

Environmental Discourse & Communication

Department of Environmental Studies
State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry
EST 393 • Winter 2009 • Mondays 12:45-3:35 PM • 111 Marshall Hall
<http://www.esf.edu/es/meisner/est393.htm>

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Office hours: Mondays 10:30 am -12 noon, Tuesdays 1:00 - 2:00 PM, or by appointment

ABOUT THE COURSE

This is a required course for the Environmental Studies Program's Environmental Communication and Culture Option. The course is also open as an elective for other upper-division students; junior standing is required and EST 245 or permission is a pre-requisite.

The course will consider the relationship between discourse and nature. Through a variety of readings, lectures, discussions, interactive exercises, written work, and presentations, the course will explore the scope and character of a wide range of public discourses around environmental affairs. Combining theoretical material with examples, it will address the following topics: the cultural and social contexts of environmental discourse; the social construction of nature and environmental issues; theories of communication; approaches to the analysis of a variety of forms of environmental discourse; and the representation of nature and environmental issues in a variety of fora covering a range of environmental viewpoints. Emphasis is on the analysis and understanding of the rhetoric of environmental texts.

OBJECTIVES

After successfully completing this course students should be able to:

1. Describe the character and dominant patterns of Western environmental discourses.
2. Explain the significance of communication and environmental discourses for society in general, for environmental decision making, and for our experience of Nature.
3. Identify the roles that language, narratives, and metaphors play in the representation of Nature and environmental issues.
4. Explain the applicability of communication theory to environmental affairs.
5. Better articulate the cultural and social dimensions of the environmental crisis.
6. Apply particular discourse analysis skills to specific examples of environmental discourse.
7. Apply critical reading, thinking, and writing skills.

COURSE MATERIALS

The following books should be available at Follet's Orange Bookstore in Marshall Square:

- Cox, R. (2006). *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. (Referred to as Cox in the course outline below)
- Dryzek, J. S. (2005) *The Politics of the Earth: Environmental Discourses*. 2nd edition. New York: Oxford University Press. (Referred to as Dryzek in the course outline below)
- Helvarg, D. (2004). *The War Against the Greens: The 'Wise Use' Movement, The New Right, and the Browning of America*. Boulder: Johnson Books.

Any additional Readings will be made available through library reserve.

For other sources see: Environmental Communication Network (ECN) <http://www.esf.edu/ecn/>

COURSE POLICIES

Please see the attached "Course Policies" document.

February 2 - Public Participation and Conflict Resolution

Cox, Ch.3 "Public Participation in Environmental Decisions" (42 pgs)

Cox, Ch.4 "Conflict Resolution Through Collaboration and Consensus" (27 pgs)

February 9 - Mass Media and the Environment

Cox, Ch.5 "Media and Environmental Journalism" (42 pgs)

Cox, Ch.6 "Risk Communication" (35 pgs)

February 16 - Advocacy and Activism

Cox, Ch.7 "Environmental Advocacy Campaigns" (46 pgs)

Cox, Ch.8 "Environmental Justice" (40 pgs)

February 23 - Science and Industry

Cox, Ch.9 "Science and Symbolic Legitimacy" (36 pgs)

Cox, Ch.10 "Green Marketing and Corporate Campaigns" (44 pgs)

March 2 - Mid-Term Exam

No Readings

March 16 - Discourse Matters

Dryzek, Ch.1 "Making Sense of the Earth's Politics: A Discourse Approach" (21 pgs)

Mills, Sara (2004) "Introduction" from *Discourse*. (2nd ed.) New York: Routledge. (25 pgs)

March 23 - Narratives and Metaphors

Griffin, Em (2000) "Narrative Paradigm of Walter Fisher," from *A First Look at Communication Theory* (Fourth ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. (9 pages)

Rayner, Phillip, Wall, Peter and Kruger, Philip (2001) "Narrative" from *Media Studies: The Essential Introduction*. New York: Routledge. (11 pages)

Punter, David (2007) "Introduction" and "Public Metaphor" from *Metaphor*. New York: Routledge. (25 pgs)

Lakoff, George and Johnson, Mark (1980) Selections from *Metaphors We Live By*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. (13 pages)

March 30 - Discourses of Global Limits and their Denial

Dryzek, Ch.2 "Looming Tragedy: Survivalism" (24 pgs)

Dryzek, Ch.3 "Growth Forever: The Promethean Response" (18 pgs)

April 6 - Problem Solving Discourses

Dryzek, Ch.4 "Leave it to the Experts: Administrative Rationalism" (23 pgs)

Dryzek, Ch.5 "Leave it to the People: Democratic Pragmatism" (20 pgs)

Dryzek, Ch.6 "Leave it to the Market: Economic Rationalism" (21 pgs)

April 13 - Discourses of Sustainability

Dryzek, Ch.7 "Environmentally Benign Growth: Sustainable Development" (16 pgs)

Dryzek, Ch.8 "Industrial Society and Beyond: Ecological Modernization" (18 pgs)

April 20 - Discourses of Green Radicalism

Dryzek, Ch.9 "Changing People: Green Consciousness" (19 pgs)

Dryzek, Ch.10 "Changing Society: Green Politics" (25 pgs)

April 27 -Course Conclusions

Dryzek, Ch.11 "Ecological Democracy" (6 pgs)

Cox, Epilogue. "Imagining a Different World" (10 pgs)