

# COMX 347 Rhetoric, Nature, and Environmentalism

## Instructor Info

- Steve Schwarze, Professor of Communication Studies; Program Director of Climate Change Studies
- Office: LA 357
- Office Hours: MW 10-11 and by appointment
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## Course Description

The primary purpose of this course is to help students engage thoughtfully with public discourse about environmental issues within a US context. It introduces students to key texts, standard appeals, and recurring strategies of environmental advocacy. The secondary purpose of the course is to improve your writing abilities in the context of rhetorical analysis. The course will introduce you to a broadly conceived rhetorical perspective on discourse, a perspective that takes seriously the role that symbols, images, narratives, metaphors, audiences, identities and ideologies play in influencing attitude and action. During the course, you will use these concepts to analyze and produce discourse about environmental issues. Your writing ability should improve, as should your skills of analysis and criticism. **Because of the emphasis on writing throughout the course, this course fulfills the upper-division writing requirement in COMM.**

## Student Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course, students should be able to:

- 1) explain how environmental movement in the US has evolved in relation to public discourse surrounding ideas of “nature,” “progress,” and “justice”
- 2) identify and analyze rhetorical strategies and tactics in environmental discourse
- 3) make persuasive arguments about environmental issues, both orally and in writing
- 4) make persuasive critical judgments about environmental rhetoric on the basis of effectiveness, ethical quality, and environmental impact.

## Readings

We will use the 5<sup>th</sup> edition of Pezzullo and Cox’s *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere* (ECPS hereafter). It will eventually be available at the UM Bookstore but feel free to acquire it through other means. Earlier editions are OK but may not be adequate for fulfilling course assignments and objectives. Other course readings will be posted on Moodle, so please make arrangements to access them on a regular basis and have them available to you in class (preferably on paper). Timely material may be circulated electronically or distributed in class.

Finally, please make a few other sources part of your daily diet of reading. Set aside 15-20 minutes (or trade a half-hour of crappy TV) for this aspect of citizenship. These sources will help you get up to speed on environmental issues, and we will occasionally discuss items from them. The links below send you to the sites’ email subscription pages if you want those to show up in your inbox, but you can also use Twitter or just bookmark the home page.

1. [Mountain West News](#) and their “Rockies Today” news service sponsored in part by UM’s Center for the Rocky Mountain West. It is a curation of news about our region, and it is an excellent way of getting familiar with regional environmental issues—public land management, growth and sprawl, energy development, climate change, endangered species, waste and pollution, etc.

2. [Yale Environment 360](#), which bills itself as an “online magazine offering opinion, analysis, reporting and debate on global environmental issues.” It gets a wide range of contributors (not just journalists) and addresses an equally wide range of topics.
3. [E&E News](#), which stands for energy and environment. A little more wonky/policy oriented than the others, and more energy-focused. They have separate feeds for climate, energy, etc, which can be accessed via tabs at the top of the page.

There are many others: bloggers such as UM alum [David Roberts](#) at Vox, the environmental reporting at [The Guardian](#), one of the UK’s leading newspapers, and the websites, Twitter feeds, and Youtube channels of environmental organizations large and small. Around town, pay attention to the *Missoulian* and *Missoula Current*. Finally, the Environmental Studies Program maintains several [calendars](#) for local events, meetings, and organizations where you can see environmental rhetoric in action.

### Academic Misconduct

Academic misconduct includes cheating, plagiarism, and deliberate interference with the work of others. It is the intellectual equivalent of theft, and the aesthetic equivalent of plastic surgery. Like the former, it ruins the trust necessary for a well-functioning community; like the latter, it mistakenly sacrifices personal uniqueness and replaces it with a disfigured, false ideal.

For this class, it is primarily a matter of conducting scholarship ethically: giving credit to others for their ideas, and providing fair and accurate representations of the discourse of others. Go to the UM Student Life web page and read all about it. Although I handle instances on a case-by-case basis, plagiarism usually results in an ‘F’ on the particular piece of work and, in some cases, an ‘F’ on your course transcript. Bottom line: don’t do it.

### Deadlines

I have found that deadlines tend to promote health and well-being, at least over the long run, so I intend to hold you to them. Incompletes will be given only in unusual circumstances.

### University Policies

The university’s policies related to registration, grading, and all that, as well as specifics about deadlines, can be found at these two links:

<http://www.umt.edu/registrar/students/default.php>

<http://www.umt.edu/registrar/PDF/Autumn-2019-Registration-Deadlines-Chart.pdf>

### Assignments and Grading

Your final grade in the course will be derived primarily from a portfolio of assignments around a theme or topic that you will negotiate with me. My goal is that you will have a sustained engagement with environmental rhetoric surrounding your topic and that your writing, speaking, and thinking on the topic will gain depth and complexity over time. The portfolio’s contents will be as follows:

Your grade will be apportioned as follows:

- 20% Participation and homework: quizzes, one-pagers, “show and tell,” paper talks
- 20% Nature Analysis: 5-7 page analysis of nature/culture or antagonism.
- 30% Advocacy Analysis: 5-7 page rhetorical analysis of an environmental text or controversy.
- 30% Final paper: revision and extension of earlier paper. 10-15 pages. Students interested in presenting their paper at UMCUR or NWCA should see me early in the semester.

## COMX 347 Schedule, Fall Semester 2019

*Italicized listings are for events related to the course, but not required*

### **Aug 26/28 EC, Discourses of Nature, and Environmental “Movements”**

M: Course Introduction (read ECPS ch. 1 afterward)

W: Cronon, Price

### **Sept 4/6**

M: Labor Day, no class

W: DiChiro

### **Sept 9/11**

M: ECPS ch. 2, pp. 29-36; Muir, “Hetch Hetchy,” Oravec, “Conservationism v. Preservationism”

W: ECPS rest of ch. 2; Carson, “Fable” and “Obligation;” EJ reading

### **Sept 16/18**

M: ECPS ch. 11, “EJ and CJ Movements.”

*Also, 5pm deadline for tuition payment, dropping the course, changing grade option*

T: “What Does Climate Action Look Like” event, Noon, DHC

W: ECPS ch. 4, visual and popular culture

F: *Global Climate Strike*

### **Sept 23/25**

M: Rhetorical analysis and writing

W: \*\*\*PAPER 1 DRAFT DUE; workshop in class.

**PAPER 1 DUE Friday, Sept. 27 Noon**

### **Sept 30/Oct 2 Rhetorical Strategies in Environmental Controversy**

M: ECPS ch. 3, “Symbolic Constructions”

W: More on rhetorical strategies TBD

### **Oct 7/9**

M: ECPS ch. 9, “Advocacy Campaigns”

W: ECPS ch. 10, “Digital Media”

### **Oct 14/16**

M: ECPS ch. 6, “Scientists, Technology and Env Controversy”

W: ECPS ch. 7, “Human Health and Ecological Risk Communication”

### **Week of Oct 21/23**

M: Read Chapter 11 Sustainability and “Greening” Corporations

W: More on corporate rhetoric TBD

### **Week of Oct 28/30**

M: \*\*\*PAPER 2 DRAFT DUE; workshop in class

*Also, 5 pm deadline to drop. After this, withdrawal only by petition for extenuating circumstances*

W: TBD

**PAPER 1 DUE Thursday, Oct. 31, Noon**

### **Rest of semester: TBD**

No class Monday Nov. 11 (Veteran’s Day), Wednesday Nov. 27 (Travel day)

Final meeting: Tuesday Dec. 10, 1:10-3:10 pm. **FINAL PAPER DUE IN CLASS**