

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMN

CMMN A370 Sec 001 TR 3:30-4:45 pm C/M Rm. 302 Fall 2001

PROFESSOR: Dr. Robert A. Thomas C/M R327

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Office Hours: TR 1:00-3:30 pm, 4:45-5:00 pm Other times by appointment

SYLLABUS

COURSE DESCRIPTION: Presents an overview of how environmental information is expressed in mass communications and associated theory of the field. Important environmental theory and issues will be discussed. Students will use and sharpen their writing skills, learn how to evaluate scientific information, and study issues with conflicting data.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

- C Carson, Rachael. 1962. *Silent spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- C Leopold, Aldo. 1949. *Sand County almanac*. New York: Ballentine.
- C West, Bernadette, Peter M. Sandman, and Michael R. Greenberg. 1994. *The reporter's environmental handbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press.

Various additional readings may be made available on reserve at the library.

Recommended reference text: Miller, G. Tyler, Jr. *Living in the environment*. Current ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- C **CLASS LISTSERV:** You are required to subscribe to the class listserv. All announcements and changes as the course progresses will be shared via this listserv. To subscribe, visit the following for instructions: <http://www.loyno.edu/infotech/docs/listserv.html>. Deadline: September 4, 2001.

- **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS:**

- **Internet:** The assignment is to pick any environmental issue (recycling, global warming, ozone depletion, coastal erosion, toxic chemicals, population growth, etc.) and, using the internet, find ten sites that address the issue. Using the form provided, describe how you sought information (key word, site, symptom, etc.; what browsers/search engines did you use?). Be sure to include the topic, site address, a summary of what you have learned, and your evaluation as to the quality of the information on the site. Is it balanced? Is it agenda driven? Do you think it is credible? Why? Does it give references?
Before starting this assignment, visit the LUCEC web site (www.loyno.edu/lucec). Under "Additional Resources" you will find "News Analysis Helps." In this category there are a couple of web sites that tell you how to evaluate the internet. Use them to expand your knowledge for this assignment. 50 pts. Due date: September 11, 2000.
- **Journal abstracts:** The assignment is to select 10 environmental communications articles published in professional journals, read them, and write a one-page summary of their content. The purpose of this venture is to acquaint you with journals in the field and to learn what topics are being addressed in the profession. You may select the journals from the list provided, with the following constraints. Five of your reviews must come from **SEJournal**. Each of the five articles must come from a different volume. Choose articles that address important discussion of issues in the field. The other five articles must be chosen from communications journals, not magazines (like *Natural History*, *Smithsonian*, *Discover*, *Scientific American*, etc.). You should use journals in your sequence. You must use APA style when citing the source of your articles. 50 pts. Due date: September 27, 2000.
- **Book review:** Write a book review that compares the approaches, thoughts, and personal impacts of the books by Leopold and Carson. Why do you think the two authors have ultimately served their purposes? 100 pts. Due date: November 6, 2000.
- **Essay:** Write an essay consisting of two sections. First, contrast the perspectives and approaches to environmental topics among research scientists, government scientists/managers, and activists; second, discuss how the aforementioned perspectives and approaches are handled by environmental journalists. This essay will be based on our guests' remarks and on our debriefings and discussions in class. 50 pts. Due date: November 27, 2000.
- **Research paper:** Write an environmental paper on a topic chosen by you and

approved by me. The mission here is to give balanced coverage to the issue. Who says what? Why do they say it? Is there a consensus, and, if so, what is it? Use quotes and give sources of information. This project will be a cross between a print journalism piece and a scientific review. It will have a bibliography, but it will be written for the lay-reader, be factual, and explain the issue from more than one perspective. Length should be 5-10 pages, excluding the bibliography. Use APA style. 150 pts. Due date: December 6, 2000.

- **Credibility and Ethics:** The issue of credibility is becoming increasingly important and difficult to deal with in society. How do you think we can resolve this issue? Demonstrate your knowledge of ethics in the field of environmental communications. I am especially interested in how you personally handle the problem. 50 pts. Due date: December 13, 2000.
- **CURRENT ISSUES:** Immerse yourself in environmental issues available to you via various media outlets. If it's in the news, it may well be discussed in class. Be prepared to discuss current events in relation to the material on your syllabus. Your abilities to discuss current issues will affect your grade under Class Participation.
- **FIELD TRIP:** We will take a half day field trip to the vicinity of Madisonville (across Lake Pontchartrain) to observe salamanders and to discuss their ecology and significance in the ecosystem. The site we will visit is being developed, and discussion will address the issue of habitat loss. You will write an article about your experiences on this field trip and include your observations about how a scientist approaches field work and how information is analyzed. 50 pts. Due date: Thursday after the trip.
- **CRITIQUE:** Each student will have three opportunities to critique the course. The first will be around mid-term, which will allow for immediate alterations to the course, if deemed warranted by the professor. The second will be a special form that will be returned to the professor at the end of the course, the purpose of which is to evaluate possible improvements for the next time the course is offered. The third is the department's standardized evaluation that will be returned directly to the department without being seen by the professor. All are completed anonymously and intended to improve teaching at Loyola.

GRADING SYSTEM: The grade will be based on exams, quizzes, class participation, attendance at the field trip, and the quality of the written assignments.

- **Writing Assignments.** The writing assignments detailed above will represent 50% of the total grade (450 pts).
- **Exams.** There will be one 100-pt exam and one final 200-pt exam. The final exam is

- comprehensive. These exams will represent 33.3% of the total grade.
- **Quizzes.** At the discretion of the professor, daily quizzes may be given on the assigned readings and/or research. These will adjust the total points below (but not percentages). Quizzes may represent up to 5% of the total grade.
- **Class Participation.** A rubric will be distributed that will quantify this topic (100 pts). The rubric will represent 9% of the total grade.
- **Field Trip.** Attendance, enthusiastic participation, and a well written article can earn up to 50 pts. The field trip represents 4.5% of the total grade.

HELP ALONG THE WAY: If you have special needs (i.e., alternative testing, help with writing, etc.), please speak with me at the start of the term so that proper arrangements can be made. For more information about support services, contact Disability Services in the Office of Academic Enrichment, Monroe 405, 865-2990.

If you would like to speak with a personal counselor, contact Counseling & Career Services, DC 200, 865-3835.

The Academic and Career Excellence (ACE) Center, Room 101 Monroe Library, is an excellent resource. In effect, this is “one stop shopping” and one can work on projects there (using computers and other resources), and get instant advice from the following offices: Academic Enrichment, Counseling and Career Services, Disability Services, English Writing Lab, Mathematics Center, Monroe Library, Ross Foreign Language Center, and Writing Across the Curriculum. The information number is 864-7155.

FINAL GRADE: The final grade will be based on the following point distributions:

A	92-100%	828-900 points
B+	88-91%	792-827 points
B	82-86%	738-791 points
C+	77-81%	693-737 points
C	70-76%	630-692 points
D+	67-69%	603-629 points
D	60-66%	540-602 points
F	Below 60%	Below 540 points

RULES & REGULATIONS: These will be *strictly followed*.

- **Attendance:** This is not a correspondence course, and students should realize there is a high correlation between attendance and grades. Regular class attendance is expected. Each class absence over four will drop your class average by one letter grade (see additional implications in the class attendance/participation rubric). Two lates count as one absence. Arriving 15

minutes late to class counts as an absence. It is the student's responsibility to see the professor after class to have an absence changed to a late. There is no need to contact the professor if you'll be late or absent; cuts are allowed for personal reasons. On the other hand, if you use your cuts frivolously and then get sick or have a personal problem, you will suffer the consequences.

- **Exam make-up policy:** Arrangements must be made prior to the original exam date. If arrangements are not made before the original exam date, or the make-up is missed, the grade will be "0."
- **Deadlines:** You must meet the deadlines for assignments. The field of communications lives on deadlines. A one letter grade drop will occur for each class after the deadline that a project is handed in.
- **Proper grammar and spelling are expected:** ALL misspelled words are ½ point off each (unless the word is misspelled in a fashion that it changes its meaning or it is a scientific name, in which case the point loss may be more).
- **Following directions:** It is important that you follow all directions for assignments. If you do, the assignment will be graded; if not, it will be returned and considered not submitted.
- **Plagiarism:** You are being educated to be a communications professional. If you plagiarize others, you lose the credibility that is so precious to our field. *You are also guaranteed an F in this course, and possible expulsion from the university* (see student handbook regarding plagiarism). And yes, the professor does occasionally submit papers to an internet plagiarism site for evaluation.
- **Classroom decorum:** Students are expected to conduct themselves appropriately in class. It is against accepted classroom etiquette to indulge in such activities as private conversations (either verbal or non-verbal), cell phone interruptions, gum chewing, etc. Multiple offenses will result in ejection from class. Students are reminded that when the professor begins roll-call, all conversation is to cease immediately.
- **Writing style:** For all writing assignments, the APA style manual must be followed.

CLASS SCHEDULE:

- August 28 - Overview of the class, Introductory discussion.
August 30 - Basic environmental information/concepts, scientific method, classification of the

- biological world.
- September 4 - Environmental information: How and where we get our information.
- September 6 - Publications and other sources of information, local groups, gatherings of environmental people, internet, how to develop your own sources and advisory groups.
- September 11 - Inconclusive by Design.
- September 13 - Overview of major environmental issues (reading assignments and brief discussions used throughout the course).
- September 18 - Continuation; toilets and their connections.
- September 20 - Pure scientists and how they process information.
- September 25 - Industry scientists and how they approach their tasks.
- September 27 - Government scientists and how they cause science to progress.
- October 2 - No Class: International Federation of Environmental Journalists
- October 4 - No Class: International Federation of Environmental Journalists
- October 9 - Social scientists and the environment (we will probably change this date to another to avoid a class conflict for the presenter).
- October 10 - Class discussion: scientists: types, concerns, characteristics.
- October 16 - Environmental activists and how they communicate.
- October 18 - No Class: Society for Environmental Journalists
- October 23 - NGO administration and policies and how they affect news.
- October 25 - Petrochemical corridor/cancer alley scientists: a case study.
- October 30 - Class discussion: environmentalists: types, concerns, characteristics.
- November 1 - No Class: All Saints Day.
- November 6 - Print environmental journalism: the beat.
- November 8 - TV/video environmental journalism as the messenger.
- November 13 - Class discussion: media environmental journalists: types, concerns, characteristics.
- November 15 - Environmental public relations specialists: how to balance the client's needs with the threat of greenwashing.
- November 20 - Environmental advertising specialists: how to balance the clients needs with the threat of greenwashing.
- November 22 - No class: Thanksgiving.
- November 27 - No Class.
- November 29 - Class discussion: PR/advertising specialists: types, concerns, characteristics.
- December 6 - Environmental education as bearer of the message; Concepts used by environmental exhibits designers. Writing letters and attending public hearings.
- December 13 - Final exam: 11:30 am - 1:30 pm.

ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATIONS BIBLIOGRAPHY: For the most up-to-date bibliography in the field, see www.loyno.edu/lucec/biblio.html.