

Victoria University of Wellington
Media Studies
School of English, Film, Theatre and Media Studies

MDIA 321 – Media and the Environment
Course Guide
2008 Trimester Two

Coordination and Teaching

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Course format & class times:

Two hour lectures (incl. screenings): Tue 10–12 (HM 104).

One hour tutorials: Tue 1–2 (KP42 101) and 2–3 (MY 401); Wed 1–2 (KP 42 101).

Description

MDIA 321 provides an overview of the processes at work in the representations of environmental issues in the media, the arts, or in politics and industries. The media play an important role in communicating information about environmental issues and in shaping environmental values. It is increasingly important to understand the processes underlying the environmental debates in contemporary society.

Students will examine the role of media in communicating environmental issues as well as in shaping our perception and understanding of environmental issues. The course will focus on two perspectives: the use of, and interaction with, the media by environmental institutions to do their work on the one hand; and, on the other hand, the representations of these issues and organisations within the media.

Learning aims, objectives, and requirements of MDIA 321

By the end of the course students will be able to:

- 1) review the processes and contexts through and in which different media communicate environmental concerns;
- 2) engage critically with how the media contribute to shaping our perception and understanding of environmental issues;
- 3) evaluate critically the differing practices and agencies engaged in the environmental debate;
- 4) distinguish between the requirements of the various media—particularly traditional broadcast media vs. ‘new’ media forms—representing environmental issues;
- 5) engage in the practice of debate about media issues recognizing the differing requirements of oral, written, and visual discourses.

Requirements. This course is taught in an interactive lecture and tutorial style; it combines lecture, screenings, discussion, and workshop-style teaching. Students are expected to prepare the weekly course material for an active engagement in discussion. **Please note:** there will be a considerable number of essential screenings during lecture time.

Readings

Weekly readings and further recommended readings depending on your research topic.

The following items have been put on closed reserve:

- Allan, Stuart, Adam, Barbara, and Cynthia Carter. *Environmental Risks and the Media*. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Anderson, Alison. *Media, Culture and the Environment*. London: Rutgers University Press, 1997.
GE145 A454 M
- Beder, Sharon. *Global Spin. The Corporate Assault on Environmentalism*. Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 1997.
GE195 B411 G
- Carson, Rachel. *Silent Spring*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1963.
SB959 C321 S
- Cottle, Simon (ed). *News, Public Relations and Power*. London: Sage, 2003.
PN4751 N558
- Cox, Robert. *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006.
GE25 C878 E
- Cubitt, Sean. *EcoMedia*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005.
PN1995.9 N38 C962 E
- Gore, Al. Introduction. In Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994. xv–xxvi.
- Hutchins, Brett and Libby Lester. “Environmental Protest and Tap-Dancing with the Media in the Information Age”. *Media, Culture & Society*. 28(3): 433–451.

IPCC. *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report. Summary for Policymakers of the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Core Writing Team, Pachauri, R.K and Reisinger, A. (eds.)]. Geneva, Switzerland: IPCC, 2008.

available on

<http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_spm.pdf>

McNeill, John R. *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2000.

GF13 M169 S

Books on 3-day-loan:

Booth, Wayne C., Colomb, Gregory G., and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 2nd ed. Chicago: Chicago UP, 2003.

Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6th ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003.

Petelin, Roslyn, and Marsha Durham. *The Professional Writing Guide: Writing Well and Knowing Why*. South Melbourne: Longman Professional, 1992.

HF5721 P477

Williams, Joseph M. *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. New York: Longman Publishers, 2002.

PE1421 W724 S

Assessment

1. Oral presentation (all learning objectives, but particularly objective 5)

Oral presentation on a selected topic from the course outline. Ideally, you should choose the topic area you also intend to do your research essay on, so that you can do assignments 1–3 as different stages of working on the same project. Your task is to introduce your topic, identify relevant issues, discuss an example or case study, and identify relevant critical literature. You also have to open your topic up for discussion and debate in class (that is, provide questions and points for discussion, be able to answer questions, etc.).

We will **assign the presentation topics in Week 3**.

Your presentations will be assessed on your delivery and engagement with the topic. Please submit a written outline/draft of your presentation on the day of your presentation.

Length: 10 min + time for discussion

Weighting: 20%

Due: during tutorials

2. Research essay proposal (all learning objectives)

Your research proposal will provide a description of your research question and a clear identification of your object of study and the purpose of your research essay. For more information and the necessary elements of a research proposal for this course please refer to Appendix 1 of this Course Guide.

Weighting: 20%
Length: 1500 words
Due: 2 September 2008, 5pm

3. Research essay (objectives 1–4)

Weighting: 50%
Length: 3000
Due: 21 October 2008, 5pm

4. Tutorial participation (all learning objectives)

Tutorial participation will be assessed on both attendance and active participation in tutorial discussions and exercises.

Weighting: 10%
Length: n/a
Due: during tutorials

① Specific assessment criteria will be discussed in class. Please use **MLA** style as your reference style for all assignments in this course.

① **Extensions and late assignments.** The course coordinator will grant extensions only in exceptional circumstances (illness, or other compassionate reasons). You must request an extension in advance of the due date, if possible. These requests must be in writing (an email is acceptable), and must be accompanied by supporting documents (e.g. medical certificate, note from a counselor, etc.). It is your responsibility to keep a copy of your coordinator's agreement to an extension.

Late assignments will be penalized at the rate of **10 points for the first day and 2 points for additional days** (points of the total marks for the assignment). Please note that the coordinator will grant extensions only rarely as this causes logistical difficulties and is unfair to other students who have worked hard to get their assignments in on time.

Blackboard

Information relevant to this course (including supplementary readings and resources) will be available on Blackboard.

Workload

According to University policy students are expected to spend an average of 18 hours a week on this course (which means a total of 216 hours).

Assessment criteria guidelines

A+ (85-100%)

Excellent work showing sophisticated and independent thought. Superior analysis, comprehensive research, good theoretical or methodological understanding and impeccable presentation.

A (80- 84%)

Work is distinguished by its clarity of thought and argument. Question is answered skilfully, is meticulously structured and the argument is convincing. Demonstrates sophisticated comprehension of the topic, a familiarity with scholarship & research in the area, and a clear understanding of related theoretical issues. A high standard of critical analysis. Presentation and organization are excellent with correct use of citation conventions when required.

A- (75- 79%)

Work of a high standard: ideas could be of 'A' quality material but the overall effect was undermined by limitation or inconsistency in one area. It could also be 'A' material that was flawed by the quality or consistency of its technical presentation, research support, or theoretical understandings. Demonstrates independent thought, good writing skills, effective selection/structuring of material, and a general clarity and sense of purpose.

B+ (70% - 74%)

Work which exhibits a good standard of research and of writing. Contains some perceptive analysis, and effective research, preparation and planning. This work may demonstrate insight and perception but this standard is not maintained through the whole work. The argument, technical quality, and other elements may be inconsistent in quality. May require greater integration of theoretical or empirical analysis. Demonstrates some independence of thought.

B (65% - 69%)

Consistently good work and still above average. May demonstrate strong analysis, theoretical reading or contextual knowledge, but without integrating these elements into a balanced argument. May be well researched and documented but in the 'B' range there could well be a deficiency in some aspect of research or understanding. May have problems with technical presentation, structure, argument and/or research.

B- (60% - 64%)

Good work but may not be consistent and thus falls short of 'B' quality in one or more respects. In this grade area the work will have exceeded the standard expected for passes at this level. Question is satisfactorily answered and has been appropriately informed by research, but there is less attention to the detail and complexity of issues. There may be problems with the essay structure, the writing style, the selection of material or the argument. There may also be problems with presentation, expression, and grammar.

C+ (55% - 59%)

The essay is limited in achievement due to an overall incapacity for independent research or thought – hence it will tend to demonstrate a reliance on lecture material. Work in the C range will have paid insufficient attention to critical sources and not be widely researched. Work in this category may have deficiencies in structure and organization, the quality of argument, and/or the writing style.

C (50% - 54%)

Satisfactory completion of set tasks only. Basic engagement with the subject matter, and lacking in critical analysis or a considered conceptual approach. May be poorly planned and constructed, with serious problems of clarity and expression. May not have used or have acknowledged an appropriate range of sources. May be purely descriptive. There may be some significant problems with writing, research or organization.

D (40% - 49%)

Misses the point of the exercise or has failed to respond adequately to it. The work is deficient in important respects to the extent that it cannot be regarded satisfactory at this level. A 'D' grade essay may contain some elements of attaining a pass grade.

E (0% - 39%)

This category implies that the essay is well below the achievement minimum (in a range of respects) for work at this level. A E essay will demonstrate not one, but several of the 'D' essay's deficiencies - it may be well short of the prescribed length, badly written, poorly conceived, ill structured, hastily prepared, full of technical or other inaccuracies, and/or lacking in even a basic understanding of the concepts.

GENERAL UNIVERSITY STATUTES AND POLICIES



Students should familiarise themselves with the University's policies and statutes, particularly the Assessment Statute, the Personal Courses of Study Statute, the Statute on Student Conduct and any statutes relating to the particular qualifications being studied; see the *Victoria University Calendar* available in hardcopy or under “about Victoria” on the Victoria homepage at:

http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about_victoria/calendar_intro.html

Information on the following topics is available electronically under “Course Outline General Information” at:

<http://www.victoria.ac.nz/home/about/newspubs/universitypubs.aspx#general>

- Student and Staff Conduct
- Academic Grievances
- Academic Integrity and Plagiarism
- Meeting the Needs of Students with Impairments
- Student Support

PROGRAMME

Week 1: 8 July 2008

Course introduction. Discussion of objectives, assignments and expectations.
Discussion of course outline and student requests and suggestions.

Week 2: 15 July 2008

Introduction—The Rise of Environmentalism

Readings:

Gore, Al. "Introduction", in Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1994. xv-xxvi.

McNeill, John R. "Ideas and Politics", in *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth Century*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2000. 325–356.

Part I: Coverage of Environmental Issues and Science in the Media

Week 3: 22 July 2008

Environmental communication and the public sphere

Readings:

Cox, Robert. The Study of Environmental Communication. In *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006. 1–36.

Week 4: 29 July 2008

News Production and the Environment

Readings:

Anderson, Alison. News Production. In *Media, Culture and the Environment*. London: Rutgers University Press, 1997. 45–74.

Miller, M. Mark and Bonnie Parnell Riechert. "Interest Group Strategies and Journalistic Norms: News Media Framing of Environmental Issues. In *Environmental Risks and the Media*. Ed. By Stuart Allan et al. New York: Routledge, 2000. 45–54.

Week 5: 5 August 2008

Risk Communication—Expert and Nonexpert Publics

Readings:

- Allan, Stuart et al. Introduction. In *Environmental Risks and the Media*. Ed. By Stuart Allan et al. New York: Routledge, 2000. 1–26.
- Wilson, Kris M. “Communicating Climate Change Through the Media”. In *Environmental Risks and the Media*. Ed. By Stuart Allan et al. New York: Routledge, 2000. 201–217.

Week 6: 12 August 2008

Digital Media and the Rise of Alternative Environmental Media

Readings:

- Hutchins, Brett and Libby Lester. “Environmental Protest and Tap-Dancing with the media in the Information Age”. *Media, Culture & Society*. 28(3): 433–451.

Mid-trimester break: 18–31 August 2008

Part II: Environmental Politics and the Media

Week 7: 2 September 2008

Voices for Change—Advocacy and NGOs

Readings:

- Anderson, Alison. “Environmental Activism and News Media”. In *News, Public Relations and Power*. Ed. by Simon Cottle. London: Sage, 2003. 117–132.

Week 8: 9 September 2008

Voices for Change—Policy, Public Participation, and Citizenship in a ‘Green Public Sphere’

Readings:

- Cox, Robert. Citizen Voices and Public Forums. In *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006. 81–124.
- IPCC. *Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report. Summary for Policymakers of the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* [Core Writing Team, Pachauri, R.K and Reisinger, A. (eds.)]. Geneva,

Switzerland: IPCC, 2008.
available on
<http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/syr/ar4_syr_spm.pdf>

Week 9: 16 September 2008

Calling for Change—a Visual Rhetoric of the Environment

Readings:

- Cox, Robert. A Rhetorical Perspective on the Environment. In *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006. 52–61.
- Cox, Robert. Visual Rhetorics: Portraying Nature. In *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006. 62–79.

Week 10: 23 September 2008

Calling for Change—the Environment in Popular Media

Readings:

- Cubitt, Sean. *EcoMedia*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2005. 1–6. 133–146.

Week 11: 30 September 2008

Marketing Change—Green Consumerism, Green Marketing and Corporate Campaigns

Readings:

- Beder, Sharon. Advertisers: Influence and Strategies. In *Global Spin. The Corporate Assault on Environmentalism*. Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 1997. 175–194.
- Cox, Robert. Green Marketing and Corporate Campaigns. In *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2006. 367–410.

Week 12: 7 October 2008

Course wrap-up and research essay workshop

Appendix 1

Guidelines for writing your research proposal

The research proposal must clearly indicate the topic you will address, the question you will pursue, and the scope and methodology you intend to use. The function of a research proposal is to describe

- what the proposed research is about and what it is trying to achieve
- how it will do that
- what can be learnt from that and why it is worth learning.

Use the following basic questions to guide your development of your proposal:

- **What?** What is the purpose of this research? What are you trying to find out?
- **How?** How will the proposed research answer these questions?
- **Why?** Why is this research worth doing (or worth funding)? What will be learnt from it, and why is it worth knowing? (adapted from Punch 263)

To answer these questions, your research proposal should include the following parts:

1. **Title.** Your proposed title should reflect your research topic and hypothesis or line of argument adequately, as well as fulfill the function of titles.
2. **Introduction (what?).** Area and topic. Background and context. Statement of purpose (general).
3. **Research question and hypothesis (what?).** A statement of what the research question is. Here give a more specific statement of purpose, describing briefly the primary object of study, the issues to be investigated and the means by which you will answer the research question. Conciseness and precision are essential. You should also formulate a hypothesis (also often called argument or thesis statement). But please note that a hypothesis or thesis statement at the research proposal stage is about what you intend to argue with view of the material and object of study, not about arriving at conclusions before the research has been carried out. All the study skills and writing books listed in the readings for this course have sections that explain how to formulate a research question and hypothesis, as well as develop an argument.
4. **Justification, framework for analysis, and methodology (why and how?).** The justification should provide an argument for why this research should be conducted as proposed. The justification will demonstrate that the research question is clearly focused, can be addressed within the scope of the essay and is answerable using the methodology and theoretical framework you are proposing. This is a detailed description of what the research project will aim to achieve and how it will accomplish this. The key terms you will use in the research should be introduced here as well as the key primary and secondary resources. This segment must clearly signal that you are working within the confines of the field.

5. **Outline/definition of key concepts.** Leading on from 3., define and contextualise your key conceptual terms, and explain how they are relevant and useful to your research.
6. **Executability and research process.** You must identify resources you will need, such as primary and secondary texts, and indicate their availability. You also must identify your skills necessary for conducting this research and indicate whether you already have or yet have to acquire those skills (such as, for example, interviewing skills). Discuss any other issues relevant to your ability to complete the project in a timely manner, including getting approval from the Ethics Committee and/or availability of informants. Also include a suggested timeline.
7. **Outline of the different parts of the essay.** You should briefly describe what each section or paragraph will accomplish in relation to the overall objectives of the essay and the thesis you will be developing. This is indicative as you might change the structure and of the essay but even at an early stage of preparatory work you must consider the practicalities of structuring and organising your ideas. Hence, the outline should reflect your argument development and the ‘architecture’ of your argumentation. A proposal is an argument and therefore needs to stress “its line of reasoning, its internal consistency and the interrelatedness of its different parts” (Punch 263).
8. **References.** Reference list of works used/cited in your proposal.

Useful books:

- Bell, Judith. *Doing Your Research Project. A Guide for First-Time Researchers in Education, Health and Social Science*. 4th ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005.
- Booth, Wayne C., Colomb, Gregory G., and Joseph M. Williams. *The Craft of Research*. 2nd ed. Chicago: Chicago UP, 2003.
- Gibaldi, Joseph. *MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers*. 6th ed. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2003.
- Punch, Keith F. *Introduction to Social Research: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches*. London: Sage, 2005.

Useful links:

- The Purdue OWL (Online Writing Lab):
 <<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>>
- Online Tutorial - Using Library Research Tools:
 <<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/library/instruction/orientation/index.aspx>>
- and especially searching databases:
 <<http://www.vuw.ac.nz/library/instruction/orientation/section8.aspx>>