

**Communication 4350 and Communication 5332:
Environmental Communication
Quinn Hall, 206
CRN: 15410 & 12595**

General Information

Professor: Dr. Stacey Sowards
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Office hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Course Overview

This course is designed to explore various environmental philosophies as they relate to communication contexts. We will examine how communication plays a role in environmental issues such as journalism and news reporting, sustainability, consumerism, politics, environmental organizations, and ecotourism. We will also examine how environmental theories and communication contexts play out in local, national, and international debates and contexts.

Course Goals

1. To build foundational knowledge in the area of environmental communication through an examination of:
 - a. contemporary theories and approaches to the study of environmental philosophy.
 - b. how communication plays a significant role in the framing and discussion of environmental problems and solutions.
2. To apply environmental theories to various environmental communication contexts.
3. To compare and contrast environmental theories in communication contexts.
4. To learn about self and others through an examination of privilege and culture as they relate to environmentalism.
5. To increase sensitivity toward others, communities, and the environment.
6. To emphasize lifelong learning and critical self-reflexivity on environmental practices and issues.

Course Prerequisite

For undergraduates, it will be helpful if you have completed other upper level communication courses, especially COMM 3371: Communication Theory & Analysis, before enrolling in this course. Graduate students will be better prepared for this course by taking a graduate level research methods class.

Textbook and materials

1. Robert Cox. (2006). *Environmental communication and the public sphere*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
2. J. E. de Steiguer. (2006). *The origins of modern environmental thought*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press.
3. Course reading packet, available on WebCT.

Special Needs

If you have a special or learning need, please see me right away for appropriate accommodation.

Classroom Expectations

Students are expected to be respectful and supportive of other students. Many different ideas will be welcomed and encouraged. We will discuss some controversial topics, and students must feel that they are comfortable to express their thoughts.

Attendance

Please be on time for class! It is distracting and disrespectful when students come in late and leave early. Your attendance and participation are vital for discussion and assignments. It is very difficult to get a satisfactory grade in this course if you frequently miss class. **Your participation grade will be based mostly on your attendance record, because if you are not in class, you cannot participate.** If you miss a class, **it is your responsibility** to get the notes and any additional information given out on the day you missed. Although I will be happy to meet with you to discuss any questions, I will not provide notes for you. Check WebCT for details. **Graduate students are expected to attend EVERY class**, unless there are extreme and extenuating circumstances.

Use of Laptops, Cell Phones, and Other Technologies

Use of laptops, cell phones, ipods, and other technologies during class is not permitted, unless prior permission is granted. The necessity of classroom interaction in this course negates the usefulness of these technologies as note-taking devices. The use of these technologies during class can also prove distracting to your classmates, so please refrain from using them during class.

Course Assignments and Evaluation

There are several assignments in the course designed to meet the objectives of the course:

1. Reading questions. Each set of reading questions is designed to focus your reading of texts and to help build foundational knowledge of various readings. We will use the reading questions as a basis for class discussion of the readings. Limit your responses to two pages. You **should do question #1 for each reading selection, and #2-4 for the readings as a whole (rather than for each reading selection).**

For each reading assignment set (e.g., for each class meeting), answer the following questions:

1. What do you think are the important points in the essays?
2. Which arguments or points do you agree with or find persuasive? Why?
3. Which arguments or points do you disagree with or find unpersuasive? Why?
4. What questions do you have about the readings? What would you like to discuss further in class?
5. In what ways do you see these readings connecting to what you see in media, your everyday life, your workplace, or elsewhere? Give some examples.

Reading questions are due by 2:00 pm, on Tuesdays. Please submit reading questions on WebCT (using the discussion board or email function).

2. There are three options for the semester-long project. Each student will choose to participate in one of the following options:

a. Team project. This project will focus on an environmental issue/organization in the El Paso/southern New Mexico/Chihuahua area. Each team will choose an issue or organization (e.g., related to ecotourism in Chihuahua, the Otero Mesa drilling project, Asarco and pollution, problems in nearby colonias, Franklin State Park, or Hueco Tanks, etc.). Each team will be comprised of five people. The team members will then work to: develop an understanding of the environmental issue/organization, analyze problems faced, discuss problems with local leaders, address how social change and activism might occur, and write a report about these issues. This project will culminate in a final paper that is 20-25 pages in length and will include approximately 30 sources. Ideally, the quality of the final paper will be such that it can be submitted to a national or regional conference. All papers must conform to APA (5th ed.) guidelines.

b. Dyadic project. This project focuses on collaborative work that explores and analyzes the principle of “social action.” That is, the primary goal of the final project will be to use a (local, national, or international) political, organizational, social, or grass roots movement, as a lens for understanding and documenting what individuals, groups, or collectives are actually doing to make changes in the environment. Although “making changes” can be construed very broadly, our notion here is to gain a deeper understanding of how ‘we’ are moving forward to better manage the human/environmental dynamic. This project will culminate in a final paper that is 20-25 pages in length and will include approximately 30 sources. Ideally, the quality of the final paper will be such that it can be submitted to a national or regional conference. All papers must conform to APA (5th ed.) guidelines.

c. Evaluative case study/environmental issue paper. This paper will be a culminating project for this class. You will choose a topic to write about, preferably something that is interesting and useful to you in your present or future career. I encourage you to choose option #1 or 2, but in the case that you will not be able to work on a team based project, you may choose this option instead. This project will culminate in a final paper that is 10-15 pages in length and will include approximately 15 sources. Ideally, the quality of the final paper will be such that it can be submitted to a national or regional conference. All papers must conform to APA (5th ed.) guidelines.

3. Class participation and group discussions. Much of this class will be based on discussion groups and vigorous participation in class. “Vigorous participation” means that you have completed the reading, thought about it, formulated opinions, and are prepared to engage in discussion with one another about the material. You must be ready to actively participate, but also actively listen.

Your participation and group discussion grades will also be based on completion of in class activities that might include (but is not limited to) small group discussions, case studies, and one to two paragraph in-class essays. Your participation grade will be based on attendance and your active participation.

Grading

<u>Points for Assignments</u>	<u>Possible Points</u>
semester-long final project	50 points
reading questions (3 points each)	36 points
<u>participation</u>	<u>14 points</u>
Total points	100 points

WebCT

I will use WebCT to post reading packet assignments, grades, announcements, and other relevant information. The website is at: my.utep.edu. From there, click on the WebCT link, which should take you to your classes for the semester. Readings are posted on WebCT, but if you have a slow internet connection at home, download these essays at UTEP.

Late Assignments and Incomplete policy

Late written assignments will receive a **one point deduction for each twenty-four hour period** (including weekends) the assignment is late. If you are unable to attend class on the day that an assignment is due, you must contact me before the due date to arrange to hand in your assignment. Generally, I find it unacceptable for students to turn in late assignments, unless there are extreme and extenuating circumstances.

Late final papers will not be accepted. If your final paper is late, you will receive a zero for the assignment.

A grade of incomplete will not be given for any reason, unless there are EXTREME extenuating circumstances AND you have talked to me in advance. An incomplete will only be given if some extenuating circumstance prevents you from completing the final paper by the deadline.

Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarizing, collusion, and deliberately interfering with the work of others.

Plagiarizing means representing the work of someone else (such as another student or an author of a book, article, or internet site) as your own. If you use the ideas or words of someone else, **you must cite the source** of the original information in your paper or presentation. For this class, using your own papers completed for another class also would be considered plagiarism.

Cheating includes, but is not limited to, copying answers from other students' papers or tests, discussing test questions with students who have not taken the test, and/or using notes when taking a test. Another example of cheating is to use a source from a text book without obtaining the original author's work. If you do not read a work in its entirety, you may misrepresent the original author's work. Another example is to copy answers from another student or to allow another student to copy from your work. Collusion refers to collaboration with another student to commit any academically dishonest act. If you provide answers to someone or knowingly allow someone to copy your work, you will be held responsible.

Invented or plagiarized work can result in an F grade for the course and may result in possible disciplinary action at the university level. Students may be suspended or expelled for engaging in academic dishonesty.

Letters of recommendation policy

Letters of recommendation should be written by someone who knows you well, thinks highly of your work, and has had you in class before. For these reasons, I will only write letters of recommendation for students who I have had in two or more classes, and received grades of B or better. If you plan on asking me for a letter of recommendation, you should provide me a copy of your resume, UTEP transcript (unofficial is acceptable), the addresses and names of the people to address the letters, stamped and addressed envelopes, and descriptions of the programs to which you are applying. I will need approximately two weeks advance notice for writing letters of recommendation. This policy is also a good guideline to follow when asking anyone for a letter of recommendation.

Independent study policy

For future reference, I will only allow students to do independent studies with me if a student is prepared to engage in a significant research project that will entail substantial work. I require weekly reading, research, and meetings for independent studies, plus a paper that is worthy of submitting to a conference. An independent study should be a project that entails original research (and this does not mean library research) and requires a substantial effort. An independent study should not be undertaken because it fits your schedule more conveniently or because you need one more class for graduation.

Syllabus Schedule

All assignments listed by chapter refer to the Cox or de Steiguer text book. Other reading assignments are listed by author's last name, and can be found on WebCT. All readings on WebCT are in the order that they appear on the syllabus schedule. Also, there are a few handouts on WebCT as well. Please bring these to class and read them before class.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic/Activity</u>	<u>Readings and assignments due before Tuesday</u>
Part I: Introduction to the Study of Environmental Communication		
Tuesday, August 26	introduction to course & syllabus overview to assignments	none
Thursday, August 28	introduction to discussion teams introductions film: <i>An Inconvenient Truth</i>	none
Tuesday, September 2 & Thursday, September 4	introduction to environmental history and environmental communication film: <i>An Inconvenient Truth</i> (continued)	de Steiguer, chapters 1 & 2 Cox, chapter 1 reading questions, set 1 (submit on WebCT, by Tuesday, 2:00 pm)
Meeting, September 2: National Communication Association Student Club and Lambda Pi Eta National Honor Society for Communication, 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm, Quinn Hall, 2nd floor		
Tuesday, September 9 & Thursday, September 11	major contributors to environmental philosophy and environmental rhetoric	de Steiguer, chapters 3, 4, 5, 6 reading questions, set 2 (submit on WebCT, by Tuesday, 2:00 pm)
Part II: Media Coverage of Environmental Issues		
Tuesday, September 16 & Thursday, September 18	environmental journalism	Cox, chapters 5 & 6 Friedman, WebCT reading questions, set 3 (submit on WebCT, by Tuesday, 2:00 pm)
Tuesday, September 23 & Thursday, September 25	media framing of environmental issues semester projects: topic deadline	Nitz & West, WebCT Cox, chapter 9 Corbett & Durfee, WebCT reading questions, set 4 (submit on WebCT, by Tuesday, 2:00 pm)
Tuesday, September 30 & Thursday, October 2	green advertising and marketing	Cox, chapter 10 Dorsey, Steeves, & Porras, WebCT reading questions, set 5 (submit on WebCT, by Tuesday, 2:00 pm)
Part III: Environmental Philosophies and Communication		
Tuesday, October 7 & Thursday, October 9	population ecology	de Steiguer, chapters 10 & 11 Killingsworth & Palmer, WebCT reading questions, set 6 (submit on WebCT, by Tuesday, 2:00 pm)
Tuesday, October 14 & Thursday, October 16	deep ecology and ecofeminism semester projects: research deadline	de Steiguer, chapter 16 Bullis, WebCT Knopper et al., WebCT reading questions, set 7 (submit on WebCT, by Tuesday, 2:00 pm)

Tuesday, October 21 & Thursday, October 23	environmental justice/social ecology	Cox, chapter 8 Jennings & Jennings, WebCT reading questions, set 8 (submit on WebCT, by Tuesday, 2:00 pm)
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Tuesday, October 28 & Thursday, October 30	international environmental issues: north/south divide semester projects: outline deadline	Mater, WebCT Sowards, WebCT reading questions, set 9 (submit on WebCT, by Tuesday, 2:00 pm)
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Part IV: Environmental Advocacy and Public Participation

Tuesday, November 4 & Thursday, November 6	public participation and decision making GO VOTE TODAY!	Cox, chapter 3 Peterson, Peterson, Peterson, Allison, & Gore, WebCT reading questions, set 10 (submit on WebCT, by Tuesday, 2:00 pm)
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Tuesday, November 11 & Thursday, November 13	conflict resolution	Cox, chapter 4 Peterson & Franks, WebCT reading questions, set 11 (submit on WebCT, by Tuesday, 2:00 pm)
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Tuesday, November 18 & Thursday, November 20	environmental advocacy campaigns semester projects: first draft deadline	Cox, chapter 7 Delicath and Deluca, WebCT reading questions, set 12 (submit on WebCT, by Tuesday, 2:00 pm)
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Tuesday, November 25	film: "Who Killed the Electric Car?"	
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Thursday, November 27	Thanksgiving – no class	
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Tuesday, December 2 & Thursday, December 4	individual reflections, choices, actions summary and conclusions	<i>E: The Environmental Magazine</i> articles, WebCT
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Final projects and team evaluations due by: Tuesday, December 9, 6:45 pm

Team members:

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Name	Telephone Number	Email Address

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Name	Telephone Number	Email Address

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Name	Telephone Number	Email Address

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Name	Telephone Number	Email Address