

JOURNALISM 125

ENVIRONMENT, THE PUBLIC AND THE MEDIA

LEHIGH UNIVERSITY
FALL 2003 (4 credits)

SYLLABUS

SCOPE OF THE COURSE

Many environmental issues face us locally, regionally, nationally and globally, and decisions have to be made concerning them--both personal and governmental. The way the mass media report about these issues is important for both short-term and long-term decisions made by individuals, industries and governments.

Information about environmental issues, reaches most Americans through the mass media--newspapers, magazines, radio, television and the World Wide Web. Some environmentally concerned citizens gather additional information from more specialized publications and websites focusing on nature, land or water conservation, hunting or fishing, and environmental issues in general. They also attend meetings of environmental organizations. Wherever the information comes from, it has some impact on people and their actions.

The purpose of this course is to make you more critical readers of environmental news by teaching you to analyze how the mass media present environmental information and what their various information sources are. We will work on developing your analytic skills on a step-by-step basis, adding different criteria throughout the semester, eventually building a complete set of analysis criteria that you will be able to use for your final paper and, I hope, for your future careers.

To help develop your analytic skills, we will generally focus on an environmental topic and then look at how the media covered it and which environmental, governmental or industrial groups provided information for it. Sometimes we will examine how these information sources prepared their messages and attracted journalists' attention. Since there are so many environmental issues to study, we will focus on ones generally described in an easy-to-read text plus one important subject that happened last year, the World Summit on Sustainable Development. We will move from global issues such as population, climate change, biodiversity, logging and overfishing to more environmental health risk issues such as toxic chemicals and nuclear waste. Finally, we will briefly look at the field of environmental risk communication and the role the media and others play in how people evaluate risk.

CLASS SESSIONS

This class will meet Tuesday and Thursday from 9:20 to 10:35 am. These sessions primarily will be class discussions, with a minimum of lecturing. **Your participation in class discussion will be an important part of this course and your grade.** You will need to be prepared by doing the assigned readings and attending class. **More than three absences, whether excused or unexcused, will lower your final grade one letter.**

Since late arrivals disrupt discussions, two late arrivals will count as an absence. Leaving and returning to the classroom during discussions also is disruptive and, if you do so, it will count as a late arrival. So come to class prepared to stay the full time and come on time.

READINGS

Selected readings in four books are required for the course:

Reporting on the Environment: A Handbook for Journalists, by Sharon Friedman and Kenneth Friedman, United Nations Press

Media and the Environment, edited by Craig LaMay and Everette Dennis, Island Press

Nature's End, by Whitley Strieber and James Kunetka, Warner Books

Watersheds3, by Lisa Newton and Catherine Dillingham, Wadsworth Publishing Co.

The first and second book are out of print and are on the class website, which is www.lehigh.edu/~ddjour/J125/index.htm . If members of the class wish to have these readings copied and purchase them as one package, this can be arranged. The third book also is out of print and copies will be lent to you for the semester's use when you deposit a \$20 check with the Journalism Department. Make it out to Lehigh University. When you return your copy, you will get the check back. You MUST return this book in order to pass the course!! (You may be able to purchase this book on Amazon.com as a used book.) The fourth book is available in the bookstore.

As you will see from the course, reading and assignment schedule attached, there also are a number of required readings that you can access directly from the course website. Don't panic when you see how many; we will be splitting them up so not everyone has to read everything for a particular subject.

You also should be looking at the wealth of environmental links and resources available on the class website. Be sure to look several times a week at the following daily environmental news websites that are linked on the class website: World Environment

News by Reuters News Service at www.planetark.org/news/ , Environmental News Network (ENN) at www.enn.com , and SEJ-daily, a daily digest of stories done by members of the Society of Environmental Journalists, www.sej.org . What you read on these three websites should add to your knowledge for discussion of environmental issues in the class.

ASSIGNMENTS

This is a four-credit course and will require work both as an individual and once or twice as a team member. Since this is also a writing-intensive course, you will be required to write a minimum of 30 pages.

There will be three short papers due during the semester including:

- 1) a summary of some coverage of the World Summit;
- 2) a book report on *Nature's End*; and
- 3) an analysis of excerpts from a Pulitzer prize-winning series, "Oceans of Trouble."

There will be a midterm exam and a final paper on an environmental issue of your choice and an analysis of how well the media covered it according to criteria we have developed all semester. A brief proposal for the final paper will be due at the end of October and the final paper will be due on the last day of class.

In addition to these assignments, small groups of 2-4 students will be responsible for preparing materials to help lead class discussions. Each time, a different group of students will be chosen so no one will be overburdened with work. A schedule of written assignments and tentative due dates is at the end of the syllabus.

This course was extensively revised last year and most of the kinks are gone, but still consider the schedule, readings and assignments as somewhat tentative. There may still be changes as we go, and your suggestions are welcome about how things are going and what changes to make.

All papers must be printed double-spaced, and corrected for spelling and grammar. Assignments should be turned in on time to receive the maximum possible grade. Papers turned in up to one week late will lose one letter grade. Papers turned in after one week lose two letter grades and so on. ALL ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE TURNED IN TO PASS THE COURSE.

GRADES

Grades will be calculated as follows:

World Summit Report	6%
Nature's End Book Report	15%
Oceans of Trouble Points and Report	10%
Midterm	18%
Class and Debate Presentations	5%
Term Paper	30%
Classroom Participation	16%

Junior writing certification will be a separate evaluation and will not enter into calculations for the letter grade. Individual conferences on writing problems will be held with students after a few assignments have been turned in. One or two writing clinics also may be scheduled. **There is a Writing Helpers section on the class website.** If you know you have writing problems or if you just want to improve your writing skills, don't wait for a scheduled appointment. Come to see me as soon as possible.

PROFESSOR AND OFFICE HOURS

I am Sharon Friedman, Professor and Director of Lehigh's Science and Environmental Writing Program and its Environment and Society Minor. My office hours are Monday from 9:30 am to noon and Tuesday and Thursday from 1-3 pm in Room 209 in Coppee Hall. Other times are by appointment. My office phone is 610-758-4179; e-mail is smf6 or sharon.friedman@lehigh.edu.

I frequently work at home on Wednesdays and Fridays and you can call me there at 610-868-7692. I faithfully read my e-mail every day except Saturday, so you can always contact me that way.

If you have a disability for which you are or may be requesting accommodations, please let me know as early in the semester as possible. You may also wish to contact the Office of Academic Support Services, University Center Room 212, 610-758-4152.

Everyone in this class should feel free to come see me or contact me by phone or e-mail with any comments, problems or questions you have. Since this course has recently been revised, I really am interested in your responses to it.