

## ENVIRONMENTAL COMMN

CMMN A370 Sec 001 TR 3:30-4:45 pm C/M Rm. 302  
Fall 2003

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

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Office Hours: TR 10:45 - 11:45 am; 2:00 – 3:15 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:

- 👉 Carson, Rachael. 1962. *Silent spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- 👉 Leopold, Aldo. 1949. *Sand County almanac*. New York: Ballentine.

Various additional readings may be made available on blackboard, reserve at the library, or in my office.

**Recommended reference text (not required):** Miller, G. Tyler, Jr. *Living in the environment*. Current ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

#### COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

- **CLASS COMMUNICATION (REQUIRED):** I will often communicate with the class via email. You *must* have an email account and it *must* be updated (the one you are actually using on a day-to-day basis) on LORA so that I can batch email the class. *Check often (daily) or you will definitely miss important information. Not getting the messages is not a valid excuse – you snooze, you lose. Both of the following must be done by September 2, 2003.*
- **CLASS LISTSERV:** You are required to subscribe to the class listserv. All announcements and changes as the course progresses may be shared via this listserv. To subscribe, simply send an email to [majordomo@loyno.edu](mailto:majordomo@loyno.edu). In the body of the email,

write *subscribe cmmna370001*. You should almost immediately receive an email telling you that you have been successfully subscribed.

- **BLACKBOARD:** Many elements of this course will be available to you on the class Blackboard site (<http://blackboard.loyno.edu/>). You may find announcements, corrections to the syllabus (including due dates), clarifications, references, etc. You are well advised to check it often – and *always* make note of announcements. *The “I didn’t know” excuse won’t work.* To access Blackboard for the first time, go to <http://blackboard.loyno.edu>, click on *Login*, then give your *username* (the one for your Loyola email) and *password* (6 digits made up of your birth year [4 digits] and month of birth [2 digits]). Once in, you may (and should) change your password. If you have used it before, then proceed as usual. If you have problems, go to the Monroe Library Reference Desk.

§ **WRITING ASSIGNMENTS (always follow the AWriting Instructions@ on the Blackboard site):**

§ **Internet:** The assignment is to pick an environmental issue (recycling, global warming, ozone depletion, coastal erosion, toxic chemicals, population growth, etc.) *for your research paper* (see below) and, using the internet, find ten sites on the topic that you consider credible and five whose veracity you challenge. Using the form provided on Blackboard, 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 for ANews Analysis Helps@ (<http://www.loyno.edu/lucec/links.html#10>). 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 18, 2003.

§ **Journal abstracts:** The assignment is to select 10 environmental communications articles published in professional communications 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 (see the list on Blackboard), not magazines (like *Natural History*, *Smithsonian*, *Discover*, *Scientific American*, etc.). If you are a communications major, you should use journals in your sequence (but it is not required). You must use APA style when citing the source of your articles (see Blackboard). 50 pts. Due date: October 16, 2003.

- § **Book review:** You will 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? This will be done in class as an open book assignment. 100 pts. Due date: December 4, 2003.
- § **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 my and our guests' remarks and on our debriefings and discussions in class. 50 pts. Due date: November 25, 2003.
- § **Research paper:** Write an environmental paper on a topic chosen by you and approved by me (before you do the Internet assignment). Give an overview of the topic (standard research paper), followed by your evaluation of how the print news industry has covered the issue (use Lexus Nexus [see Blackboard] to find at least 10 newspaper articles published in the past 10 years that address the issue [each being at least 10 column inches - the longer the better]). The mission here is to give balanced, fair 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 the paper 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. 150 pts. Due date: December 2, 2003.
- § **Credibility and Ethics:** Throughout the course, you must think about this topic. Be sure to make notes to yourself. 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. You will be asked to discuss this topic on your final.

§ **EXAMS:** There will be a mid-term exam worth 100 pts and a comprehensive Final exam worth 250 pts.

§ **CLASS PARTICIPATION:** You should be actively engaged in the class. Never fail to ask a question. Your participation and enthusiasm is factored in qualitatively when final grades are calculated.

§ **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.

§ **QUOTATIONS:** Find 10 environmental quotes that say something powerful to you. Use the quotations form available on Blackboard to give the quote, explain what it means to you, and describe how you verified the veracity of the quote. 50 pts. Date due: November 20, 2003.

§ **FIELD TRIP:** We will take a half-day field trip (on a Sunday morning) to Jean Lafitte National Park. We will be with the Delta Ecology class, and we will walk a mile or so through the swamp (on an asphalt path) and discuss the types of wetlands that exist in coastal Louisiana, and the flora and fauna that live there. Your assignment is to write a news piece on the information offered during the field trip. 50 pts. Trip date: October 19, 2003. Due date for article: Thursday after the trip.

§ **CRITIQUE:** Each student will have three ways to critique the course. The first will be to email comments to the professor at any time (this allows 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 dean's and/or department's standardized evaluation that will be returned directly to the dean and/or department without being seen by the professor. The professor expects students to offer ideas, and the second two are anonymous – all are intended for improvement of 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 53% of the total grade (400 pts).

- § **Exams.** There will be one 100-pt exam and one final 150-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.
- § **Field Trip.** Attendance, enthusiastic participation, and a well-written article can earn up to 50 pts. The field trip represents 7% of the total grade.
- § **Quotations.** As described above. Worth 50 pts (7% 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 208, 865-3835.

The Academic and Career Excellence (ACE) Center, Room 101 Monroe Library, is an excellent resource. In effect, this is Aone 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 864-7141.

There will be no class accommodations without certification from one of the above sources.  
**FINAL GRADE:** The final grade will be based on the following point distributions:

A	92-100%	690-750 points
B+	88-91%	660-689 points
B	82-86%	615-659 points
C+	77-81%	577-614 points
C	70-76%	525-576 points
D+	67-69%	502-524 points
D	60-66%	450-501 points
F	Below 60%	Below 449 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; the four cuts are allowed for personal reasons. On the other hand, if you use your four 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 2 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<sup>1</sup>:** 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.

Information/data/quotation/opinion/statement of fact taken from any other source must be attributed. You may paraphrase statements of others, but must cite the source. If the material is taken directly from another source, it must be placed in quotes and reproduced with complete accuracy. *Failure to do so is plagiarism and will be treated accordingly.*

READ THIS ONE MORE TIME & COMMIT IT TO MEMORY.

§ **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.

<sup>1</sup> The second paragraph of this section is taken from Dr. Cathy Rogers.

- § **Facilities:** Please use the facilities before coming to class. It is rude to get up and leave in the middle of lecture.
- § **Writing style:** For all writing assignments, the APA style manual must be followed (see the Blackboard discussion).

### **CLASS SCHEDULE:**

- August 26 - Overview of the class, Introductory discussion.
- August 28 - Diversity: How does your brain work? How does it differ/how is it similar to others in the class?
- September 2 - Basic environmental information/concepts, scientific method, classification of the biological world, good/bad communication, scientists vs. communicators, etc..
- September 4 - Continuation.
- September 9 - Overview of major environmental issues (reading assignments and brief discussions used throughout the course); toilets and their connections.
- September 11 - No class: Society of Environmental Journalists' Conference
- September 16 - No class
- September 18 - Environmental information: How and where we get our information. Publications and other sources of information, local groups, gatherings of environmental people, internet, how to develop your own sources and advisory groups. Inconclusive by design.
- September 23 - Pure scientists and how they process information.
- September 25 - Industry scientists and how they approach their tasks.
- September 30 - Government scientists and how they cause science to progress
- October 2 - Social scientists and the environment (we will probably change this date to another to avoid a class conflict for the presenter).
- October 7 - No class: International Federation of Environmental Journalists
- October 9 - No class: International Federation of Environmental Journalists
- October 14 - No class: Fall break
- October 16 - Exam I
- October 19 - Field Trip: Jean Lafitte National Park, 8:00 am – 12:00 noon.
- October 21 - Environmental activists and how they communicate; environmentalists: types, concerns, characteristics
- October 23 - Petrochemical corridor/cancer alley scientists: a case study.
- October 28 - The business perspective<sup>7-</sup>

- October 30 - Administration and policies and how they affect news
- November 4 - Print environmental journalism: the beat.
- November 6 - TV/video environmental journalism as the messenger.
- November 11 - Class discussion: media environmental journalists: types, concerns, characteristics.
- November 13 - Environmental public relations and advertising specialists: how to balance the client=s needs with the threat of greenwashing
- November 18-  
November 20 - Continuation  
Environmental education as bearer of the message; Concepts used by environmental exhibits designers. Writing letters and attending public hearings.
- November 25 - The future of environmental communication
- November 27 - No class: Thanksgiving.
- December 2 - Last class: Course summary
- December 4 - Book review – in class.
- December 11 - Final exam: 11:30 am - 1:30 pm.

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

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