Syllabus

Dr. Richard Buttny
Office: 113 Sims Hall
Telephone: 443-5137; Fax: 443-5141; e-mail: RButtny@syr.edu
Office Hours: Monday & Wednesday 12:30-2:00, and by appointment
Classroom: SIMS HALL 131

COURSE DESCRIPTION
The course will address questions such as these: How does communication mediate the relationship between people and nature? How do we know nature or our environment through what we say about it? What are the different ways we represent the nature and the environment: through photography, film, written narratives, television, music, and so on? What are the different environmental discourses and rhetorics which affect how we conceive of the wild and our place in nature? Are these sustainable?
Topics include:
• The social construction of nature and human relationships with nature, through discourse, rhetoric, and communication practices
• Critical and cultural approaches to environmental discourse
• Communication about environmental issues in organizational, mass media, political, and international contexts
• Communication in environmental controversies; stakeholder dialog, and conflict
• Public understanding of environmental issues; public participation in environmental decision-making; expert-public-government dialog
• Environmental risk communication

CLASS FORMAT
The class will be taught in a discussion format. Students will be asked to make in-class presentations based on the readings and their own research.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
1. Students will learn that our experiences of nature and the wild are mediated by our narratives, metaphors, and cultural assumptions.

2. Students will learn the various and competing environmental discourses and rhetorics that guide decisions on the environment.

3. Students will learn the crucial connection between communication and sustainability practices.
COURSE READINGS:


Online readings

COURSE ASSIGNMENTS:

Class grading: 500 total points

100 points: Reaction paper to *Into the Wild* (5 pages). What does this book tell us about a journey into the wild? What is the importance of “going into the wild”? How does this compare to Thoreau’s sense of the wild? Why do we need wild places?

200 points: Term paper (10 pages) addressing environmental issues on water and/or on hydrofracking. Use a perspective from Cox’s *Environmental Communication & the Public Sphere* text (e.g., journalistic, activist, public participation, risk, scientific) to analyze the issues arising from our Feldman’s *Water* or Wilbur’s *Under the Surface.*

Environmental practice option: get involved with a local environmental group, attend their meetings & work on some environmental project for a minimum of six weeks. Keep a log of your activities. Use our readings to inform your activism. Write up = 10 pages. Permission of instructor required.

100 points: Final comprehensive examination.

100 points: Class participation: come prepared, ready & awake, & have a good attitude. Attendance: after 2 absences your grade will be lowered. Arriving late will lower your grade
CLASSROOM CONDUCT:
• Students are expected to arrive in class on time & not leave early.
• No bathroom breaks in the middle of class (unless it’s really necessary)
• No texting in class
• Students who disrupt the class will have their grade lowered.

SU ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:
Student work must adhere to academic integrity. “Academic integrity includes a commitment to the values of honesty, trustworthiness, fairness, and respect.” A violation of academic integrity is “any dishonest act which is committed in an academic context....” It includes “plagiarism (using someone else’s language, ideas information or original material without acknowledging the source),” copying from another student’s work, use of unauthorized aids in examinations, etc. http://academicintegrity.syr.edu

RELIGIOUS HOLIDAY(S): Students must notify instructors by the end of the second week of classes when they will be observing their religious holiday(s).

Syllabus Statement Regarding Disability-Related Accommodations
If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact the Office of Disability Services(ODS), http://disabilityservices.syr.edu, located in Room 309 of 804 University Avenue, or call (315) 443-4498 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. ODS is responsible for coordinating disability-related accommodations and will issue students with documented Disabilities Accommodation Authorization Letters, as appropriate. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact ODS as soon as possible.

CLASS SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Week 1
     Read: Cox, ch.1 Study & practice of environmental communication

Aug.28  Perspectives, assumptions, & ideologies of nature & the environment
     Read: Cox, ch.2 Contested meanings of environment

Week 2
Sept.2  Labor Day

Sept.4  Discourses of the environment
     Read: Cox, ch.3 Social-symbolic constructions of environment
     Sign up for presentation on Into the Wild. Summarize the key ideas and events from the reading. Compare and contrast to other ideas on the wild, nature or the environment.
What insights does this book offer? What problems?

*Week 3*
Sept.9  Narratives of nature; the symbolic meanings of the wild  
**read:** *Into the Wild*, pp. 1-69 **Student presentation**

Sept.11  Narratives of nature; the symbolic meanings of the wild (con’t) *DVD Into the Wild*  
**read:** *Into the Wild*, pp. 70-132 **Student presentation**

*Week 4*
Sept.16 Narratives of nature; the symbolic meanings of the wild (con’t)  
**read:** *Into the Wild*, pp. 133-203 **Student presentation**

**supplemental read:** Simpson, “I Want to Ride on the Bus Chris Died In”

Sept.18 Henry David Thoreau, grandfather of American environmentalism  
**read:** Thoreau’s *Walking*  [http://thoreau.eserver.org/walking.html](http://thoreau.eserver.org/walking.html)

*Week 5*
Sept.23 Visual representations of the environment: photography, *Ansel Adams: documentary film*  
**Reaction Paper to Into the Wild due in**

Sept.25 Visual representations of the environment: documentary, *Ken Burns, National Parks*  
**Read:** DeLuca, “Salvaging wilderness from the tomb of history: A response to *The National Parks: America’s Best Idea*”

*Week 6*
Sept.30 Water as threatened resource for the 21st C  
**Read:** *Water*, ch.1-2

Oct.2 Water & sustainability & global warming  
**Read:** *Water*, ch.3-4

*Week 7*
Oct.7 The right to water; environmental justice  
**Read:** *Water*, ch.5

Oct.9 The water of Onondaga Lake; *tour Honeywell Visitor Center*

*Week 8*
Oct.14 Journalism & the environment  
**Read:** Cox, ch.6 News media & environmental journalism

Oct.16 Journalism & the environment:
Bring to class: news stories of an environmental issue

**Week 9**

Oct. 21 The internet & environment

**Read:** Cox, ch. 7, Social media & the environment online

Oct. 23 Environmental activism. Lecture: Bill McKibben 350.org, global warming

**Read:** Cox, ch. 8, Advocacy campaigns & message construction

**Week 10**

Oct. 28 Energy: hydrofracking for natural gas: promises & perils; *book trailer*

**Read:** Wilbur, *Under the Surface*

**Read:** Cox, ch. 4 Public participation in environmental decisions

Oct. 30 Hydrofracking: for & against; risk communication; *Gaslands*

**Read:** Wilbur, *Under the Surface*

**Read:** Cox, ch. 5, Managing conflict

**Week 11**

Nov. 4 Hydrofracking: the science & the politics of global warming; *Gaslands (con’t)*

**Read:** Wilbur, *Under the Surface*

**Read:** Cox, ch. 11, Science comm & environmental comm

Nov. 6 Narratives of hydrofracking for natural gas; *Frack Nation*

**Read:** Wilbur, *Under the Surface*

**Read:** Cox, ch. 12, Risk communication

**Week 12**

Nov. 11 You are what you eat: our food & the environment; *Food, Inc.*

**Paper on water & hydrofracking due in**

Nov. 13 Food & the environment: Our national eating disorder: Industrial corn

**Read:** Pollen, selection from *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*

**Week 13**

Nov. 18 Food & the environment

**Read:** Pollen, selection from *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*

Nov. 20 Tour SU foods
Week 14
Dec.2 Food & the environment *Botany of Desire*
    Read: Pollen, selection from *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*

Dec.4  Student presentation on research or advocacy project

Final Exam: Fri., Dec. 13, 3:00-5:00pm