

Syllabus: CMS 323 Media and the Environment

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Course Description:

As we transition from an industrial model of media distribution to networked communications, corporations and grassroots environmental activists are vying to define environmental opinion in an evolving media landscape. By applying media literacy tools to examine paradigms of communication and ecology we seek to understand how environmental concepts are mediated and explore communication strategies for addressing issues such as global climate change.

Summary of Course Content:

This course examines how media shapes our understanding of environmental issues. It covers media ethics, environmental messaging, and the political economy of media. Students will analyze advertising, consumerism, and media's ecological footprint. The course also explores eco-citizenship, environmental media management, and the role of media in fostering sustainable change. Students will complete readings, discussions, multimedia resources, video reflections, a midterm essay, a final project, and a final presentation.

Outcomes:

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Connect media with their physiological impact on living systems;
- Evaluate media's interdependence with the global economy, and how the current model of globalization impacts living systems;
- Analyze how media form symbolic associations and discourses that promote environmental ideologies and claims making in the news, popular culture and advertising; and
- Comprehend how media impact our ability to engage in sustainable cultural practices by exploring alternative uses of media that promote sustainability.

Required Texts:

- *Communicating Nature: How We Create and Understand Environmental Messages*, Julia B. Corbett (Island Press) 978-1597260688
- *Ecomedia Literacy*, Antonio Lopez (Routledge) 978-1138303393
- *Routledge Handbook of Ecomedia Studies* (Routledge), edited by Antonio Lopez, Adrian Ivakhiv, Stephan Rust, Miriam Tola, Alenda Y. Chang, Kiu-wai Chu, 9781003176497

Reserve Readings:

- *Ecomedia: Key issues* by Stephen Rust, Salma Monani, Sean Cubitt

- *Greening the Media*, Maxwell and Miller, Oxford, 978-0195325201
- *Goodbye iSlave: A manifesto for digital abolition*, Jack Linchuan Qiu, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 9780252099069
- *Signal traffic: Critical studies of media infrastructures*, Lisa Parks (Editor.), Nicole Starosielski (Editor.), University of Illinois Press, 97802520974161
- *Sustainable Media: Critical Approaches to Media and Environment*, Nicole Starosielski (Editor), Janet Walker (Editor), Routledge, 978-1138014060

Additional readings will be handed out in class, available on reserve in the library, or downloadable from the class website. Textbooks can be ordered from Amazon UK (see class Website for links) or from Almost Corner Books.

Course Organization:

With an emphasis on a cultural studies approach to the environment, this course covers three core concepts: 1) examining media and environmental ethics and paradigms, 2) environmental messaging, and 3) the political economy of media systems. Because this course combines both theory and practice, there will be readings combined with in-class viewing and student projects designed to implement ideas explored during the course.

Assignments (see Moodle for instructions):

- **Weekly reading reflections (20%):** Students are required to provide a short weekly reflection video using Flipgrid based on the weekly readings and class discussions. Due by Sunday night via the Flipgrid link on Moodle.
- **Midterm Essay (30%):** 6-8 page take-home analytical essay that examines key issues from the first half of the semester
- **Final Project: Ecomediasphere Analysis (30%):** 8-10 page research project based on a personal gadget (such as your phone, tablet, or computer) using the ecomediasphere methodology from the perspective of ecoculture, political ecology, ecoculture, and lifeworld.
- **Final Presentation (10%):** Present research results for final exam using Prezi.
- **Attendance and participation (10%):** More than three unexcused absences and excessive tardiness will result in an automatic 0 for attendance and participation.

Course Outline and Readings:

Readings and schedule are subject to change. Please consult weekly the Moodle page for the most current assignments.

Week 1: Constructing Environmental Paradigms

- *Ecomedia Literacy* (ch. 2): “Environmental ideology and eco-ethics”
- *Routledge Handbook*: “Introduction,” Antonio López, Adrian Ivakhiv, Stephen Rust, Miriam Tola, Alenda Y. Chang, Kiu-wai Chu

- *Routledge Handbook* (ch. 24): “Media and Ecocultural Identity,” Tema Milstein, Gabi Mocatta, José Castro-Sotomayor

Week 2: Constructing Environmental Paradigms

- *Communicating Nature* (ch. 2): “A Spectrum of Environmental Ideologies”
- *Routledge Handbook* (ch. 1): “When Do Media Become Ecomedia?,” Adrian Ivakhiv, Antonio López
- *Routledge Handbook* (ch. 5): “Political and Apolitical Ecologies of Digital Media,” Sy Taffel

Week 3: Ecological Mindprint: Advertising and Popular Culture

- *Communicating Nature* (chpts. 3-4): “The Links between Environmental Attitudes and Behaviors”; “Work and Consumer Culture”
- Ecomedia Literacy (ch. 8): “Ecomedia Mindprint: Ecocultures”

Week 4: Advertising and Popular Culture

- *Communicating Nature* (chpt. 5-6): “Leisure in Nature as Commodity and Entertainment”; “Faint-Green: Advertising and the Natural World”
- "Selling with Gaia: Advertising and the natural world," Joseph Clark (PDF)
- 6_sins-greenwashing.pdf (Moodle)

Week 5: Ecological Mindprint: Political Ecology: Constructing Environmental Issues and Claims Making

- *Ecomedia Literacy* (ch. 7): “Ecomedia Mindprint: Political Ecology”
- "Communication, media and social construction of the environment," Anders Hansen (Routledge Handbook of Environmental Communication, PDF)

Extra credit

- "Systems dynamics meets the press," Donella Meadows (PDF)

Week 6: Constructing Environmental Issues and Claims Making

- *Communicating Nature* (ch. 8): “News Media”
- “Gaslighting: Fake climate news and Big Carbon’s network of denial,” Antonio Lopez (PDF)

Week 7: Corporate PR and Activist Media

- *Communicating Nature* (ch. 9): “Battle for Spin: The Public Relations Industry”
- *Routledge Handbook* (ch. 21): “#NOLNG253! Media Use in Modern Environmental Justice Movements,” Ellen E. Moore, Anna Bean

Week 8: Midterm Review and Catch-up

Week 9: Ecological Footprint: Intro to Political/material ecology of media

- *Routledge Handbook* (ch. 5): “Meaning, Matter, Ecomedia,” Christy Tidwell
- *Routledge Handbook* (ch. 15): “Relational Ecologies of the Gramophone Disc,” Elodie A. Roy

Week 10: Ecological Footprint: Conflict minerals/production

- *Routledge Handbook* (ch. 6): “Centering Africa in Ecomedia Studies: Interview with Cajetan Iheka,” by Miriam Tola, Kiu-wai Chu, Stephen Rust
- *Routledge Handbook* (Chapter 23): “Who Makes Our Smartphones? Four Moments in Their Lifecycle,” Richard Maxwell, Toby Miller
- Watch: Ghana Digital Dumping Ground
- Play: The Phone Story (Moodle)

Week 11: Ecological Footprint: Energy/e-waste

- *Routledge Handbook* (Chapter 16): “Core Dump: The Global Aesthetics and Politics of E-Waste,” Mehita Iqani
- *Routledge Handbook* (Chapter 10): “Disaggregated Footprints: An Infrastructural Literacy Approach to the Sustainable Internet,” Nicole Starosielski, Hunter Vaughan, Anne Pasek, Nicholas R. Silcox
- *Routledge Handbook* (Chapter 11): “Collapse Informatics and the Environmental Impact of Information and Communication Technologies,” Laura U. Marks

Week 12: Ecomedia footprint: Selfworld/affect

- *Ecomedia Literacy* (ch. 6): “Ecomedia Footprint: Lifeworld,” Antonio Lopez
- *Routledge Handbook* (ch. 36): “Slow Media, Eco-Mindfulness, and the Lifeworld,” Jennifer Rauch

Week 13: Eco-citizenship

- *Communicating Nature* (ch. 10): “Communication and Social Change”
- *Routledge Handbook* (ch. 18): “Environmental Media Management: Overcoming the Responsibility Deficit,” Pietari Kääpä, Hunter Vaughan
- *Routledge Handbook* (ch. 20): “Common Pool Resources, Communication, and the Global Media Commons,” Patrick D. Murphy, E. Septime Sessou

Week 14: Review