COMM 5346/4360: Environmental Communication
Wednesday, 6:00-8:50PM (UGLC 210)

Overview

Contact Information
Instructor: Dr. Carlos A. Tarin
Email: catarin@utep.edu
Phone: 915.433.8916 (Cell)
Office: Cotton Memorial 102
Office Hours: By appointment

Required Texts
All course readings will be available on Blackboard or through the UTEP Library.

Course Description and Objectives
This course is designed to explore various environmental theories as they relate to communication contexts. We will examine how communication plays a role in environmental issues such as 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 Objectives
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.

Classroom Expectations
Students should strive to maintain a respectful and supportive classroom environment. This class will deal with topics and ideas that may be controversial in nature. It is your responsibility to respond and participate to classroom discussions in a thoughtful and productive manner. Any blatant disrespect, sexism, racism, homophobia, classism, etc. will not be tolerated.
Course Policies
Readings
This is a reading intensive course. You should anticipate around 100+ pages of reading per week. All readings must be completed prior to class each week. Please be advised that some of these readings are difficult – so plan accordingly.

Late/Incomplete Work
Students should aim to submit assignments on or before assigned due dates. If you think you might have trouble meeting a deadline, please contact me in advance. Incompletes will not be given unless there are extreme extenuating circumstances and the student is able to provide verifiable proof. If you miss an assignment deadline because of an emergency, it is your responsibility to furnish proper documentation in order to make up work. Early submission of assignments is always acceptable.

Academic Misconduct
The University of Texas El Paso prides itself on its standards of academic excellence and students are expected to uphold the highest standards of academic integrity. Any student who commits an act of scholastic dishonesty is subject to discipline. Scholastic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, collusion, submitting work for credit that is attributable in whole or in part to another person, taking an examination for another person, and any act that gives or attempts to give unfair advantage.

Academic honesty is required of all students. Students found guilty of academic dishonesty can receive an “F” for the assignment or the course, and other disciplinary action may be taken. I take a strong stance on plagiarism. Plagiarism includes (but is not limited to) intentional submission of someone else’s work without credit, in part or as a whole; misuse of citations to conceal a source; use of other course work in this class; and other similar behaviors. Please contact me immediately if you are unclear as to what constitutes plagiarism.

CASS
As per Section 504 of the Vocational Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, if a student needs an accommodation then the Office of Disabled Student Services located at UTEP needs to be contacted. If you have a condition, which may affect your ability to perform successfully in this course, you are encouraged to discuss this in confidence with the instructor and/or the director of the Center for Accommodations and Support Services. You may call 915-747-5148 for general information about the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the rights that you have as a UTEP student with a disability.

Individuals with disabilities have the right to equal access and opportunity. It is the student’s responsibility to contact the instructor and The Center for Accommodations and Support Services Office (CASS) at The University of Texas at El Paso.
**Drop/Withdrawal**

Census day for Spring is February 1st, 2023. The last day you can drop this course is March 30, 2023. Incompletes after this deadline will only be given in the case of extreme, extenuating circumstances.

**Course Assessment and Assignments**

This semester, we will be using an approach to learning that has variously been described as “un-grading,” “labor-based grading,” and “contract grading.” In practice, what this means is that you will be evaluated on the labor put into assignments with the understanding that your learning, and therefore your work, is continuously developing. Grades are still assigned at the end of the semester, but instead of a system that uses “x points achieved out of y points possible,” you’ll be evaluated on how much you do (or do not do) and how much you feel you have grown as a learner. This system is being implemented for several reasons including:

- To overcome system curricular bias. A substantial body of scholarship demonstrates how point-based grading styles may carry inherent racial, gender, and class-based biases. You will be evaluated on the work you put into your assignments and the efforts you make to improve your work over the semester.

- To improve overall learning. Traditional points-based learning tends to encourage memorization rather than understanding. By not worrying about points, you should have an opportunity to engage with the work for the sake of engaging, not to prepare for tests or quizzes.

- To encourage risk-taking in your learning. This class is fairly flexible and is centered on your success (whatever that might look like). In typical classroom environments, students are dissuaded from experimenting or taking risks because point deductions could lead to failure. This is not the case in this class. Take risks, and think outside the box – you’re being rewarded for your effort and labor, not whether it checks all the boxes.

- It’s less punitive. Life complications happen, but that doesn’t mean you should fail a course. Labor-based models of grading allow for far more substantial flexibility without punishing students for events outside their control.

**Labor-Based Grading in Practice**

Below, you will find a ‘menu’ of assignments that you will be responsible for during the semester, along with how much work should be completed in order to achieve the grade you want in this course. Please note: submission of assignments does not mean you will receive completion credit for them. I will be offering fairly substantial feedback on all of your major assignments with the hope that it will help you improve your work throughout the semester. If you turn in work that is incomplete or needs revision, you’ll have an opportunity to re-submit. You should aim to turn in your best work possible with your first submission, but this class is designed with the understanding that sometimes you need feedback, guidance, or just more time.
to do your best work. Focus on learning and engaging with the material, not on counting points to get a certain grade!

**Grading Guide:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you want an A…</th>
<th>If you want a B…</th>
<th>If you want a C…</th>
<th>If you want a D…*</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complete 3 mini-essays during the semester <strong>OR</strong> 3 creative mini-projects <strong>OR</strong> 1 full-length research paper.</td>
<td>Complete 2 mini-essays during the semester <strong>OR</strong> 2 creative mini-projects <strong>OR</strong> 1 extended literature review.</td>
<td>Complete 1 mini-essays during the semester <strong>OR</strong> 1 creative mini-projects.</td>
<td>Do not turn in any essays/projects or turn in work that meets the minimum standards detailed in the rubric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete at least 14 nature reflection entries</td>
<td>Complete at least 12 nature reflection entries</td>
<td>Complete at least 10 nature reflection entries</td>
<td>Complete less than 10 nature reflection entries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submit at least 11 short reading reflection/responses</td>
<td>Submit at least 10 short reading/reflection responses</td>
<td>Submit at least 9 short reading/reflection responses</td>
<td>Submit less than 9 short reading/reflection responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete a detailed environmental autobiography</td>
<td>Complete an environmental autobiography</td>
<td>Complete an underdeveloped environmental autobiography</td>
<td>Do not complete an environmental autobiography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complete an end-of-semester reflection/self-evaluation</td>
<td>Complete an end-of-semester reflection/self-evaluation</td>
<td>Complete an end-of-semester reflection/self-evaluation</td>
<td>Complete an end-of-semester reflection/self-evaluation</td>
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*Students who fall below these minimum standards risk receiving an F grade for the semester.

**Additional For Graduate Students:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you want an A…</th>
<th>If you want a B…</th>
<th>If you want a C…</th>
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Assignments

(1) **Research Project or Mini-Essays/Mini-Projects.** During the semester you will be working to complete either a substantial research project/paper or smaller projects/essays.

   a. **For the longer research project:** students should expect to submit a full-length research project (20-25 pages, including at least 20 peer-reviewed citations). Essays written with a partner or small group are also acceptable. In order to receive feedback on your essay and keep you on track, you will submit sections of the essay during the semester with a final product due during finals week.

   b. **For the mini-essays/mini-projects:** students should expect to submit smaller written or creative projects throughout the semester. Mini-essays will consist of critical reflections or argument-focused responses on assigned course readings (10-12 pages, including at least 7-10 peer-reviewed citations each). Mini-projects may include a variety of more creative works that engage with course materials or concepts including (but not limited to): documentaries, infographics, podcasts, photography or other creative works.

   c. **Other ideas:** If you have an idea that doesn’t fit into the above categories, let me know and we might be able to make it work. I am especially receptive to alternatives such as service-learning projects or community-engaged labor.

   **All students will submit a brief ‘prospectus’ document early in the semester outlining what they plan to do for the project assignment.**

(2) **Nature Reflections.** Each week during the semester, you should make time to engage with the natural world for at least 30 minutes. You will keep a reflection log that documents your engagement with nature over the course of the semester. Engaging with the natural world can take a variety of forms (hiking, going to a park, sitting in green spaces on campus, going camping, etc.). Written reflections should be short entries (1-2 paragraphs) that document your practices (where/when/what) and any reactions you might have.

(3) **Weekly Reading Reflections.** Each week, you should submit a brief reflection response paper (1 single-spaced page **maximum**) that addresses all assigned readings for the week. In particular, your response should answer the following questions: (1) What are the important points or themes across the weekly readings? (2) Which arguments do you find most persuasive? Why? (3) Which arguments do you disagree with or find unpersuasive? Why? (4) What questions do you have about the readings, or what would you like to discuss further? Readings should be uploaded no later than 11:59PM on the Tuesday before each class meeting.

(4) **Environmental Autobiography.** This assignment will ask you to complete what is being referred to as an environmental autobiography, a form of writing that reflects on your own positionality and the ways the natural world shapes (or does not shape) your identity. More details will be provided with a separate assignment sheet during the semester.

(5) **End-of-Semester Evaluation/Reflection.** At the end of the semester, you will submit a short self-evaluation that documents your reflections on the course and your growth as a
student. This is also an opportunity for your to explain what grade you think you should receive in the course or explain any extenuating circumstances that should be taken into consideration for your final course grade.

(6) (Graduate Students Only). Book Review. This assignment will require you to complete a book review for an academic environmental communication book. Your review should be between 5-7 pages in length and critically engage with the material considering key arguments, limitations, contributions to the broader body of environment communication scholarship, etc. I am happy to provide book recommendations. (You may also complete a review of a popular press book, but this is not recommended.)
Course Schedule

Week 1: (January 18) -- Introductions/Syllabus | Environmental Communication as a Crisis Discipline
To Read:
- Syllabus
- Cox, “Nature’s “Crisis Discipline”
- Senecah, “Impetus, Mission, Future”
To Do:
- Nature Reflection

Week 2: (January 25) -- Understanding the Nature-Culture Dualism
To Read:
- Haila, “Beyond the Nature-Culture Dualism.”
- Sowards, “Identification Through Orangutans.”
- Muller, “Companion Cyborgs.”
To Do:
- Nature Reflection
- Short Reading Response

Week 3: (February 1) -- Ecocultural Identity
To Read:
- Dickinson, “Ecocultural Conversations.”
- Tarin, Upton, & Sowards, “Borderland Ecocultural Identity.”
To Do:
- Nature Reflection
- Short Reading Response

Due:
- Final Project Prospectus

Week 4: (February 8) -- Place, Toxicity, and Community
To Read: Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Pollution, Travel, and Environmental Justice by Phaedra C. Pezzullo (available as an e-book through the UTEP Library).
- Introduction, Chapters 1-3.
To Do:
- Nature Reflection
- Short Reading Response

Week 5: (February 15) -- Place, Toxicity, and Community (continued)
To Read: Toxic Tourism: Rhetorics of Pollution, Travel, and Environmental Justice by Phaedra C. Pezzullo (available as an e-book through the UTEP Library).
- Chapters 4-5, Conclusion, Epilogue.
To Do:
- Nature Reflection
- Short Reading Response

Due:
- Environmental Autobiography

**Week 6: (February 22) – Environmental Racism and Environmental Justice**

**To Read:**
- Endres, “Sacred Land or National Sacrifice Zone.”
- Gordon & Hunt, “Reform, Justice, and Sovereignty.”
- Upton, Tarin, & Hernandez, “Contruyendo Conexiones.”
- Chen et al., “Challenges and Benefits of Community-Based Participatory Research.”

**To Do:**
- Nature Reflection
- Short Reading Response

**Week 7: (March 1) – Decolonial & Indigenous Environmentalism**

**To Read:**
- Comfort, “Indigenous Diaspora.”
- Tarin, “Buen Vivir.”
- Na-puti, “Disaster Militarism.”

**To Do:**
- Nature Reflection
- Short Reading Response

**Week 8: (March 8) – Gender & The Environment**

**To Read:**
- Kheel, “Communicating Care.”
- Stearney, “Feminism, Ecofeminism, and the Maternal Archetype.”
- Singer, “Toward Intersectional Ecofeminist Communication Studies.”
- Seegert, “Queer Beasts.”

**To Do:**
- Nature Reflection
- Short Reading Response

**Due:**
- Mini-Essay/Mini-Project/Final Paper, Part 1

**Week 9: (March 15) – SPRING BREAK, NO CLASS, BE SAFE!**

**Week 10: (March 22) – More-than-Human Communication**

**To Read:**
- Haraway, “Companion Species Manifesto.”
- Tate, “Hello, Garden Eel Here.”
- Barnett, “Politics of Edibility.”
- von Essen & Allen, “Solidarity Between Human and Non-Human Animals.”

To Do:
- Nature Reflection
- Short Reading Response

**Week 11: (March 29) – Visuality, Protest, and the Environment**

*To Read:*
- DeLuca, from *Image Politics:*
  - Making Waves
  - Imaging Social Movements
  - The Possibilities of Nature
- O’Byrne & Endres, “This Land is Our Land.”

*To Do:*
- Nature Reflection
- Short Reading Response

**Week 12: (April 5) – Energy Communication**

*To Read:*
  - Introduction, Chapters 1-2.

*To Do:*
- Nature Reflection
- Short Reading Response

**Week 13: (April 12) – NO CLASS –**

*To Do:*
- Nature Reflection

*Due:*
- Mini-Essay/Mini-Project/Final Paper, Part 2

**Week 14: (April 19) – Climate Communication**

*To Read:*
- Cox, “Beyond Frames.”
- Kumpu, “What is Public Engagement?”
- Cozen et al., “Energy Communication.”
- Carvalho & Peterson, “Discursive Constructions of Climate Change.”

*To Do:*
- Nature Reflection
- Short Reading Response

**Week 15: (April 26) – Environmental Praxis, Readings TBD**
To Do:
   - Nature Reflection
   - Short Reading Response

Week 16: (May 3) – Final Meeting, Readings TBD
To Do:
   - Nature Reflection
   - Short Reading Response

Week 17: (May 10) Finals Week
To Do:
   - Nature Reflection
   - Short Reading Response

Due:
   - Final Project/Mini-Essay/Mini-Project, Part 3
   - Self-Reflection/Self-Evaluation
   - Completed Nature Reflection Notebook