**ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNICATION (Comm 362) Spring 2011**

“Every one of us can do something to protect and care for our planet. We have to live in such a way that a future will be possible for our children and our grandchildren. Our own life has to be our message.” –Thich Nhat Hanh

**Instructor:** Richard McGrath, Ph.D. and Associate Professor of Communication Studies

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**Office Hours:** 12:30-2:00 MWF, 2:00-3:30 T/TR; and by appointment

**texts:** Cox, R. (2010*). Environmental communication and the public sphere (2nd ed.).* Los Angeles, CA: Sage; Easton, T.A. (Ed.) (2011). *Taking sides: Clashing views on environmental issues* (14th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill; and readings on class Blackboard site.

This class surveys communication related to the environment: environmental movement persuasion; public participation in environmental decisions; media coverage of the environment; advocacy for environmental justice; green marketing and corporate campaigns; and the use of science for symbolic legitimacy. You will have the opportunity to refine your analytical and writing abilities by producing both a short critique of an advertisement with an environmental theme and an in-depth essay of rhetorical criticism focused on persuasive strategies of environmental discourse. In addition, you will practice public speaking skills by presenting an oral summary of your critical essay to the class. The overall objective of the course is to help you increase your understanding of how communication shapes our perceptions of environmental issues. Note that much of this class is discussion based. Therefore, *Attendance is required*. Your *punctual* presence is expected at all scheduled class meetings unless you are prevented from attending because of a medical/family emergency or compulsory attendance at an official Central College function (*see policy below*). Graded assignments and proportion of final evaluation:

**essay exam one** 15%

**essay exam two**   15%

**essay exam three** 15%

**critique of an advertisement:** 3-5 page analysis of a television or magazine

ad with an environmental theme 15%

**statement of purpose:** 2-3 page justification of topic, generic research question,

brief description of rhetorical artifact for critical essay, and reference list 10%

**critical essay:** 8-12 page rhetorical analysis of the persuasive strategies

evident in environmental discourse 25%

**oral summary presentation of critical essay** 5%

**General Expectation:** You are expected to not only complete reading assignments on time, but also reflect upon what you have read and come to class prepared for discussion. Being prepared for discussion entails the formulation of questions and critical responses. In other words, I assume that you will be an active participant in the course and not merely a passive observer.

*Continued enrollment in the course implies your agreement to abide by the terms of this syllabus.*

**Attendance:** Each class member is allowed three absences that are not due to *documented* medical excuses or *verified* mandatory participation in college sanctioned events (for example, choir tour, mock trial tournament, or participation as an athletic team member). After your third unexcused absence your final grade will be reduced by 5% for each subsequent absence. For example, if you end the course with five unexcused absences and you have earned an 84% B, your final grade will be 74% C. If you are unable or unwilling to adhere to this policy, you should drop the course.

**Exam Policy:** Study guides will be provided for all exams. Unless you have made prior arrangements with the instructor, only exams missed because of *documented* medical or other emergencies may be rescheduled.

**Written Assignments:** Papers must be typed/word processed and double-spaced. Your writing should conform to the basic rules of English spelling, punctuation, and grammar. Furthermore, papers must adhere to the stylistic guidelines specified in the APA (American Psychological Association) Publication Manual. *You are encouraged to bring typed drafts of work in progress to my office for instructor feedback and direction well before a paper’s due date.* Good writing results from a process of rewriting, and everyone needs an editor. Late papers will receive a penalty of one letter-grade. Errors or failures in your use of a computer are not acceptable excuses for late work.

**Electronic Manners:** While attending class please turn OFF (not merely silence) all electronic devices (MP3 players, PDAs, cell phones, personal computers, etc.). This is a matter of basic respect and politeness in any public speaking situation. Freeing yourself from technology will also help cultivate a skill necessary for all professional careers: focused critical listening.

**Food:** Please do not consume food during class. Central Market and Grand Central Station are the appropriate venues for eating. Rustling of wrappers, food aroma, and the inevitable accident are distracting for your classmates and instructor. Coffee and other liquids are O.K., but take care not to spill them.

**Dress Code:** One important purpose of this course is to help prepare you for professional life after college. When speaking in professional contexts your personal appearance is a major determinant of audience perceptions of your credibility. As such, you will be expected to adhere to “business casual” guidelines for dress and grooming while delivering the oral summary of your critical essay. See the class Blackboard site for details on what constitutes “business casual” dress and grooming for men and women.

**Disabilities:** Central College abides by interpretations of the Americans with Disabilities Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that stipulates no student shall be denied the benefits of an education “solely by reason of a handicap.” Disabilities covered by law include, but are not limited to, learning disabilities, hearing, sight, or mobility impairments, and other health related impairments. If you have a documented disability that may have some impact on your work in this class for which you may require accommodations, please see me *and* Nancy Kroese, Director of Student Support Services and Disabilities Services Coordinator (x 5247) during the first two weeks of the semester so that such accommodations may be arranged.

**Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism and cheating of any form are serious offenses and may result in an F for the assignment, the course, or expulsion from the college. The details of Central’s Academic Integrity policy are found in the Student Handbook on the college’s web site. A copy will be sent to you via e-mail during the first week of the semester. It is your responsibility to read and understand the contents of that policy before you submit work to be graded. Questions regarding the policies and enforcement of the policies may be addressed to me during class or during office hours.

**Notification of Participation in College Sanctioned Events:** Mock Trial participants, choir tour participants, athletes, and others who must miss a class to participate in a college sanctioned event are expected to notify me in advance and complete work, including tests, before the planned absence. It is the student’s responsibility to communicate with me in advance regarding absences and to determine a schedule for make-up work.

# SPRING 2011 CLASS SCHEDULE

*week one*

1/18 T *Studying Environmental Communication*

**read:** Cox, pp. 1-37.

1/20 TR *The U.S. Environmental Movement*

**read:** Cox, pp. 45-58

*week two*

1/25 T *Green Marketing and Corporate Advocacy*

**read:** Cox, pp. 331-359

1/27 TR *A Rhetorical Perspective on the Environment*

**read:** Cox, pp. 58-66; Blackboard: “The Nature of Rhetorical Criticism”; “Doing Rhetorical Criticism”; “Framing Analysis”; and “Ad Critique”

*week three*

2/1 T *Ideological Criticism*

**read:** Blackboard: “Ideological Criticism” and “Beasts, Burgers, and Hummers: Meat and the Crisis of Masculinity in

Contemporary Television Advertisements”

2/3 TR *Genre Criticism*

**read:** Blackboard: “Generic Criticism” and “Revealing and Reframing Apocalyptic Tragedy in Global Warming Discourse”

*week four*

2/8 T *Metaphor Criticism*

**read:** Blackboard: “Metaphor Criticism” and “The Rhetoric of the Columbia: Space as a Wilderness, a Miracle, and a Resource”

2/10 TR *Cluster Criticism*

**read:** Blackboard: “Cluster Criticism” and “Rhetorical Features of Green Evangelicalism”

*week five*

2/15 T *Visual Rhetorics*

**read:** Cox, pp. 66-71; Blackboard: “Tree Hugger TV: Re-Visualizing Environmental Activism in the Post-Network Era”

2/17 TR *Narrative Criticism*

**read:** Blackboard: “Narrative Criticism” and “The Ecological Jeremiad, the American Myth, and the Vivid Force of Color in

Dr. Seuss’s The Lorax”

*week six*

2/22 T **EXAM ONE**

2/24 TR *Public Participation in Environmental Decisions*

**read:** Cox, pp. 83-110

*week seven*

3/1 T  *Conflict Resolution and Collaboration in Environmental Disputes*

**read:** Cox, pp. 119-143

3/3 TR *Media and the Environment Online*

**read:** Cox, pp. 151-180

**CRITIQUE OF AN ADVERTISEMENT DUE**

*week eight*

3/8 T *Risk Communication: Environmental Dangers and the Public*

**read:** Cox, pp. 189-217

3/10 TR *Environmental Advocacy Campaigns*

**read:** Cox, pp. 225-255

*week nine* **SPRING BREAK**

*week ten*

3/22 T *Environmental Justice/Climate Justice: Voices from the Grassroots*

**read:** Cox, pp. 263-288

3/24 TR *Science Communication and Environmental Controversies*

**read:** Cox, pp. 299-324

*week eleven*

3/29 T **EXAM TWO**

3/31 TR *Controversial Environmental Issue*

**read:** IsSustainable Development Compatible with Human Welfare?

*in Taking Sides*

*week twelve*

4/5 T *Controversial Environmental Issue*

**read:** Will restricting Carbon Emissions Damage the U.S. Economy? *in Taking Sides*

4/7 TR *Controversial Environmental Issue*

**read:** Is Carbon Capture Technology Ready to Limit Carbon Emissions?

*in Taking Sides*

## STATEMENT OF PURPOSE DUE

*week thirteen*

4/12 T *Controversial Environmental Issue*

**read:** Are Biofuels Responsible for Rising Food Prices?

*in Taking Sides*

4/14 TR *Controversial Environmental Issue*

**read:** Should We Drill for Offshore Oil?

*in Taking Sides*

*week fourteen*

4/19 T **CENTRAL COLLEGE SERVICE DAY**

4/21 TR *Controversial Environmental Issue*

**read:** Is it Time to Revive Nuclear Power?

*in Taking Sides*

*week fifteen*

4/26 T *Controversial Environmental Issue*

**read:** Is Genetic Engineering the Answer to Hunger?

*in Taking Sides*

4/28 TR *Controversial Environmental Issue*

**read:** Do Environmental Hormone Mimics Pose a Potentially Serious Health Threat?*in Taking Sides*

*week sixteen*

5/3 T *Oral Summaries of Critical Essays*

**CRITICAL ESSAY DUE**

5/5 TR *Oral Summaries of Critical Essays*

*Final Exam Period:* Tuesday, May 10 at 3:30 p.m.

**EXAM THREE**