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JRNL 505.01: Journalism and the Environment Seminar

Henriette B. Lowisch

University of Montana - Missoula, henriette.lowisch@umontana.edu

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JRNL 505 Journalism and the Environment

Meets Tuesdays and Thursdays, 11:10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., DAH 301

Instructor

Prof. Henriette Lowisch

Don Anderson Hall 431

Phone: (406) 243-2227

Henriette.Lowisch@umontana.edu

Office Hours

Mondays, 12:30 – 2:30 p.m.

Thursdays, 1 – 3 p.m.

And by appointment

Course Objectives

This seminar puts environmental science and natural resource journalism into context. It defines the mission of journalists working these beats and discusses challenges facing those determined to report on complex and politically charged topics. It introduces graduate students to the resources available at the University of Montana, involves them in the community of environmental and natural resource reporters and guides their first steps toward their master's project or portfolio.

Learning outcomes

By the end of the semester, successful students will:

- Know what factors drive media coverage of environmental issues.
- Deepen their knowledge of the scientific, ethical, policy and economic aspects of climate change.
- Be familiar with journalists, scientists and organizations working on environmental science and natural resource issues in Missoula and throughout the West.
- Practice using social networks to cover the news and develop sources, brand and audiences.
- Hone their writing, presentation and analytic skills.
- Have a draft proposal for their master's project or portfolio in hand.

Course Outline

This course is structured around five components:

- Share expertise
- Build professional networks
- Join the conversation on social media
- Communicate climate change
- Draft your master's proposal

1 Student Expertise

Students bring a diverse range of expertise and interests to the Master's program. Early in the semester, you will teach a 30-minute class session on an issue related to environmental science or natural resource journalism you already know well.

2 Professional Networking

Working journalists and communication professionals will address topics as varied as fundraising, career planning, media-agency relations and freelancing. Students prepare for guest speaker appearances by formulating and submitting questions based on assigned readings.

Graduate students in the Master's program for Environmental Science and Natural Resource Journalism are expected to join SEJ or another professional organization. For example:

[Society of Environmental Journalists](http://www.sej.org/) <http://www.sej.org/>

[Society of Professional Journalists](https://www.spj.org/) <https://www.spj.org/>

[Outdoor Writers Association of America](http://owaa.org/) <http://owaa.org/>

[National Association of Science Writers](http://www.nasw.org/) <http://www.nasw.org/>

[Investigative Reporters and Editors](http://www.ire.org/) <http://www.ire.org/>

3 Social Media Competency

Students will establish a Twitter presence and learn how to use social media as journalists rather than private individuals. Events will be assigned for live-tweeting and storifying. The entire team will curate a Twitter stream in the run-up to the Paris climate summit (COP21) in December.

4 Communicating Climate Change

Communicating climate change is a major and ongoing challenge for journalists. Students will follow and analyze media coverage of climate change throughout the semester. Coverage of the upcoming COP21 conference will provide a real-time, global case study. Locally, students will discuss issues of climate, communities and conservation with scientists, advocates and community leaders at the Crown of the Continent Roundtable and the Crown Reporting Fund Dinner.

Most readings are available through Moodle, but you need to buy the following book:

Jamieson, D. (2014). Reason in a Dark Time: Why the Struggle Against Climate Change Failed -- and What It Means for Our Future. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

5 Master's Proposal

By the end of the semester, you will submit a proposal for a professional project or portfolio. You will receive a template and detailed instructions; hear from former students who have successfully completed their master's, and meet with me for a one-hour individual review of your abstract.

Expectations

Students are expected to complete the following types of assignments for this seminar:

Readings and Questions (20 percent)

Read assigned texts and formulate questions for guest speakers and events. Questions need to be submitted to the Moodle on deadline and in a specified format. In addition, don't forget to bring them to class or events, so you can actually use them in conversation.

Social Media (25 percent)

- Establish Twitter presence, including photo, bioblurb and link to personal website.
- Follow 200+ relevant accounts and acquire 50+ quality followers (I won't count spammers).
- Send two tweets per week, with quality points for useful multimedia, mentions and hashtags.
- Live-tweet an assigned event.
- Participate in team effort to curate Twitter stream on climate change during COP21.

Master's Proposal (35 percent)

Please upload the following assignments on the Moodle by deadline. Follow the specs outlined there.

- Abstract (400 words) and bibliography due Oct. 20, 11:00 a.m.
- First draft of full proposal due Nov. 24, 11:00 a.m.
- Second draft of full proposal due Dec. 15, 11:00 a.m.

Seminar Presentation and Discussion (20 percent)

- Powerpoint presentation (20 minutes) on a topic you know very well, followed by Q&A.
- Fruitful contributions to in-class discussions and outside events.

Professionalism

To learn is your responsibility. Don't squander the opportunities this course affords.

- Make sure you understand assignments and meet all deadlines.
- Don't be late. Class doesn't start at 11:11 a.m. It starts at 11:10 a.m.
- Notify me in advance if you need to miss a class for a valid reason.
- You get one "free" absence, as long as you notify me in advance.
- You'll need to complete an extra assignment for each additional class you miss.
- Missing one third of classes will automatically result in failing the course.

Academic Honesty

All students must practice academic honesty. Academic misconduct is subject to an academic penalty by the course instructor and/or a disciplinary sanction by the University. All students need to be familiar with the [Student Conduct Code](http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php) (http://www.umt.edu/vpsa/policies/student_conduct.php).

Accommodation for Students with Disabilities

This course is accessible to otherwise qualified students with disabilities. To request reasonable program modifications, please consult with the instructor. [Disability Services for Students](http://life.umt.edu/dss) (<http://life.umt.edu/dss>) will assist in the accommodation process.