

# NR400 Public Relations in Natural Resources

Department of Fish, Wildlife & Conservation Biology  
Warner College of Natural Resources  
Spring 2018 Mon/Wed, 1-1:50pm Plant Sciences W9

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## University Course Description

Effective public relations and public information programs applicable to natural resource professions (3 credits)

## Course Overview

*NR400 Public Relations in Natural Resources* examines how public communication shapes opinion and understanding of natural resource issues. The course combines study of key communication concepts with experiential projects, including critique of a public hearing and creation of media products. Through readings, case studies, and assignments, students analyze approaches for effective public communication. They then design brochures, websites, videos, etc., eventually collaborating in teams for real-life 'clients'.

## Student Learning Outcomes

In this course, students will:

1. explore various communication tools, terms, theory, and concepts and how to apply them in explaining representations and public perceptions of the natural world.
2. critique case studies of communication in natural resources and conservation issues.
3. meet and learn from communication experts and natural resources managers.
4. develop communication strategies, materials and products through group and individual efforts, and present/share those materials with the class and natural resources professionals.
5. apply critical reading, thinking, and writing skills to explore and articulate thoughtful opinions on questions related to environmental communication.

## Readings

The required textbook is: **Phaedra Pezzullo & Robert Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere, 5th edition*** (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2018).

Additional readings will be posted on CANVAS. NOTE: you must complete readings ***before*** the class for which they are assigned, so that you are a participant rather than just an observer. Be prepared for occasional ***unannounced*** quizzes [see below] to check your comprehension of particular readings.

## Recitation

This course requires 50 minutes of recitation per week (see below for schedule). Recitations will be used for discussion, group work, guest speakers, and in-class assignments, depending upon the week's topic.

Attendance/participation in your recitation will factor into your overall grade.

R01	Mondays	2-2:50pm	NR201
R02	Wednesdays	11-11:50am	Stadium 1203
R03	Wednesdays	12-12:50pm	Stadium 1203

## Assignments

A total of 500 points will be available for assignments in this course, primarily four projects (in-depth details about each project will be provided during the course). The assignments are as follows, listed in order of due date:

### *Website Critique (10% of grade)*

Critique an online education/information website about an environmental topic/issue. Paper (minimum 4 pages, single-spaced size 12 font, excluding bibliography, illustrations, etc.) is due Sunday **February 25<sup>th</sup>**.

### *Individual Communication Project (20% of grade)*

For your first effort in communication design, you will create a brochure/website/video/podcast/other product about a natural resource topic that interests you. Unlike the group media project, you do NOT have to work with a 'client' for this assignment. Project proposals are due Thursday **February 8<sup>th</sup>**. Due date for project itself is Thursday **March 8<sup>th</sup>**.

### *Public Hearing Observation (20% of grade)*

Attend and critique a public hearing about an issue relevant to natural resources. If you wish, interview one or more people at this public hearing – someone in the audience, a speaker (activist, professional 'expert', etc.), one of the 'listening' panelists, journalist, etc.

A 1-page proposal detailing date/place of hearing and brief background of issue is due Thursday **January 25<sup>th</sup>**. The final paper (minimum 4 pages, single-spaced size 12 font, excluding bibliography, illustrations, etc.) is due Thursday **March 23<sup>rd</sup>**.

### *Group Media Project (20% of grade)*

In 4-person teams, you will conceive and design a media product(s) that informs an identified audience about an actual natural resource issue, opportunity or challenge. This project, which also entails a final presentation, must incorporate concepts covered in the course. Only groups that develop a relationship with a 'client' (non-profit, nature center, public agency, etc.) for their media product can potentially earn an 'A'.

Project proposals are due Friday **April 6<sup>th</sup>**, though I urge you to meet beforehand with me/Josh to discuss your ideas. A progress report is due Thursday **April 19<sup>th</sup>**. The final product is due Sunday **April 29<sup>th</sup>**.

### *Quizzes (15% of grade)*

Four quizzes will test your knowledge/understanding of readings and other material covered in the course. Students will not be permitted to make up a missed quiz unless there are serious mitigating circumstances.

### *Attendance/Participation/In-class work (15% of grade)*

Our style of teaching is collaborative, so participation by you is essential, especially during the weekly recitation. As incentive, we often require you to do small projects before/during recitation, that are worth a handful of points. As for attendance, random checks will be conducted. If you need to miss class, we would appreciate the courtesy of a pre-class request/explanation.

**THESE ASSIGNMENTS ACCORD YOU MUCH INDEPENDENCE AND CREATIVE FREEDOM – AND THUS PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY. YOUR GRADE IS VERY MUCH IN YOUR HANDS!**

Unless otherwise instructed, assignments should be posted on CANVAS no later than 11:59pm of the due date. Excepting prior arrangement, assignments submitted after this time will be penalized 5% for each day they are late. Papers later than seven days will NOT be accepted and will be graded zero. Exceptions will only

be granted in the case of serious medical or personal issues, in which case please discuss your situation with us as early as possible so we can come up with a revised deadline.

## Final Grade

The following grading scale will be used to calculate your final grade:

<b>A</b> 93-100%	<b>C-</b> 70-72%
<b>A-</b> 90-92%	<b>D</b> 60-69%
<b>B+</b> 87-89%	<b>F</b> 59% or below
<b>B</b> 83-86%	<b>S</b> Satisfactory
<b>B-</b> 80-82%	<b>U</b> Unsatisfactory
<b>C+</b> 77-79%	<b>I</b> Incomplete
<b>C</b> 73-76%	<b>IF</b> Incomplete/Fail

NOTE: Tracking your grades and overall performance is your responsibility. If you have quiz-related questions, wait 24 hours after the grade was posted (to process your thoughts/emotions), then make your request to me within 48 hours thereafter. If you do not contact me within that 48-hr window, you will not receive credit.

More generally, if you are struggling, contact me or make an appointment – do not wait until the last weeks of class to share concerns! Pass/Fail is not an option.

**Grades of "Incomplete":** Per university policy, an instructor may assign temporary grade of Incomplete to a student who demonstrates that he or she could not complete the requirements of the course due to circumstances beyond the student's control and not reasonably foreseeable. A student must be passing a course at the time that an Incomplete is requested unless the instructor determines that there are extenuating circumstances to assign an Incomplete to a student who is not passing the course. When an instructor assigns an Incomplete, he or she shall specify in writing using the Department Incomplete Grade Form the requirements the student shall fulfill to complete the course as well as the reasons for granting an Incomplete when the student is not passing the course. The instructor shall retain a copy of this statement in his or her grade records and provide copies to the student and the department head or his or her designee. (Section I.6 of the Academic Faculty and Administrative Professional Manual)

## Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is a breach of trust between a student, one's fellow students, and/or the instructor(s). The Warner College takes academic integrity seriously. At minimum, academic integrity means that no one will use another's work as their own. The CSU writing center defines plagiarism thus:

Plagiarism is the unauthorized or unacknowledged use of another person's academic or scholarly work. Done on purpose, it is cheating. Done accidentally, it is no less serious. Regardless of how it occurs, plagiarism is a theft of intellectual property and a violation of an ironclad rule demanding "credit be given where credit is due." Source: (Writing Guides: Understanding Plagiarism. <http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/guide.cfm?guideid=17>)

If you plagiarize, you could lose credit for the plagiarized work, fail the assignment, or fail the course. Each instance of plagiarism, classroom cheating, and other types of academic dishonesty will be addressed according to the principles in the CSU General Catalog ("Academic Integrity/Misconduct: <http://catalog.colostate.edu/general-catalog/policies/students-responsibilities/>.)

Academic integrity also involves doing your own reading and studying. It includes regular class attendance, careful consideration of all class materials, and engagement with the class and your classmates. Academic integrity lies at the core of our common goal: to create an intellectually honest and rigorous community. Because academic integrity, and the personal and social integrity of which academic integrity is an integral part, is so central to our mission as students, teachers, scholars, and citizens, we will ask to you sign the CSU Honor Pledge as part of completing all our major assignments.

**Disability Access**

CSU is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. Students with disabilities who need accommodations must first contact Resources for Disabled Students before requesting accommodations from the professor. Resources for Disabled Students (RDS; <http://rds.colostate.edu/home>) is located in room 100 of the General Services Building. Their phone is (970) 491-6385 (V/TDD). Students who need accommodations in this course must contact the professor at the beginning of the semester to discuss needed accommodations.

**Religious Accommodation**

Participation in official University activities, e.g., an out-of-town athletic event, or special religious observances may provide a legitimate reason for an excused absence. The student is responsible for discussing this with the instructor at the beginning of the semester.

**Title IX Information**

CSU's Student Sexual Harassment and Violence policy, following national guidance from the Office of Civil Rights, requires that faculty follow CSU policy as a "mandatory reporter" of any personal disclosure of sexual harassment, abuse, and/or violence related experiences or incidents shared with the faculty member in person, via email, and/or in classroom papers or homework exercises. These disclosures include but are not limited to reports of personal relational abuse, relational/domestic violence, and stalking. While faculty are often able to help students locate appropriate channels of assistance on campus (e.g., see CSU Health Network; <http://health.colostate.edu>), disclosure by the student to the faculty member requires that the faculty member inform appropriate CSU channels to help ensure the student's safety and welfare is being addressed, even if the student requests that the disclosure not be shared.

**Non-Discrimination Statement**

CSU does not discriminate on the basis of race, age, creed, color, religion, national origin or ancestry, sex, gender, disability, veteran status, genetic information, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or pregnancy. The University complies with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, related Executive Orders 11246 and 11375, Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 402 of the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, as amended, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, as amended, The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Civil Rights Act of 1991, the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008, and all civil rights laws of the State of Colorado. Accordingly, equal opportunity of employment and admission shall be extended to all persons. CSU shall promote equal opportunity and treatment in employment through a positive and continuing affirmative action program for ethnic minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and veterans. The Office of Equal Opportunity is located in 101 Student Services, and this statement is online at <http://oeo.colostate.edu/non-discrimination-statement>.

# Schedule of Topics and Readings

## Week 1: Introduction

JAN 17: Intro to course and to each other; sample projects; what's in a word

Reading: Mark Meisner, "Environmental communication: what it is and why it matters," One-Planet Talking Point (Nov. 2015)

RECITATION: NONE

JAN 17: Assignment due midnight: Response to Meisner article

## Week 2: Symbolic Constructions of Environment

JAN 21 [Sunday]: submit paragraph describing Public Service Announcement (PSA) about an environmental issue/topic (OPTIONAL-best get 5pts)

JAN 22: Intro to Environmental Communication/Contested Meanings of Environment

Reading: Cox, Chapter 1 (pp. 11-26)

JAN 24: A Rhetorical Perspective

Reading: Cox, pp. 51-63

RECITATION: PSA critiques

JAN 25: Assignment due midnight: 1-page Public Hearing Outline

## Week 3: Storytelling

JAN 29 – Storytelling

Reading: Tianyi Dong, "Ph.D. student pioneers storytelling strategies for science communication," Berkeley News (June 6 2017); Aleenah Ansari, "Storytelling in the sciences: introducing narrative elements in every medium of science writing," The Daily (Jan. 30 2017)

JAN 31: Toolkit for Storytelling

Reading: <https://www.planetforward.org> [select two stories for their impactfulness and be ready to explain why you felt them impactful]

RECITATION: Storyboarding

## Week 4: Environment in/of Visual and Popular Culture

FEB 5: Walt Disney's *True-Life Adventure* films

Reading: Cox, pp. 67-78

FEB 7: SeaWorld

Reading: Susan Davis, "Touch the magic," pp. 204-17 in William Cronon, *Uncommon Ground* (1996) [PDF](#)

RECITATION: Effective/Efficient Writing

FEB 8: Assignment due midnight: Proposal for Individual Communication Project

## Week 5: Analyzing Media Products

FEB 12: Analysis of Media Products

Reading: Susan Jacobson, *Communication Skills for Conservation Professionals* (2009): pp. 316-27

FEB 13: Quiz #1 online

FEB 14: NO CLASS [BUT DO ATTEND TODAY'S RECITATIONS]

RECITATION: Analyzing Media Products

## Week 6: Framing

FEB 19: Framing

Reading: George Lakoff, "Why it matters how we frame the environment," Environmental Communication (March 2010): 70-81. PDF

FEB 21: Framing Climate Change

Reading: Rose Hendricks, "Communicating climate change: focus on the framing, not just the facts," The Conversation (March 5 2017)

RECITATION: work on Individual Communication Projects

FEB 25: Assignment due midnight: Website Critique

## Week 7: Environmental Journalism

FEB 26: Environmental Journalism

Reading: Cox, pp. 91-110 (esp. 97-110)

FEB 28: GUEST SPEAKER: Dr. George Wittemyer, Associate Professor, Department of Fish, Wildlife and Conservation Biology, Colorado State University

Reading: TBD

RECITATION: Interviewing

## Week 8: Science, Scientists, and Environmental Controversies

MARCH 5: Journalism, News, and Science/Scientists

Reading: Cox, pp. 121-34

MARCH 6: Quiz #2 [online]

MARCH 7: Disinformation

Reading: Genna Reed, "The 5 Worst Plays from Industry's Disinformation Playbook," Union of Concerned Scientists [blog]; Hannah Devlin, "Americans 'under siege' from climate disinformation - former Nasa chief scientist," Guardian (June 8 2017)

RECITATION: NONE [quiz]

MARCH 8: Assignment due noon: Individual Communication Project

## Week 9: SPRING BREAK

## Week 10: Public Participation in Environmental Decisions

MARCH 19: Public's Right to Know/Right to Access

Reading: Cox, pp. 285-304 [material will help your upcoming Public Hearing Observation paper]

MARCH 21: In-class team meetings for Group Media Project **[MANDATORY ATTENDANCE]**

Reading: TBD

RECITATION: Message Construction

**MARCH 23: Assignment due midnight: Public Hearing Observation**

## Week 11: PUBLIC RELATIONS...OR GREENWASHING?

MARCH 26: Greenwashing

Reading: TerraChoice, *The Seven Sins of Greenwashing* (2009); **play 10-question game**

[<http://sinsofgreenwashing.com/games-tools/name-that-sin-game/index.html>]

MARCH 28: Northern Integrated Supply Project [NISP]; presentation by Brian Werner, Communications & Records Department Manager, Northern Colorado Water Conservancy District

Reading: <https://kmsteph.wixsite.com/stpete> **READ BEFORE BRIAN'S TALK!!**

RECITATION: **NONE [write critique of NISP speaker]**

**MARCH 29: Assignment due midnight: 500-word critique of NISP speaker**

## Week 12: Digital Media and Environmental Activism

APRIL 2: Digitizing Environmental Journalism

Reading: Cox, pp. 96 & 110-115

APRIL 4: Social Media and Environmental Activism

Reading: Malcom Gladwell, "Small change: why the revolution will not be tweeted," New Yorker (Oct. 4 2010)

RECITATION: Creating Messages and Strategies for Social Media

**APRIL 6: Assignment due midnight: Proposal for Group Media Project**

### Week 13: Designing A Public Communication Campaign

APRIL 9: Communication Strategies and Actions

Reading: Susan Jacobson, *Communication Skills for Conservation Professionals* (2009): 167-90

APRIL 10: Quiz #3 [online]

APRIL 11: Advocacy Campaigns and Movements Using Mass Media

Reading: Cox, pp. 203-14

RECITATION: NONE [quiz]

### Week 14: TBD

APRIL 16: TBD

Reading: TBD

APRIL 18: TBD

Reading: TBD

RECITATION: TBD

APRIL 19: Assignment due midnight: Progress Report on Group Media Project

### Week 15: Case Studies of Public Communication/A New Lexicon

APRIL 23: TBD

Reading: TBD

APRIL 25: New Lexicon

Reading: George Monbiot, "Forget 'the environment': we need new words to convey life's wonders [Opinion]," Guardian (Aug. 9 2017)

RECITATION: TBD

### Week 16: Group Project Presentations

APRIL 29 [Sunday]: Assignment due midnight: Group Media Project

APRIL 30: Presentations

MAY 2: Presentations

RECITATION: NONE

### Week 17: Finals Week

MAY 8: Quiz #4