Modern Cassandra: Rhetorical Aspects of Public Indifference to the Population Explosion", & Guided Freewriting
Thursday, May 1	Critical Abstracts Due, Seminar Discussions of "How to Save the Earth: The Greening of Environmental Discourse", "Effectiveness in the Environmental Impact Statement: A Study in Public Rhetoric", and "Meteorology and the Rhetoric of Nature's Cultural Display" & Guided Freewriting

Thursday, May 8	Position Paper Workshop
Thursday, May 15	Position Papers Due & The Nature-Society Relationship: Guided Freewriting in Memorial Park

TEACHING STRATEGIES

This class will be taught using a combination of readings, oral presentations, group discussions, Socratic questioning, guided freewriting, critical abstracts, position papers, and field trips.

ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING

Course requirements:

Guided Freewriting-Freewriting is a technique that helps clear mental space so that thoughts about an issue that had been below the surface of one's attention--insights that were not acknowledged at first—can emerge. In a freewriting exercise, one should not take the pen off the paper. Writing continues, even if it is writing "I don't know what to say" over and over again. What is written is not graded, so it is not necessary to tidy up sentences, grammar, or spelling. Divergence from the topic usually occurs, and is one of the purposes of the exercise. In a guided freewriting exercise, the writing begins with a sentence given by the instructor (Elbow, P. (1981). *Writing With Power*. New York: Oxford University Press.) Each class, students will have the opportunity to engage in guided freewriting on some aspect of environmental communication in an attempt to forge their own positions on the nature-society relationship. Each guided freewriting will be turned in to the instructor for 10 participation points.

Critical Abstracts of Reading-Students will have the opportunity to write a critical abstract of **an assigned landmark essay in environmental communication**. An abstract is a condensation of a journal article. In addition to presenting a condensed version of the article, a critical abstract makes a judgment on the article's quality. It points out strengths and weaknesses. The critical abstract must be **2 double-spaced pages** in length and use APA style to reference the journal article at the beginning of the abstract. Please see Seminar Tools section of the Coursebook for more information.

Oral Presentations of Readings and Discussion Questions-Students will also have the opportunity to lead a **seminar discussion of an assigned landmark essay in environmental communication**. Students will have approximately 40 minutes to summarize the material, identify the main issues, present their own opinions of these issues and guide the group's discussion of the issues. Presenters may assume that the other students have read the material. A printed outline of the presentation and a list of 10 discussion questions must be submitted to the instructor at the beginning of the presentation.

Position Papers-Students will have the opportunity to explore their own position on the nature of the nature-society relationship with regard to an issue that interests them. Students will write a **5-page double-spaced position paper** that outlines the issue and explains why it was selected. The paper should take a position on that particular issue and explain/justify that point

of view to the audience. The position paper needs to be clear, sharply focused and convincing. It should help the audience understand the position taken, and outline a few of the complex issues that surround it. No outside sources or documentation are required, but the position should be supported with relevant, credible evidence. If you use outside sources, please use APA style to reference them. Please see Seminar Tools section of the Coursebook for more information.

Important Note-Except for documented medical emergencies, or official university absences approved in advance, **there are no make-up oral presentations of readings or guided freewriting sessions in this class.** Failure to come to class on the day of a scheduled oral presentation or a guided freewriting session will result in the **grade of zero** for that assignment. Attendance will be taken daily and the attendance standards for this course will adhere to the general policies stated in the HBU Bulletin on pages 44-45. A **grade of F** will be assigned to a student who does not meet minimum attendance requirements.

Grading standards:

The grading scale for this class is as follows: 90.0-100.0 is an A; 80.0-89.9 is a B; 70.0-79.9 is a C; 60.0-69.9 is a D; 59.9 and below is an F. Grades will be determined by the following percentages:

Guided Freewriting (100 points)	10%
Critical Abstract (100 points)	20%
Oral Presentations	30%
-Seminar Leadership (90 points)	
-Discussion Questions (10 points)	
Position Papers	40%
-Workshop Draft (5 points)	
-Final Draft (95 points)	

Student appraisal: Students will complete faculty appraisal forms as regularly administered by the University.

CLASS POLICIES

Academic honesty: For information about academic dishonesty, please see the HBU Bulletin.

Grievance procedures: For information about grievances, please see the HBU Bulletin.

Absence and tardy policies: For information about attendance policies, please see the "Assessment of Learning" section above and the HBU Bulletin.

Late work: For information on late work policies regarding oral presentations and guided freewriting, please see the "Assessment of Learning" section above. In terms of critical abstracts and position papers, they must be submitted at the beginning of class (1:40 pm). If they are submitted after that time, **they will lose 10 points for each day that they are late.** The time period immediately following the class (4:20) is considered the first day.

Missed tests: For information on missed tests, please see the "Assessment of Learning" section above.

Learning disabilities: Any student having a disability and requiring special accommodation should contact Dr. Sebron Williams, Hinton Center Room 353, (281) 649-3285 with recent documentation of the disability. The student should then discuss the accommodation with the course instructor in the first week of class.

Children in classroom: Children will be permitted with the consent of the instructor.

Cell phones/Pagers: Cell phones and pagers should not be visible or audible in class.

The Academic Resource Center: The goal of the HBU Academic Resource Center is to help currently enrolled students in all majors become better written and oral communicators. The ARC Writing Consultants assist students in two areas: (1) one-on-one writing instruction and (2) help with revising and developing papers and other written documents. The ARC Oral Communication Consultants also assist students in two areas: (1) public presentational skills coaching and (2) communication apprehension treatment. Students may email (arc@hbu.edu) for an appointment or drop by the ARC in A-210 during its scheduled hours.

The content of this outline and the attached schedule are subject to change at the discretion of the instructor.

Instructor's Signature

Date