

ENVI 194-03/MCST 194-03
Environmental Issues and the Media
Fall 2018
M, W, F, 2:20-3:20 pm
Neill 401

Instructor: Michael Griffin

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Office: HUM 300/Mailbox HUM 301

Office hours: M,W 3:30-4:30 pm, T,Th 11:15 am-Noon, and by appointment

Course Description:

How are public perceptions concerning environmental concepts, conditions, policies, actors and interests shaped by embedded cultural and media representations of nature and its use? Who sets the agenda for environmental issues and debates and how is that agenda presented for public consumption and discourse? What roles do films, television, advertising and journalism play in establishing or maintaining particular patterns of imagery, perspectives and discourses regarding the environment? What are the tendencies and limitations of science journalism regarding environmental issues such as pollution, safety regulations, conservation, or climate change?

This course focuses attention on media representations related to human relationships with nature. Through weekly readings and analyses of media representations we will work to gain a better understanding of the particular influence of media images and discourse on our views of nature, climate and environmental debate, including: images of wilderness, land use and control; representations of industrialization and its impacts; news reporting on environmental degradation and climate change; the visions and metaphors of “green advertising,” media characterizations of environmental risk, portrayals of environmental activism, and the shifting parameters of environmental rhetoric in the U.S. and globally. Class members will pursue individual term projects that explore and analyze chosen issues of environmental representation and their implications.

Books ordered at Macalester Textbook Store. The bulk of assigned common readings will be from these three books. Other selected chapters and articles will also be assigned and posted on Moodle.

Required (all or most of the book assigned):

Environment, Media and Communication, Anders Hansen. Routledge, 2nd Edition, 2018.

Green Screen: Environmentalism and Hollywood Cinema, David Ingram. David Brown Bk. Co., 2004.

Seeing Green: The Use and Abuse of American Environmental Images, Finis Dunaway.
University of Chicago Press, 2015.

Supplemental/Recommended (Available for individual interests or paper projects – not required)

Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere, J. Robert Cox & Phaedra Pezzullo. SAGE, 2015.

Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change. Elizabeth Kolbert. Bloomsbury, 2015.

Garbage Wars: The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Chicago. MIT Press, 2004.

Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor, Rob Nixon. Harvard University Press, 2013.

Disability Accommodation: I am committed to supporting the learning of all students in my class. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Contact the Office of Disability Services at 651-696-6874 or disabilityservices@macalester.edu to schedule an appointment and discuss your individual circumstances. It is important to meet early in the semester; this will ensure that your accommodations can be implemented early on.

Assignments and Grading:

There are four graded assignments for the course, plus a graded evaluation of overall class participation (10% of the course grade):

- 1) **Approx. 2000 word essay** comparing cultural concepts of nature, the environment, and their representation discussed in assigned course readings (25% of the course grade);
- 2) **Approx. 2000 word essay** comparing approaches to media representation and reporting on environmental issues in light of analyses presented in class readings (25% of the course grade);
- 3) **Class presentation**, based on what you have chosen to work on for your final project and designed to prompt and lead class discussion during part of a class session. This may include chosen media examples to illustrate issues and provide points of discussion (10% of the course grade).
- 4) **Approx. 3000 word final paper and/or alternative format media project** on an approved course topic of your choice (30% of the course grade).

Class attendance and participation in discussions are very important. Good class participation is not gauged by frequency of comments, but rather by a combination of regular attendance, attentiveness in class, acknowledgement of and respect for classmate contributions, and pertinent and constructive contributions to class discussions. Class involvement will formally account for 10% of the final grade but will also be an additional factor used to resolve borderline grades. Frequent unexcused absences or a glaring lack of class participation may result in an NC calculated as 10% of the final course grade.

Class Writing:

Essays written for this class must follow a standard style and cite references appropriately and comprehensively. Note that citations must be provided for *all* paraphrasing and specific information drawn from readings and other sources, not just for direct quotations. I urge you to consult a general style manual, and make sure that you understand how to use proper and adequate citations and avoid plagiarism.

Plagiarism will be handled according to the Macalester policy on academic integrity:

<http://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/academicpolicies/academicintegrity/>

For further guidance or assistance with writing consult the MAX Center,

<http://www.macalester.edu/max/writing/>

where appointments with writing tutors are available along with a variety of physical and online sources for mastering style and improving paper organization.

For brief, fun micro-lectures on better writing see: <http://www.macalester.edu/academics/writewell/>

Please note: If you have questions at any time regarding general writing issues or specific assignments for this course, I urge you to consult with me. I am always available right after class, during office hours, or by appointment, and I am always happy to answer questions and discuss assignments. I will also respond to email questions regarding class assignments (or any class issues), although you should not expect email responses on short notice (or late at night!). Best to anticipate 24 hours for email responses (and be pleasantly surprised when you receive a response more quickly).

Also, if you have any concerns regarding the classroom environment or the tone of class discussions please bring these issues to my attention. I am committed to a class environment where an open and respectful exchange of ideas and perspectives is encouraged.

Class and Reading Schedule

(*Readings to be completed by class on the date listed)

Week 1 9/5 and 9/7

Course Introduction. Review of syllabus, requirements and course structure.

Opening questions: What are “environmental issues”? What is the cultural context in which “environmental” concepts and images have emerged and become established?

What relationships between nature and culture are invoked in environmental discussions?

What forms of media play an influential role with regard to these concepts and images?

Discussion: The American context. Tropes of “Nature and Culture,” the “Desert and the Garden,” and the “Wild West” in American Hollywood film and popular culture.

Reading: “The Significance of the Frontier in American History, Chap. 1” by F. J. Turner (Moodle)

Film Screenings (excerpts): *Stagecoach* (Ford, 1939, USA)
The Searchers (Ford, 1956, USA)

Week 2 Discussion of Turner’s “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” the concept of “Manifest Destiny,” and cultural myths of nature, the wilderness, wildlife and “primal purity” in American cinema, photography, and popular culture.

9/10 Hollywood Westerns. Naturalizing and socializing the Frontier Ethic.

Readings:

“The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” Chap. 1, F. J. Turner (Moodle)

Green Screen by David **Ingram**, Preface, pp. vii-x, Introduction and Chaps 1-2, pp. 1-25

See also e-book format of Jackson’s entire book, *The Frontier in American History*, at:

<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/22994/22994-h/22994-h.htm>

and a commentary on the influence of Turner’s essay at:

http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/people/s_z/turner.htm

Screening (excerpts): *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valence* (Ford, 1962, USA)

9/12 The Significance of the Frontier Ethic in American Visions of Wilderness and “Environment”

Readings: *Green Screen* by David **Ingram**, Chaps 3-4, pp. 36-55

Environment, Media and Communication by Anders **Hansen**, Chap. 1, pp. 1-12

Screening (excerpts): *Shane* (Stevens, 1953, USA)

9/14 Relationships between the Frontier Ethic and Contemporary notions of Wilderness

Reading:

Green Screen by David **Ingram**, Chap. 5, Part II Intro, & Chap. 6, pp. 56-87

Screening (excerpts): *Bambi* (Disney, 1942 USA)

Dances with Wolves (Costner, 1990, USA)

Class and Reading Schedule

- Week 3** Metaphors of Culture and Nature. Indigenous People as Part of “Nature.”
Settlement and the Conquest and Control of Nature.
- 9/17 Responses to the disappearing frontier. Wilderness, “Wild Humans,” Colonization and Stewardship.
Reading: *Green Screen* by David **Ingram**, Part III Intro, & Chap. 10, pp. 137-155
Environment, Media and Communication by Anders **Hansen**, Chap. 2, pp. 13-35
Screening (excerpts): *Dances with Wolves* (Costner, 1990, USA)
- 9/19 The Country, the City, and Early Environmental Movements. “New Deal” Conservation.
Readings:
Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere, J. Robert **Cox** & Phaedra **Pezzullo**,
Introduction and Chapter 1, pp. 1-30 (Moodle)
Screenings (excerpts): *The Plow that Broke the Plains* (Lorentz, 1936, USA)
The River (Lorentz, 1937, USA)
Recommended screening: *The Big Trees* (Feist, 1952, USA)
“The Big Trees” 1917, 1920s [Ford Motor Company films]
[Films discussed by Ingram in *Green Screen*]
- 9/21 Representations of nature and culture in “The Crying Indian” Keep America Beautiful ad
Essay #1 Assigned (Due Friday, Oct. 5)
Readings: *Seeing Green*, Chap. 5 “The Crying Indian,” pp. 79-95
Screenings: The Crying Indian ad (online), and discussion of Paper Assignment #1

Class and Reading Schedule

Week 4 Popular Culture, Wilderness, Nature and Environmental Issues. The first environmental PSAs.

- Work on The Crying Indian ad assignment, Due Oct. 5
- The Cultural Framing of “Loss of Wilderness”
- The Political Framing of Environmental Issues.

9/24 Mythic images of a “New World.” Gendering and Primitivizing Native People. Gendering Nature.

Readings: *Seeing Green*, Intro. and Chap. 1, pp. 1-32, + Chap. 5 “The Crying Indian,” pp. 79-95

Screenings (excerpts): “The Crying Indian Ad”

Pocahontas (Gabriel/Disney Productions, 1995, USA)

9/26 Mythic images of a disappearing primordial world and rescue narratives

Readings: Anders **Hansen**, **Chap. 5**, “Popular Culture, Nature and Environmental Issues”

Review: *Green Screen*, Chap. 4, “Ecological Indians and the Myth of Primal Purity”

Review: *Green Screen* by David **Ingram**, Chap. 5, Part II Intro, & Chap. 6, pp. 56-87

Review: *Seeing Green*, Chap. 5 “The Crying Indian,” pp. 79-95

Screenings (excerpts): *Pocahontas* (Gabriel/Disney Productions, 1995, USA)

The New World (Malick, 2006, USA)

9/28 Ecological Icons. The “Noble Savage” and the “Ecological Indian”.

Readings:

Green Screen, Chap. 7 “Jaws,” Chap. 8 “Wolves and Bears,” Chap. 9 “African Wildlife”
(Especially for those interested in pursuing projects related to wildlife conservation)

Photography (class viewing): Visions of the West: Wild Landscapes and Primitive Natives
(Timothy O’Sullivan, Alexander Gardner, John K. Hillers, William Henry Jackson,
Carleton Watkins, Edward S. Curtis, Ansel Adams and others)

See online digital photography collections from the National Archives, The Atlantic,
The New York Public Library, and other photo collection sites: (On Moodle)

<http://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2012/05/the-american-west-150-years-ago/100304/>

<http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/collections/early-landscape-photography-of-the-american-west/#/>

<https://www.archives.gov/research/american-west/>

<http://www.loc.gov/pictures/search/?st=grid&co=ecur>

<https://www.archives.gov/research/ansel-adams/>

Week 4 Possible Additional Screenings (excerpts):

The Last of the Mohicans (Mann, 1992, USA)

The Mission (Joffe, 1986, UK)

A River Runs Through It (Redford, 1992, USA)

Easy Rider (Hopper, 1969, USA)

Class and Reading Schedule

Week 5 Media representations of crises, causes and responsibility.

10/1 Locating environmental responsibility. Industries, individuals and the media

Readings: Complete **Hansen, Chap. 5**, “Popular Culture, Nature and Environmental Issues”
Green Screen, Part III, Chap. 12 and Conclusion, pp. 167-182

10/3 Before climate change was framed as a crisis, there was nuclear meltdown
Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, Fukushima

Reading: *Seeing Green*, Chap. 8 “Nuclear Meltdown I: *The China Syndrome*,” pp. 121-137, and
Chap. 9 “Nuclear Meltdown II: Three Mile Island,” pp. 138-153

Recommended for those interested in issues related to environmental conflict and risk:

Media & Environment: Conflict, Politics and the News by Libby **Lester**, Chap. 2, pp. 37-58

10/5 Nuclear waste as a relatively invisible issue (Hidden on the reservation?)

Essay #1 Due

Reading: *Environment, Media and Communication*, **Hansen**, Chap. 3, pp. 35-68

Week 5 **Potential Screenings** (excerpts):

The China Syndrome (Bridges, 1978, USA)

Silkwood (Nichols, 1983, USA)

Thunderheart (Apted, 1992, USA)

Trailer for *On Dangerous Ground* (Steven Seagal action film, 1994)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E4DJz_lvSvI

Class and Reading Schedule

Week 6 Making Claims and Managing News about the Environment

10/8 The “Constructed-ness” of News

***Collecting news stories assignment**

Readings:

Environment, Media and Communication, complete **Hansen**, Chaps. 3 and 4

Screenings: Television and Online News

10/10 News values, news media and journalistic practices

Essay #2 Assigned (Due 10/24)

Readings:

Environmental Communication and the , Chap. 5, “News Media and Environmental Journalism (Old and new),” pp. 90-117

Screenings and Examples of News Reports (Television, online and print)

10/12 News and Media Discourses About “The Environment.” Old and New Technologies for Reporting and Representing Environmental Issues.

Week 7 Climate Change Coverage: A central test case for environmental journalism

10/15 Picturing Climate Change in Popular Media Representations

Reading: Anders **Hansen**, **Chap. 7** “Media, publics, politics and environmental issues”

Screening (excerpts): *The Day After Tomorrow* (Emmerich, 2004, USA)

10/17 Climate Science and Climate Discourse

Reading: *Seeing Green*, “Conclusion: The Strange Career of *An inconvenient Truth*,” pp. 258-276

Screening (excerpts): *An Inconvenient Truth* (Davis Guggenheim and Al Gore, 2006, USA)

10/19 Climate (cont.)

Readings: *Seeing Green*, “Conclusion: the Strange Career of An Inconvenient Truth,” pp. 258-280

Complete and Review Week 7 readings for Essay #2

Screening (excerpts): *The Day After Tomorrow* (Emmerich, 2004, USA)

An Inconvenient Truth (Davis Guggenheim and Al Gore, 2006, USA)

Week 7-8 Additional Potential Screening (excerpts):

Climate of Doubt: the Politics of Global Warming

(PBS Frontline/The Documentary Group, 2012, USA)

Week 8 Reporting Risk, Crisis and Controversy: Environmental Journalism and Politics

10/22 Reporting Climate Science: the Routines and Limitations of Journalism and Media Coverage

Readings:

Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere, Part III, Communication in an Age of Ecological Crises, Chap. 6, pp. 119-146, Chap. 7, pp. 148-174

Contemporary News Treatments of Climate Change Issues and Events

The Paris Climate Summit; Rising Sea Levels and the Marshall Islands; Arctic Warming; Heat Buildup in the Oceans; Coral Reef Degradation

Screenings (excerpts): *Climate of Doubt: the Politics of Global Warming*
(PBS Frontline/The Documentary Group, 2012, USA)

10/24 Politics and Reporting on Environmental Issues in Minnesota

Essay #2 Due

Reading: *Environment, Media and Communication*, Anders **Hansen**, Chap. 7

News treatments of local Minnesota environmental issues and politics

Urban-Rural divides in environmental politics: Agricultural run-off and waterway buffers;
PolyMet mining in northern Minnesota; Contaminated Wells and Municipal Water Systems;

Research methods in journalism analysis. Framing, Agenda-setting, Methods of Content Analysis

Screening: Kare 11 TV News Reports on Disappearing Moose in Northern Minnesota
(Rick Kupchella)

10/26 **No Class – Fall Break**

Mid-Term Break, Oct. 25-28

Week 9 Back from Break: Revisiting Issues of Environmental Journalism

10/29 Review of Politics and Reporting on Environmental and Climate Issues
***Discussion of topics under consideration for final projects.**

Readings: Complete and Review Week 8 readings

10/31 The Concept of Environmental Justice and Climate Justice Movements

Reading: *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Part IV, Chap.10, pp. 208-232

11/2 Environmental Spectacle in a Neoliberal Age

Reading: *Seeing Green*, Chap. 7, “Gas Lines and Power Struggles,” pp. 109-120
Seeing Green, Chap. 12, “Environmental Spectacle in a Neoliberal Age” pp. 187-207

Week 10 The Rise of Green Consumerism

11/5 Selling “Nature/the Natural”: Advertising Nature, National identity, and Nostalgia

Reading: Anders **Hansen**, Chap. 6 (1st or 2nd Edition)

11/7 Green Consumerism

Reading: *Seeing Green*, Chap. 13, pp. 208-222

11/9 Global Crisis and Green Consumerism: Earth Day

Reading: *Seeing Green*, Chap. 15, pp. 239-257

Week 11 Media Publics, Politics, and Environmental Campaigns

11/12 The Media, Public Opinion and the Environment

Reading: Re-read Anders **Hansen**, Chap. 7 (1st or 2nd Edition)

11/14 Environmental Crisis, Media Coverage and Public Opinion

Reading: *Seeing Green*, Chap. 14, pp. 223-238

11/16 Applying Research on Media and Public Opinion to Climate Change Coverage

Readings: Review *Seeing Green*, “Conclusion,” pp. 258-280
 Review **Hansen**, Chap. 7

Week 12 Media Publics, Politics, and Environmental Campaigns (cont.)

11/19 Looking Back, Looking Forward

Readings: Anders **Hansen**, Chap. 8 (2nd Edition only)
Seeing Green, Introduction and Chaps. 1-3, pp. 1-63

11/21 and 11/23 **No Class - Thanksgiving Break Nov. 21-25**

Week 13 Environmental Racism, Environmental Classism, and Environmental Justice

11/26 Environmental Justice and Climate Justice Movements

Readings:

Review *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Part IV, Chap.10, pp. 208-232
 Review *Seeing Green*, “Gas Masks: the Ecological Body Under Assault,” Chap. 3, pp. 47-63

Recommended (especially for final projects involving issues of Environmental Justice):

Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor by Rob Nixon (reserve)
Garbage Wars: The Struggle for Environmental Justice in Chicago (reserve)

11/28 Discussions of Environmental Activism, Media, and Communication

Reading: *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Part IV, Chap. 8, pp. 177-206

11/30 Engaging Citizens with New Forms of Environmental Communication

Reading: *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*, Part IV, Chap. 9, pp. 209-232**Week 14** Class Project Presentations

12/3 Individual Projects Presentations/Discussions

Readings: No additional readings assigned. Readings for individual projects

12/5 Individual Projects Presentations/Discussions

Readings: Readings for individual projects

12/7 Individual Projects Presentations/Discussions

Readings: Readings for individual projects**Week 14****Additional Potential Screening:***A Fierce Green Fire: The Battle for a Living Planet* (Mark Kitchell, 2012, USA)**Week 15** Class Project Presentations12/10 Concluding discussions – **Final Presentations****Readings:** No additional readings assigned.12/12 Last day of class – **Final Presentations**

Course Evaluations

Individual Class Projects Due: 4:30 PM, Neill 301 or by arrangement with instructor.

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Environmental Issues and the Media

A Sample of Potential Focus Topics for Class Presentations and Projects
 (Many more topics/issues are possible)

Issue areas for news, documentary or fictional representation and portrayal:

- Nature/wildlife/wilderness
- Ecological icons
- Environmental science reporting
 - Example: Climate change reporting
 - Collapse of ice sheets
 - Rising sea levels (Island nations at risk)
 - Extreme weather events (hurricanes)
 - Climate change visualization
 - Coverage of Paris Climate change Accord
- Environmental catastrophe coverage (examples)
 - Bopal chemical plant disaster
 - Major Oil Spills – (examples)
 - [Deepwater Horizon](#) - BP Gulf Oil Spill
 - Exxon Valdez (Alaska)
 - [Amoco Cadiz](#) (France)
 - Lxtoc (Mexico)
 - Santa Barbara, CA
 - Nuclear power disasters (examples)
 - Three Mile Island
 - Chernobyl disaster
 - Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster
- Pollution and Risk
 - Nuclear waste disposal
 - Chemical pollution
 - Oil/chemical train derailments and spills
 - Air pollution
 - Air quality issues, China and Beijing air pollution problems
 - Water pollution
- Water Resources and Management (examples)
 - *Flint Michigan and or water system infrastructure*
 - *Minnesota water reclamation efforts*
 - *Ex: River, stream and ditch buffers*
- Agriculture
 - Soil practices
 - Application and implications (Fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides)
 - Monoculture
 - Food
- Mining and Fracking
- Politics, conflict, and risk
 - Sources and voices
 - Journalists and political reporting
- Recycling and waste issues
- Green Advertising/ Greenwashing
- Social Movements and Protests
- Alternative Media Strategies and Campaigns