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JRNL 505.01: Journalism and the Environment Seminar

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JRNL 505 Journalism and the Environment

Meets Mondays and Wednesdays, 5 – 6:20 p.m., DAH 301

Instructors

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Course Description

The media are a significant factor in environmental protection. They play a significant role in determining which environmental threats get the public's attention and whose perspectives on those threats get an audience. Covering environmental science and natural resource issues is a challenging job: reporters must master scientifically complex and politically contentious subjects and effectively communicate them to viewers and readers.

This seminar puts environmental science and natural resource journalism into context. We will spend the semester reading journalism (both good and bad) and talking with journalists, scientists and environmental professionals. The course will provide a brief history of the field and examine how today's media cover various aspects of this politically charged beat. It discusses how journalists use storytelling to engage, enlighten and empower the public about issues of great complexity and importance. It also provides graduate students with the necessary context and information to develop their master's project or portfolio and engender voices of authority.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester, successful students will:

- Be familiar with the origins and history of environmental journalism as a genre/beat.
- Understand the breadth of issues covered by environmental journalists and what factors drive media coverage of these issues.
- Recognize what elements make for excellence in environmental science and natural resource journalism, and be able to critique various kinds of stories with a keen eye.
- Articulate a vision for their future work in the profession.
- Have a draft proposal for their master's project or portfolio in hand.

Assignments and Grading

Students will be required to complete the following assignments:

Active Class Participation (25 percent)

Throughout the semester, you will be required to read and discuss the work of journalists covering various aspects of the environmental beat. These stories range from hard news to long-form narratives, and represent a spectrum of opportunities in a rapidly evolving media landscape. (See below for required texts.) Be prepared to actively participate in class discussions on the readings. Each of you will be required to lead discussion for one class. You will also get the chance to talk to some of the authors about their stories, their work and their views of the industry. You will be required to formulate questions for peers and guest speakers and use them in conversation.

Advancing the Story Presentations (25 percent)

Each student will prepare and present a 15-minute presentation about how an ongoing story has evolved. The story should be something you are aware of and interested in. It should have appeared in the news previously and should have changed since it was most recently covered by the media. Presentation dates will be assigned in Week 2. If you'd like to rehearse your presentations before your presentation date, I'm available during office hours, or you can make an appointment.

Writing Assignments (30 percent)

During the semester, you will write two critiques of published articles we have not covered in class, and one critique of Elizabeth Kolbert's *The Sixth Extinction*. Each of these short essays (1000 words) should focus on what makes these pieces "environmental journalism", how the author conveys complex material to his/her audience, and how well the article worked (or didn't). Suggestions for how it could have been improved are also welcome.

Master's Proposal (20 percent)

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 Nadia for a two half-hour individual reviews of your plan of action, proposal and abstract.

Please follow the instructions on Moodle on how to submit your completed assignments, which is usually one or more of a) bring a printed version to class; b) email it to Nadia or Jeff c) and/or upload to Moodle.

Grading scale

A 93-100	C+ 77-79
A- 90-92	C 73-76
B+ 87-89	C- 70-72
B 83-86	D 60-69
B- 80-82	F 0-59

Assignment Deadlines

Due when	What
Due, Aug. 29, for discussion in class. Please email to Jeff.	A 300-word statement about what you think environmental journalism is (and isn't), whether it adequately covers the range of topics you think it should, and why you think it is important.
Due Sept. 10, for discussion in class that day.	Read, view, listen to these professional projects or portfolios <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conde, Kelly 2013. "The Damage Done" ○ Ouellet, Nicky 2016 "It's rooted in the land: How managing natural resources leads Native American tribes to sovereignty" ○ Radley, Kevin 2012 Battle of the Bulls (MP4) ○ Petersen, Erik or Nazeri, Mona TK
Due Sept. 24. Email to Nadia.	Topic for Advancing the Story assignments due.
Due Oct. 10. Please bring printed version class.	Written critique of a long-form feature article of your choice. Please provide a copy of the article as well as your critique.
Due Nov. 7. Please bring printed version class.	Written critique of a long-form feature article of your choice. Please provide a copy of the article as well as your critique.
Due Nov. 5. Please upload to Moodle.	First draft professional proposal
Due Nov. 19. Please bring printed version class.	Critique and review of Kolbert's book, <i>The Sixth Extinction</i> .
Due Nov. 28. Please upload to Moodle.	Final draft professional proposal
Due Nov. 28 in class.	Expert presentations from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roy • Bolte • Bond • Johns
Due Dec. 3 in class.	Expert presentations from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Santa • Gessaman • Chipley
Due Dec. 5 in class.	Expert presentations from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trevellyan • Cast • Kushnir

Readings

We will use the following book. Additional readings will be made available through Moodle and assigned one week before a corresponding lecture, guest appearance or story time.

- Kolbert, Elizabeth. (2014). *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*. New York, NY: Henry Holt and Company. Winner of the 2015 Pulitzer Prize for general nonfiction.
- Various weekly readings that I will supply at least one week in advance. Please check Moodle for details.

Professionalism

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

- Make sure you understand assignments ahead of time and meet all deadlines.
- Don't be late. Class doesn't start at 5:01 p.m. It starts at 5 p.m.
- Notify us in advance if you need to miss a class for a valid reason.
- You get one "free" absence, as long as you notify us 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 a failing grade.

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.