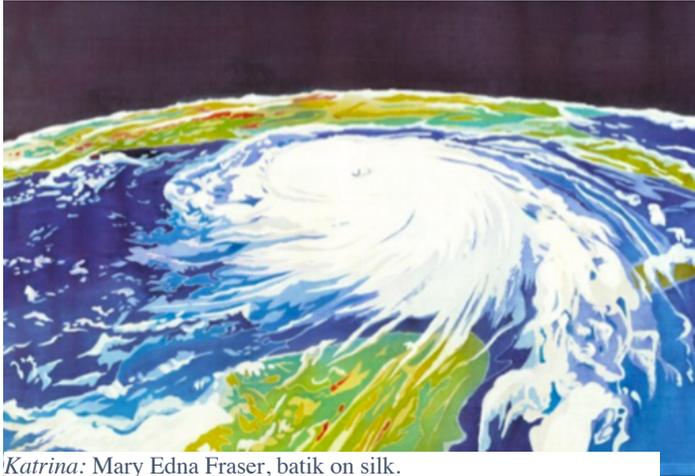


ENVS 255WR – Environmental Communication



Katrina: Mary Edna Fraser, batik on silk.

Course Description: Major issues in the environmental sciences, such as those dealing with global climate change, pollution, natural resources, and extinctions, are often misunderstood by the general public, particularly in the U.S. But such misconceptions can be overcome by recognizing logical fallacies and using effective communication techniques, such as dynamic presentations, clear writing, empathy, and storytelling. Therefore, this class will provide the right tools for addressing false or misleading

information while also developing proactive communication skills for communicating environmental science in a range of situations, whether personal, public, or academic.

Intended Learning Outcomes

Because this course fulfills the **Continuing Communication** (WRT) requirement, it is designed with the following writing outcomes in mind:

- **Communicate to learn.** You will use communication as a form of inquiry, invention, and reflection.
- **Communicate to contribute:** You will use communication to contribute to conversations about the environmental sciences with organizational patterns appropriate for people both within and outside of the environmental sciences.
- **Communicating with evidence:** You will learn to communicate key concepts in the environmental sciences using evidence-based reasoning as a foundation, while arguing persuasively and ethically.
- **Communicate clearly:** You will learn how to make all your communication clearly, coherently, and expressively.

Other Useful Information

Meeting Time and Place: Monday and Wednesday, 1-2:15 p.m.; Math and Sciences Building Room N306.

Readings: Textbooks: (1) *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (2011), by Naomi Oreskes and Erik Conway, Bloomsbury Press, New York, 368 p.; (2) *Houston, We Have a Narrative: Why Science Needs Story* (2015), by Randy Olson, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 260 p. Additional readings, videos, and podcasts will be assigned throughout the semester.

Course Instructor: Anthony J. Martin (he/him), Professor of Practice, Department of Environmental Sciences.

Student Hours: 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays in my personal Zoom room, ID **425 979 1782**, or by appointment. For the latter, just ask before or after class or e-mail. Also, if I forget to log in that day, just send me an email reminder and I'll be on soon after.

Email, office phone: geoam@emory.edu; (404) 727-6476.

Email Policy: For e-mail messages sent after 6:00 p.m. (U.S. Eastern) or on weekends, do not expect me to answer them until the morning of the next day or on Monday morning, respectively.

Class Safety Policy: Because we are still in the midst of a global pandemic, we must take all necessary precautions to ensure the safety of your classmates and your professor. Hence **masks must be worn at all times in class**, which also means you cannot eat or drink while in class. Failure to follow this basic safety protocol means that I must ask you to leave class.

Basic Requirements for Course:

- Weekly in-class writing and editing exercises = 30%
- Out-of-class assignments (mostly using Twitter) = 10%
- Class presentations = 25%
- Class participation (in person and online) = 15%
- Writing portfolio = 10% (Your edited weekly in-class and out-of-class assignments will be assembled into a writing portfolio by the end of the semester.)
- Reflection on writing portfolio = 10% (For this assignment, you will be given a prompt addressing the learning outcomes of the course, using your writing portfolio as a means for self-evaluating your writing.)

Note that the above varied communication assignments, which include digital, oral, and written are designed to give you many opportunities to try your hand at communicating about the environmental sciences. Also, the assignments are scaffolded in a way that will allow for continued practice and growth as the semester proceeds. The final portfolio and your reflection are meant to be the culmination of your learning across the semester.

General Information:

A typical weekly schedule in the first half of the semester will be:

Monday: Responding to writing prompts by handwriting two-paragraph summaries of and reactions to assigned readings at the start of class, followed by discussion, and then self- and peer-editing of those readings;

Tuesday: Reading, revising, participating in online discussion;

Wednesday: Practical communication exercises (writing and/or speaking) using main topics of each week as guides.

Thursday-Friday: Honing and then submitting final two-paragraph summaries online; online discussions or other exercises between classes.

Weekends: No assignments due; use this time to catch up on reading, prepare for Monday's class, and/or rest.

If you are feeling ill in any way before class, **do not come to class**. Just let me know about your illness when you can, and do what you need to get better. Also, please let me know if someone in your family is experiencing a serious illness or has passed away that requires you to leave campus.

Owing to additional stresses related to the unusual societal conditions of 2021 (e.g., global pandemic, climate crisis, systemic racism, insurrections, and more), you are allowed two (2) **Pandemic Passes** for the semester. So if you have a major personal problem that prevents your attendance or turning in an assignment on time, you may simply send me a message saying "I hereby use Pandemic Pass #1 (or #2)," no questions asked. There is also no need for you to write a 1,000 word essay explaining your situation (which will not count as a writing assignment, either).

Any forms of dishonesty associated with graded materials are violations of the Honor Code and will be dealt with appropriately. Please read about the Emory Honor Code at:

<http://catalog.college.emory.edu/academic/policies-regulations/honor-code.html>

Class participation is part of your grade and evaluated through the quantity and quality of your participation in class. Attendance is recorded and used as part of your participation grade (but while also accounting for excused absences). Online participation will be evaluated through our Canvas class site and Twitter. Promptness is necessary for proper participation, and excessive tardiness is counted against your participation grade.

Writing Center: The Emory Writing Center (EWC) is open year-round to support writers (students, staff, and faculty) in Emory College, the Laney Graduate School, the School of Nursing, and the Medical Imaging Program. We offer one-on-one remote and in-person tutoring for writers working on a range of composition projects (essays, applications, reports, theses, etc.), at any stage of the writing process (from brainstorming to final revisions). Writing Center tutors work on idea development, structure, use of sources, style, grammar, and more. We are not a proofreading or editing service, but rather offer strategies and resources writers can use as they compose, revise, and edit their own work. Tutors also support the literacy needs of English Language Learners (ELL); several tutors are trained ELL Specialists. The Writing Center is located in Callaway N111 and a maximum of two appointments are allowed each week. You can learn more about the Emory Writing Center and make an appointment on our website: <http://www.writingcenter.emory.edu>. Our opening day each semester is set one week after the add/drop/swap deadline, to allow for our tutors to finalize their schedules. Please review our policies before your first appointment, including our new policy on inclusivity and respect: <http://writingcenter.emory.edu/appointments/policies.html>.

Attention, Seniors! The conditions of this syllabus are applied equally to all students in the class, regardless of graduation status. Accordingly, your saying “But I need this class to graduate!” is not a valid reason for missing assigned work throughout the semester.

Inclusivity Statement: I pledge to make every effort to make this an inclusive class, but if I fall short of that goal, please inform me and I will do my best to learn and correct it.

Tentative Course Schedule

Week 1, Aug. 25 – Introduction to the course and its main goals. **Readings:** Introduction and Chapter 1, *Doubt is Our Product* (Oreskes and Conway); Introduction and Chapter 1, *Why Science Needs Story* (Olson).

Week 2, Aug. 30-Sept. 1 – In-class writing (Prompt #1), revision, discussion of readings. **Readings:** Chapter 2, *Strategic Defense, Phony Facts, and the Creation of the George C. Marshall Institute* (Oreskes and Conway); Chapters 2-3, *Science is Stuck in a Narrative World, And the Humanities Ought to Help* (Olson).

Week 3, Sept. 8 – In-class writing (Prompt #2), revision, discussion of readings. **Readings:** Chapter 3, *Sowing the Seeds of Doubt: Acid Rain* (Oreskes and Conway); Chapter 3-4, *But the Humanities are Useless for This, Therefore Hollywood to the Rescue* (Olson).

Week 4, Sept. 13-15 – In-class writing (Prompt #3), revision, discussion of readings. **Readings:** Chapter 4, *Constructing a Counternarrative: The Fight over the Ozone Hole* (Oreskes and Conway); Chapter 5-6, *Methods: Narrative Tools-The WSP Model, Methods: Word-The Dobzhansky Template* (Olson).

Week 5, Sept. 20-22 – In-class writing (Prompt #4), revision, discussion of readings. **Readings:** Chapter 5, *What’s Bad Science? Who Decides? The Fight over Secondhand Smoke* (Oreskes and Conway); Chapters 7-8, *Methods: Sentence-The ABT Template, Methods: Paragraph-The Hero’s Journey* (Olson).

Week 6, Sept. 27-29 – In-class writing (Prompt #5), revision, discussion of readings. **Readings:** Chapter 6, *The Denial of Global Warming* (Oreskes and Conway); Chapters 9-10, *Results: The Narrative Spectrum, Results: Four Case Studies* (Olson).

Week 7, Oct. 4-6 – In-class writing (Prompt #6), revision, discussion; “pitching” environmental science topics, Part I. **Readings:** Chapter 7, *The Revisionist Attack on Rachel Carson* (Oreskes and Conway).

Week 8, Oct. 13 – In-class writing (Prompt #7), revision, discussion; “pitching” environmental science topics, Part II. **Readings:** *Conclusion: Of Free Speech and Free Markets, Epilogue: A New View of Science* (Oreskes and Conway).

Week 9 Oct. 18-20, – In-class writing (Prompt #8), revision, discussion; introduction to improvisation as a tool in science communication and writing scripts for video.

Readings/Viewings: Alan Alda science-communication videos, “Dance Your Ph.D.” videos; Chapters 11-12, *Science Needs Story, And Hollywood can Help* (Olson). Guest “lecture” by Ruth Schowalter, Interplay and Georgia Tech.

Week 10, Oct. 25-27– Writing effective presentations on environmental-science topics; simplifying complex subjects (“Up Goer Five”); adapting scripts to presentations and video.

Readings/Viewings: TED talks, other videos, podcasts (TBA); Chapters 13-14, *But Narrative Training Requires a Different Mindset, Therefore I Recommend Story Circles* (Olson).

Week 11, Nov. 1-3 – Writing, editing, and performing personal stories that use science as a theme and the “Story Collider” method; start story circle groups.

Readings/Viewings/Listenings: Story Collider podcasts.

Week 12, Nov. 8-10 – In-class presentations of personal environmental science stories; when words are not enough: effective use of visuals in science communication (PowerPoint, gifs, memes, videos, and more). **Readings/Viewings:** *Information is Beautiful* website and other sites.

Week 13, Nov. 15-17 – In-class presentations of personal environmental science stories.

Week 14, Nov. 22 – Social media for communicating environmental science: blogs, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, podcasts, and more; personal environmental science stories using video presentations.

Week 15, Nov. 29-Dec. 1 – Environmental Science Film Festival! Showing and discussing films produced in this class.

Week 16, Dec. 6 – **Last class:** The Hero/Heroine’s Journey completed! Final in-class writing assignment, assessing what we learned this semester.

Miscellaneous: Let me know you got this far in the syllabus by sending me a message reacting to the environmental-science video linked [here](#).