

**Environmental Writing:  
Rhetorical Strategies for Complex Ecological Issues  
11:374:311**

Meeting time: Check Rutgers class schedule

Instructor: Mary L. Nucci, Ph.D.

Office: Cook Office Building, Room 214.

Office hours: By arrangement

Email: [mnucci@sebs.rutgers.edu](mailto:mnucci@sebs.rutgers.edu)

### **Course Description**

Given the accelerating language of environmental disaster—airpocalypse, ecocide, global collapse—is optimism still required or desirable in environmental writing? In this course, we will examine the range of rhetorical strategies that environmental writers have used to create a sense of urgency or even doom, and students will practice their own nonfiction writing in the critical essay and research essay forms. We will read work that disrupts the pastoral mode of traditional nature writing, that draws on the manifesto, that deploys logic with the reasoned marshaling of scientific fact. Our overarching question will be: What is effective environmental writing? Can there be a new mode of environmental writing that escapes the rhetorical eddies of the past—the mourning of the disaster, the turn toward hope? How might we write ourselves into the age to follow the Anthropocene?

### **Course learning goals**

- Read both academic and popular science prose with an understanding of structure and the ability to identify key ideas and questions.
- Incorporate conceptual and editorial feedback from peers and instructor by engaging in the drafting and revision process.
- Understand and practice the different rhetorical strategies unique to an academic discipline or the public sphere.
- Discover and appraise sources through the research process and use the conventions of academic attribution and citation correctly.
- Analyze and synthesize information from multiple sources to generate new ideas and present those ideas with energy and creativity.

#### WCD

- Communicate effectively in modes appropriate to a discipline or area of inquiry; evaluate and critically assess sources and use the conventions of attribution and citation correctly; and analyze and synthesize information and ideas from multiple sources to generate new insights.

#### WCR

- Communicate complex ideas effectively, in standard written English, to a general audience

- Respond effectively to editorial feedback from peers, instructors, &/or supervisors through successive drafts and revision

**Course prerequisite**

All students must have completed Expository Writing 01:355:101 or its equivalent.

**Course materials** All reading materials will be provided on the Canvas site.

**Assignments and grading**

Unless you are directed otherwise, all writing assignments you submit must be singlespaced, in 12-point font, and include your name and page numbers.

Assignment	Points
Project topic	5
Project proposal	20
Annotated bibliography	20
Twitter draft	15
Twitter revision	5 (participation)
Twitter final	20
Letter to the editor draft	15
Letter to the editor revision	5 (participation)
Letter to the editor final	20
Blog draft	15
Blog peer review	5 (participation)
Blog final	20
Reading responses journal/summary (10 x 5)	50
Final portfolio presentation	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	210

Grading

Grades will be determined as a percentage of the total points from assignments and participation as shown here:

A	90-100 %
B+	85-89 %
B	80-84 %
C+	75-79 %
C	70-74 %

I do not accept late assignments, but recognize that life issues or other courses may impact your ability to get work done—if this is the case, speak to me **BEFORE** the due date and we can discuss alternatives. Repeated requests for handing assignments in late will not be honored without a note from the Dean’s office. Late assignments will be subject to loss of points. Participation points will not be given if student is not in class.

**Course Schedule (subject to change)**

Date	Class topic	Activity (in-class)	Reading journal (due following week)	Assignments (due following week)
Week 1	Introductions. Syllabus review. Intro/review of rhetoric.	Rhetorical analysis.		Project topic.
Week 2	Reading discussion. Issues in communicating about the environment. Journaling as activism.	Sources of environmentalism.	Journal/non fiction reading	Project proposal (due Week 4; outcomes, audience, format etc.) AND annotate bibliography (5-10 credible sources, including at least 2 sources from a peer-reviewed scientific journal. Each source should include a 3-10 sentence summary)
Week 3	Mass media/environment in the media.		Journal/non fiction reading	
Week 4	Understanding the audience/Alternate voices.		Journal/non fiction reading	
Week 5	Social media		Journal/non fiction reading	3 Twitter postings (280 characters w hyperlink(s))
Week 6	Politics and environmental communication	Twitter peer review	Journal/non fiction reading	Letter to editor (400-500 words). Twitter posts due.
Week 7	The long form blog.	Letter to editor peer review	Journal/non fiction reading	Letter to editor due. Outline for long form blog (final blog should be 2500-3000 words, 5-6 pages)
Week 8	Strategies for communicating.	Outline for long form blog peer review (ONLINE)	Journal/non fiction reading	
Week 9	Spring break			
Week 10	Visual environmental communication	Visual analysis	Journal/non fiction reading	
Week 11	Storyboarding visuals.	Long form blog review	Journal/non fiction reading	
Week 12	In class peer review.		Journal/non fiction reading	
Week 13	The survey says...			Long form blog final due

Week 14	Careers in environmental writing			Journal summary due
Week 15	Final portfolio presentation			

### **Absence policy**

Rutgers students are expected to attend all scheduled course meetings. University policy excuses absences due to religious observance or participation in Rutgers-approved activities, and permits students to make up work missed for these circumstances. If you will be absent from a class, lab, or exam for any reason, you need to report your absence through the Absence Reporting Website <https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/>. The system will generate an email to me about your absence but the University recommends that you also contact me directly to let me know of your absence. I will take attendance at every class.

Key points to know:

- Note that if you miss class, you will not receive the participation points for that class.
- More than 2 unexcused absences other than per Rutgers guidelines (an excused absence is illness with a doctor's note, family emergency, religious observation or Rutgers-sanctioned event with note) WILL result in a letter grade drop for your final grade.
- Only students with excused absences will be offered the opportunity to meet with me to review the class content.

### **Academic integrity**

The university's policy on Academic Integrity is available at <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-policy>. The principles of academic integrity require that a student:

- properly acknowledge and cite all use of the ideas, results, or words of others.
- properly acknowledge all contributors to a given piece of work.
- make sure that all work submitted as his or her own in a course or other academic activity is produced without the aid of impermissible materials or impermissible collaboration.
- obtain all data or results by ethical means and report them accurately without • suppressing any results inconsistent with his or her interpretation or conclusions.
- treat all other students in an ethical manner, respecting their integrity and right to pursue their educational goals without interference. This requires that a student neither facilitate academic dishonesty by others nor obstruct their academic progress.

- uphold the canons of the ethical or professional code of the profession for which he or she is preparing.

Adherence to these principles is necessary in order to ensure that everyone is given proper credit for his or her ideas, words, results, and other scholarly accomplishments. All student work is fairly evaluated and no student has an inappropriate advantage over others.

- the academic and ethical development of all students is fostered.
- the reputation of the University for integrity in its teaching, research, and scholarship is maintained and enhanced.

Failure to uphold these principles of academic integrity threatens both the reputation of the University and the value of the degrees awarded to its students. Every member of the University community therefore bears a responsibility for ensuring that the highest standards of academic integrity are upheld.

### **Accommodations for students with disabilities**

Please follow the procedures outlined at

<https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registrationform>. Full policies and procedures are at <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>

### **Basic Needs Resources**

Any student who has difficulty affording groceries or accessing sufficient food, or who lacks a safe and stable place to live, is urged to contact the Rutgers Student Food Pantry and/or the Dean of Students (contacts below). Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable doing so, as they may be able to provide additional support.

#### *Rutgers Student Food Pantry*

<http://ruoffcampus.rutgers.edu/food/>

848-932-5500

College Ave Student Center, Room 115 (126 College Ave).

Check their website for hours and additional locations. The Rutgers Student Food Pantry is dedicated to helping all Rutgers students in need of food, no questions asked. Students will be provided with groceries that typically last about one week.

#### *Dean of Students Office*

<http://deanofstudents.rutgers.edu>

848-932-2300

88 College Avenue, New Brunswick, NJ 08901

Mon-Fri, 8:30am-5:00pm

The Dean of Students Office at Rutgers University-New Brunswick provides solutions, services, and support to help students navigate Rutgers University. The Office serves as a

student support network by providing advocacy, problem resolution, and critical incident intervention for those times when additional assistance is needed. Please call to schedule an appointment to meet with a representative from the Dean's office. Just In Case Web App <http://codu.co/cee05e>.

### **Student wellness services**

Just In Case Web App <http://codu.co/cee05e>

Access helpful mental health information and resources for yourself or a friend in a mental health crisis on your smartphone or tablet and easily contact CAPS or RUPD.

#### Counseling, ADAP & Psychiatric Services (CAPS)

(848) 932-7884 / 17 Senior Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901/ [www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/](http://www.rhscaps.rutgers.edu/)  
CAPS is a University mental health support service that includes counseling, alcohol and other drug assistance, and psychiatric services staffed by a team of professional within Rutgers Health services to support students' efforts to succeed at Rutgers University. CAPS offers a variety of services that include: individual therapy, group therapy and workshops, crisis intervention, referral to specialists in the community and consultation and collaboration with campus partners.

#### Violence Prevention & Victim Assistance (VPVA)

(848) 932-1181 / 3 Bartlett Street, New Brunswick, NJ 08901 / [www.vpva.rutgers.edu/](http://www.vpva.rutgers.edu/)  
The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance provides confidential crisis intervention, counseling and advocacy for victims of sexual and relationship violence and stalking to students, staff and faculty. To reach staff during office hours when the university is open or to reach an advocate after hours, call 848-932-1181.

#### Disability Services

(848) 445-6800 / Lucy Stone Hall, Suite A145, Livingston Campus, 54 Joyce Kilmer Avenue, Piscataway, NJ 08854 / <https://ods.rutgers.edu/>  
Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form>.

### Scarlet Listeners

(732) 247-5555 / <https://rutgers.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/scarletlisteners>  
Free and confidential peer counseling and referral hotline, providing a comforting and supportive safe space.

### **Statement of diversity and inclusion**

It is our intention that students of all backgrounds will be well served by this course. We will work to create an environment of inclusion that respects and affirms the inherent dignity, value, and uniqueness of all individuals, communities, and perspectives. We are lucky to have a diverse university. Diverse voices and life experiences enhance the learning process and we welcome students to share their personal experiences. We will not tolerate disrespectful language or behavior against any individual or group. If you feel as though you have been disrespected or treated unfairly by the instructors or any other individual, please let us know. You may speak with the instructors in person, over email or report anonymously using the feedback note box. You may also report bias to the Rutgers Diversity and Inclusion initiative using this link: <http://inclusion.rutgers.edu/report-biasincident/>.