**Environmental Communication and Rhetoric (Winter 2015)**

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Class Meeting: Wednesday, 6-10, in Seminar 2 B2107

**Learning Objectives**

This elective is an intensive writing course that is designed to improve each student’s abilities in careful reading, textual analysis, argument construction, persuasive writing for diverse audiences, and substantive editing. The course aims to challenge and support students at a variety of levels of confidence and expertise in these areas. Students can expect to receive constructive feedback from both the instructor and other students through weekly writing workshops. They should expect to incorporate this feedback into subsequent revisions of each assignment. We will discuss and experiment with various strategies that might be useful at each stage of the drafting, editing, and revision process.

**Class Structure**

In terms of time commitment, the general strategy is to emphasize writing and revision rather than long reading assignments. (The reading assignments for the first day are the heaviest of the quarter.) The overall structure, as reflected in this (very incomplete) draft syllabus, is two-fold. First, we will focus on major environmental tropes— rhetorical devices or strategies—that have motivated the American environmental movement. We will analyze these strategies in their historical context and evaluate their continuing relevance for various approaches to environmental advocacy. The writing for this section will be short essays that analyze the rhetorical strategies of influential texts, most of which are found in the *American Earth* collection. Second, students will practice various kinds of analytical and persuasive writing on the same general topic for diverse audiences (e.g., academics, policymakers, general public). For these assignments, if they choose, students may write on topics related to their candidacy paper or thesis. We will discuss potential topics and audiences as a group on the first day of class; based on this discussion, we will craft the specific expectations for these assignments to reflect student learning goals.

**Textbooks**

Wayne Booth, Gregory Colomb, and Joseph Williams, *The Craft of Research*, Third Edition (University of Chicago Press, 2008).

Note: I have not placed an order for this book through the bookstore. We have used this book in gCORE and ESS.

Robert Cox, *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere* (Sage Publications, 2006, 2009, 2012).

Note: I have not placed an order for this book through the bookstore. There are three recent editions of this book (2006, 2009, 2012), which will work for our purposes. Many copies of the first two editions are available at low cost.

Bill McKibben, ed., *American Earth: Environmental Writing Since Thoreau* (Library Classics of the United States, 2008). Available through the bookstore.

**Schedule**

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|  | Topic | Reading | Assignment |
| Week 1:  January 7 | Overview of  Rhetorical Tropes in American Environmentalism | Cox, pp. 1-80\*; McKibben, “Introduction” to *American Earth*, pp. xxi-xxxi. Thoreau, selections from Walden and Huckleberries, pp. 9-36 | Response to Thoreau reading (see below). |
| Week 2:  January 14 | Trope 1: Wilderness | TBA | Essay and/or Revision |
| Week 3:  January 21 | Trope 2: Survival and Well-Being of the Human Species | TBA | Essay and/or Revision |
| Week 4:  January 28 | Trope 3: Survival and Well-Being of Non-human Species | TBA | Essay and/or Revision |
| Week 5:  February 4 | Trope 4: Climate Change | TBA | Essay and/or Revision |
| Week 6:  February 11 | Synthesis of Technical Information: Literature Review | TBA | Selection from Literature Review |
| Week 7:  February 18 | Rhetoric of Image | TBA | Essay and/or Revision |
| Week 8:  February 25 | Advocacy / Popular Appeal | TBA | Editorial |
| Week 9:  March 1 | Rhetoric of Film | TBA | Essay and/or Revision |
| Week 10:  March 8 | Sharing our best writing | TBA | Writing Portfolio |
| Evaluation Week | Evaluation conferences for electives are optional. | | |

\*All three editions appear to cover the same material within these pages.

**Assignment for Week 1: Response to Thoreau**

Select a passage from one of the Thoreau readings that you find especially meaningful or moving. Write a brief response (one-page, double-space) that articulates the key insight in this passage and addresses what makes it especially meaningful or moving. As part of your response, you might consider the following questions: How do the ideas or words resonate with your experiences or values? How does the passage fit within the message and structure of the larger essay? What aspects of Thoreau’s style do you find appealing? Bring 15 copies of this assignment with you on the first day of class.