
ENVIRONMENT & COMMUNICATION: ERSC 350

Course Outline 2008 - 2009

INSTRUCTORS:

Fall term: Ms. Lydia Dotto LS (myLearningSystem) email only, meetings by appointment

Winter term: Dr. Magda Havas 748-1011 ext 7882, ESC B309, mhavas@trentu.ca
prefer myLearningSystem (webct) for email

SECRETARY: Ms. Deb Mills 748-1011 ext. 1261, ESC B202, dmills@trentu.ca

LECTURES/WORKSHOPS: Tuesday 12:00 to 14:50 GSC 112

TEXT: No required text. Required readings are assigned during lectures and include selections from the report "The State of the News Media," a selection of scientific papers on environmental issues; a selection of media articles, including news and feature articles, opinion articles and letters to the editor; selected media and environmental web sites and blogs; abstracts from NSERC grant proposals.

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to help students develop an ability to communicate scientific information effectively to *non-scientific audiences*, including the general public, the media, policymakers, community stakeholders, businesses and others. The emphasis will be on written and oral communications, including print, broadcast, multimedia and Internet-based formats.

The course will cover trends in mass media, the format and structure of popular science writing, translating scientific jargon into plain language, researching and interviewing. Assigned exercises will involve a variety of formats, including written articles, oral presentations, audio and/or video items.

Attendance and participation in class discussions and exercises are required and will be marked; assignments will be discussed in class. Computers and audiovisual equipment will be used extensively. Assignments will be managed primarily via the online Learning System (formerly WebCT.) All assignments must be submitted as computer-generated documents, unless otherwise instructed.

Students wanting to pursue careers in environmental research, journalism, education, public relations or community outreach may find this course valuable. Lydia Dotto teaches the fall term and Magda Havas teaches the winter term.

CONTACT INFORMATION AND MEETINGS WITH INSTRUCTOR:

Fall Term: The primary method of communication with Lydia Dotto is through my Learning System email. All correspondence *must* be sent through LS email; emails from other sources will not receive a response. If LS email is not operational for technical reasons, the secondary method of communication is Trent email: lydiadotto@trentu.ca.

Lydia Dotto does not have set office hours. Students wishing to meet with her individually should send a request through LS email and she will make arrangements for a meeting room and time. On request, Lydia Dotto can also be available half an hour before or after the weekly lecture.

Winter Term: Office hours for Magda Havas are on Tuesdays 3 to 4 pm and on Wednesdays noon to 1 pm. Alternative times are available by appointment.

EVALUATION:

Assignments must be turned in on time because they are required for exercises and discussions in subsequent classes. Assignments turned in up to 24 hours after they are due will be accepted with a 10% penalty. Assignments turned in later than 24 hours after they are due will not be accepted and no marks will be given. Special circumstances (e.g. illness) should be discussed with the instructor. Conflict with work in other courses or extracurricular activities will not be accepted as a reason for exemption from these requirements.

ASSIGNMENTS:

ASSIGNMENTS	% OF FINAL GRADE	DUE
FALL TERM		
Attendance & participation in class exercises & discussions	5%	Sept 9 to Dec 2
Jargon – translate scientific terms and concepts into plain language	10%	September 30
News or short feature story (~800 words) - draft for group review - final version	15%	October 28 November 18
Opinion article - a column, blog, or 2 short letters to the editor, (~800 words) - draft for group review - final version	15%	November 11 November 25
WINTER TERM		
Attendance & participation in class exercises & discussions	5%	Jan 6 to March 31
Public speaking: 5-minute talk, video taped	10%	January to February
Scientific Brochure or Flyer: 8.5 x 11	10%	February 10
Magazine Design (groups of 4 to 5 students) Design an environmental magazine (articles 500 to 1000 words with visuals).	10% content 10% creativity 5% oral presentation 5% individual mark	March 17

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY:

Academic dishonesty, which includes plagiarism and cheating, is an extremely serious academic offense and carries penalties varying from failure in an assignment to suspension from the University. Definitions, penalties, and procedures for dealing with plagiarism and cheating are set out in Trent University's Academic Dishonesty Policy which is printed in the University Calendar and on the university web site at: http://www.trentu.ca/deansoffice/policies_dishonesty.php.

ACCESS TO INSTRUCTION:

It is Trent University's intent to create an inclusive learning environment. If a student has a disability and/or health consideration and feels that he/she may need accommodations to succeed in this course, the student should contact the Disability Services Office (BL Suite 109; 748-1281; disabilityservices@trentu.ca) as soon as possible.

WEEKLY LECTURE/WORKSHOP AGENDA:

Week	Date	Lecture/workshop	Assignment Due	%
1	09/9	Introduction: course overview - objectives, assignments, familiarization, Learning Style Inventory		
2	09/16	Context of popular communication – media and audience trends		
3	09/23	Elements of good science communication; public science literacy, jargon, readability, formats and styles of popular writing		
4	9/30	Elements of good science communication – criteria, types of popular articles, interviews & quotes	Jargon	10%
5	10/7	Opinion & analysis		
6	10/14	In class exercises and discussions and/or working on assignments		
<i>Reading Week</i>				
7	10/28	Writing for the Internet, blogging; group exercise	draft of news/feature article for group review	
8	11/4	Writing for television and film; the role of visuals		
9	11/11	Group exercise, working on assignments; guest speaker (to be confirmed)	draft of opinion article for group review	
10	11/18	Reliability of information sources; class discussion	News or short feature	15%
11	11/25	Whistleblowers, political interference in science; guest speaker (to be confirmed); class discussions.	Opinion article	15%
12	12/02	Magazine writing/ethical issues/wrap- up discussion	Attendance	5%
<i>Christmas</i>				
13	01/06	Oral Presentations		
14	01/13	Figures & Tables & Statistics	oral presentations	10%
15	01/29	Visual Literacy	oral presentations	
16	01/27	Writing Style	oral presentations	
17	02/03	Creative Writing Techniques	oral presentations	
18	02/10	Layout and design features	scientific brochure	10%
<i>Reading Week</i>				
19	02/24	Changing Country/Changing City		
20	03/03	Magazine Workshop		
21	03/10	Magazine Workshop		
22	03/17	Group Presentations	Magazine Due	30%
23	03/24	Group Presentations		
24	03/31	Debriefing	Attendance	5%