Over the past two decades, the field of environmental communication has expanded rapidly as awareness has grown of the critical role played by culture and communication in shaping the relationship between human societies and our ‘natural’ environment. On the one hand, culture and communication have played a major role in supporting the economic, social and political structures through which humans have come to exploit and dominate ‘nature’ in a fundamentally unsustainable and potentially catastrophic manner. Commercial and corporate media, for example, provide vital cultural and ideological support to ecologically devastating forms of consumer capitalism and economic growth while often marginalizing the voices of those calling for a different relationship with the biosphere (or even those seeking to inform the public of environmental crisis). On the other hand, cultural and communicative processes can also provide the conceptual and emotional space to cultivate not only an awareness of environmental crisis but also (and more importantly) the social and political will to challenge existing structures of power and inaugurate (and imagine) more sustainable forms of economy and society. Vigorous debates among scholars and practitioners in the field about how to communicate more effectively with the public (as well as a strongly interdisciplinary theoretical orientation and research agenda) have produced a much richer understanding of the roles that affect, experience, identity, narrative, values, frames and other factors can and must play in motivating increased public engagement with environmental issues, both in terms of behavioural and political change.

Our objective in this course will be to engage with the diverse range of academic scholarship in this area, as well as a selection of additional ‘applied’ communication where possible – e.g. advocacy campaigns by environmental NGOs, corporate/‘think-tank’ discourse on sustainability issues, polling and surveys on environmental politics, policies and behaviours, strategic environmental communication, etc. Primary topics to be explored will (likely) include:

- The relationship between environmental communication and ecological crisis.
- Approaches to analyzing environmental discourse.
- ‘Green’ marketing, corporate public relations and ‘sustainable capitalism’?
- Motivating sustainable consumption, consumer behaviour and behavioural change.
- News media (mainstream and alternative) coverage of environmental issues.
- Science and risk communication, including the psychology of risk decision-making.
- Researching and representing public awareness and opinion on environmental issues.
- Environmental advocacy communication: approaches, best practices and examples.
- Emotion and affect, fear and hope, frames and values in environmental communication.
- Environmental citizenship, democracy, dialogue and deliberation.

As a means of creating some conceptual and thematic consistency and focus across these topics, much of the course reading will be drawn from the literature on climate change communication. Over the past five years, the question of how to communicate (or not to communicate) about climate change has become one of the field’s top priorities, generating vigorous discussion and debate in the scholarly, policy and advocate/activist communities about how to engage most effectively with the public on this issue.

-over-
Within the broad contours and key themes of the course as laid out in this outline, I encourage input and advice from interested students with respect to a focus upon particular topics, the potential inclusion of additional issues beyond those described above and suggestions for academic and/or non-academic readings. At this point, the structure of the course is quite flexible and I am happy to refine and modify it in order to address the needs and interests of students.

Course Format:

The course will be organized around a series of weekly readings and will be conducted as a seminar discussion: accordingly, attendance at all meetings is mandatory. Please ensure that you have read and engaged with the assigned material and come prepared to be a full participant in the discussion.

Students will be responsible for preparing two short presentations (15 minutes maximum) during the term, providing the group with a concise assessment of one (or more) of the week’s readings and then two to three questions to kick start our discussion of the week’s material.

Depending upon availability and student interest, we may also invite guest speakers throughout the term who would participate in a portion of the weekly discussion.

Grading/Assignments: (to be finalized at our first meeting)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Participation</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Paper (Review of Student Selected Mass Market/’Popular’ Book on Environment Issues)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Proposal with Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major Research Essay/Project</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The major research assignment may take the form of a standard academic essay. However, students may also propose alternative forms for presenting their research, including the production of documentaries, websites, advocacy/activist campaign material or other multi-media projects. Collaborative projects between two (or more) students is also an option.

The school expects that the grades awarded in this course will bear some reasonable relation to established university-wide practices with respect to both levels and distribution of grades. In addition, The School will follow Policy S10.01 with respect to Academic Integrity, and Policies S10.02, S10.03 and S10.04 as regards Student Discipline (note: as of May 1, 2009 the previous T10 series of policies covering Intellectual Honesty (T10.02) and Academic Discipline (T10.03) have been replaced with the new S10 series of policies).

Required Readings:

- Photocopies of all course readings will be available in the School of Communication photocopy room (K9675) and, whenever possible, electronic copies of those readings will be distributed to students. Texts from which readings have been taken will also be placed on reserve in the SFU Burnaby Bennett Library when possible.
- The amount of required reading will likely be 80-120 pages per week.