



CLIMATE CHANGE STORYTELLING

SPECIAL TOPICS IN PHOTOJOURNALISM

COURSE OVERVIEW

This course is designed to challenge students to explore broad topics related to climate change globally and within the Upstate New York region. Occasionally, lectures will be led by experts in a variety of fields both from RIT and beyond to help develop a more thorough understanding of how the stories told around climate change are being told, are researched and how the different political, social and communal forces are shaping those stories.

Students will use a variety of storytelling tools to explain how climate change is affecting, changing, being debated and curbed in the Upstate New York region. Students will work in regional communities, using a variety of traditional research and field-gathering techniques to collect data, images, video and other content that will tell the complex data- and human-driven stories to broad audiences online.

DEADLINES

All assignments are due at the beginning of class of the due date. You must be present on assignment deadline classes to receive a grade at all. Failure to be present in person will be equivalent to a reduction of one letter grade.

Late work will receive a reduction of a letter grade for **every 24 hours it's late** starting immediately after the beginning of class when the work is due.

Almost all assignments will have preliminary deadlines which will account for part of each grade and must be adhered to as well. I will always explain deadlines clearly with each assignment and, of course, if anything is unclear, always ask.

ASSIGNMENTS

Preparation for and Participation in Class Discussions	15 points
Writing Assignments	15 points
Oral Presentation	10 points
Project 1	25 points
Project 2	25 points
TOTAL	100 points

CLASS DISCUSSION & PARTICIPATION

Q: What I will count for participation?

A: Discussing work in class, providing feedback to fellow students, asking questions that you have based on readings or assignments, commenting on work that you find on your own and discussing controversial issues with fellow classmates while exhibiting respectful banter.

Q: What does not count for participation?

A: Simply showing up for class, showing up on time, only speaking when prompted, or in general, being a passive student.

Q: How do I prepare myself for class discussion?

A: You will have readings/watchings for each week/class and then will be entering questions/comments to bring to class in a dropbox. If you do this well, and participate, you'll be well on your way to being successful in this department.

Tuesdays / Thursdays
2:00 - 3:20 pm
PJ Lab - GAN 3140

INSTRUCTOR
Josh Meltzer

OFFICE: GAN-2294
jhmpmh@rit.edu

OFFICE HOURS
Wednesdays – 2:30 - 3:30 pm
Thursdays – Noon - 1:00 pm

I'll be happy to make an appointment with you if you cannot see me during the above hours. Email me to schedule an appointment.

I will reply to your emails as soon as I can, and will make every effort to answer all within 24 hours or less. If I have not responded in 24 hours, please send a second reminder, you won't be bothering me.

*Though you are welcome to connect with me on social media, please do **not** use those mediums as the primary method to contact me about class work.*

IMPORTANT DATES

- Jan 23** – Last day Add/Drop
- Jan 30** – Santiago Lyon Lecture
- March 11-16** – Spring Break
- April 6** – Last day to drop w/ 'W'
- May 1** – Reading Day
- May 2-8** – Final Exams

GRADING CRITERIA

Grading your assignments will be based on the following criteria.

- Vision and planning to meet and exceed the needs of each assignment
- Creativity
- Editing
- Research
- Written components
- Technical superiority
- Deadline met

GRADING SCALES

- 94-100 pts = A
90-93 pts = A-
87-89 pts = B+
83-86 pts = B
80-82 pts = B-
77-79 pts = C+
73-76 pts = C
70-72 pts = C-
67-69 pts = D+
63-66 pts = D
60-62 pts = D-
0-59 pts = F

GRADING LEVELS

[**A**] The work has exceptional merit: superior vision, creativity, initiative in problem solving, thoughtfulness and effort, and fulfills all assignment requirements and goals in an exceptional and significant manner. Technical quality of work is excellent. It follows assignment instructions. The assignment is complete, (all specifications of the assignment - amount, content, etc. have been adhered to) and shows no technical flaws in exposure, nor printing. The contrast and color have been accurately corrected. Not only is the student able to communicate a clear idea or intent, but also is able to do so in an inventive, engaging manner effectively using formal and technical decisions. The work not only responds appropriately to the assignment, but it pushes it in innovative, and unexpected positive directions.

[**B**] Work is well done. Work exhibits good vision, creativity, initiative in problem solving, thoughtfulness and effort, and fulfills assignment requirements and goals in a better-than-average manner; however, vision, storytelling, and/or aesthetic quality could be improved. The assignment is complete and shows very few technical flaws. The student is able to communicate a clear intent in as much as the work engages viewer attention through good use of formal and technical tools. The work respond appropriately to the assignment.

[**C**] Work is of average quality. Work exhibits acceptable but average vision, creativity, storytelling, thoughtfulness and effort, and fulfills assignment requirements and goals in an average manner. The assignment is complete, though there may be some technical problems. The student attempts to make use of formal and technical tools to effectively communicate his or her ideas. The work responds appropriately to the assignment.

[**D**] Work shows a barely adequate effort. Work demonstrates some effort to fulfill the assignment requirements and goals but is unacceptable and poorly executed. The work demonstrates that the student tried to fulfill the assignment but had serious technical problems or did not carry through with enough effort to produce a usable assignment. The assignment is incomplete, and/or there exist significant errors. The work expresses the intent of the student in a confused, ineffective manner. Little serious attempt is made to use formal and technical tools to communicate clear, intended meaning. The work fails to respond to the central problems posed by the assignment.

[**F**] Student turned in something, but the work is unacceptable. Work does not fulfill assignment requirements and goals and demonstrates unacceptable effort and results. Or, work is incomplete technically, in content, or missed deadlines.

[**ZERO**] Student turned nothing in at all.

ATTENDANCE

Your attendance in every class is absolutely critical, as each lesson builds upon the previous one, and I will not be able to go back and repeat missed material. Attendance is taken at the beginning of each class and lab. **Missing more than two classes will lower your semester grade by one-half of a letter grade per absence beyond 2 absences. I CANNOT be flexible on this policy.** Please do not come late or miss class, as it's disruptive to everyone.

If you know you will be absent or are ill, please let me know in advance whenever possible.

PLAGIARISM

To represent ideas or interpretations taken from another source as one's own is plagiarism. Plagiarism is a serious offense. The academic work of a student must be his or her own. Students must give the author(s) credit for any source material used.

To lift content directly from a source without giving credit is a flagrant act. To present a borrowed passage after having changed a few words, even if the source is cited, is also plagiarism.

Disposition of Offenses - Students who commit any act of academic dishonesty may receive from the instructor a failing grade in that portion of the course work in which the act is detected or a failing grade in the course without possibility of withdrawal.

Taking ideas and examples from others and using those to inspire your work is **NOT** plagiarism and should be encouraged. This is an important distinction and you are absolutely encouraged to be inspired by work that you find online or see in class.

CELL PHONES

Do not use your cell phones at all in class. Please leave them in your bag or pocket. You will be asked to leave if you are using them for non-class related activities. At some points I may ask you to view video content on your phone, and that will be the only time that you are permitted to use it.

CLASS CRITIQUES

One reminder about critiques in class. I want involvement from everyone. The critiques need to be honest and constructive. You can be tough without tearing people apart. A thin line often separates what is perceived to be constructive versus destructive feedback. Find the balance, and when in doubt, take the higher road.

Likewise, feedback that is full of hot air and praise does little to help one another grow. Speak positively when you really feel something is great, and critique when you have constructive feedback and suggestions. Participate, participate, participate. This will be part of your grade.

When receiving a critique, you need a similar balance. There is a fine line between defending your position and making excuses. Be a good listener. Don't be so connected to your work that you lose sight of how it could be better. You need to develop a thick skin and an open mind. We will use our time to focus on solutions instead of problems. I want you all to be successful. Asking questions is never wrong.

READINGS, GUEST SPEAKERS AND CLASS DISCUSSIONS

As I mentioned in my email to you a few weeks before the semester, we will have a lot of guest speakers this semester for this course, and these will be active discussions with our guests and not times to sit back and idly listen. Each guest will make a presentation to us on their field of expertise, but then have been told that we will all come prepared with questions for them and they will be asking you questions for discussion.

Each guest will give us required reading or watching before their visit so that we are better prepared for their topic. It is absolutely imperative that you complete ALL reading/watching before their presentation. I will expect you to show them the respect for their time by coming prepared for a lively discussion. They are the key to help us connect with issues locally and help ground us in a better understanding on the issues around climate change.

REQUIRED MATERIALS

For this special topics course we will have students from a variety of backgrounds who can report their projects in media that are most familiar to them or in areas in which they would like to learn a new storytelling medium. For students working in photography, audio or video, access to camera gear (your own or from the gear cage) will be necessary. For others who will produce written narratives or data-driven narratives, use of the RIT computer labs will be sufficient. Our class does NOT meet in a computer lab, FYI, though from time to time I may arrange for class times in lab spaces to facilitate in-progress work.

Everyone should have access to two external hard drives. One for backing up the other.

REQUIRED BOOKS

- *The Hockey Stick and Climate Wars: Dispatches from the Front Lines*, **Michael E. Mann**
- *Flight Behavior*, **Barbara Kingsolver**
- *Annihilation*, **Jeff Vandermeer**
- *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, **Anna Tsing**
- *Kivalina*, **Christine Shearer**
- *The Global Warming Reader: A Century of Writing about Climate Change*, **Bill McKibben**

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES who require academic and/or auxiliary accommodations for this course must contact the Disability Services Office Student Alumni Union. The phone number is 585-475-6988. Their email is SA-DisabilityServicesOffice@rit.edu

Please **DO NOT** request accommodations directly from me without a letter of accommodation from the Disability Services Office Student Alumni Union. It's a university policy.

REQUIRED HARD DRIVE(S)

Two Mac-formatted external hard drives (one will be a mirror backup). The drive should be USB3, Firewire 800 or Thunderbolt. Thumb drives are not acceptable for this course work. Video can take up a LOT of space, so be prepared. Leave the second drive in your room or at home as a backup.

FIELD TRIP(S)

I will try to arrange two field trips for our class during the semester. We will assess car situation and carpooling, as well as alternate times during the week to go when we can stay in the field longer than our class time. We'll discuss all of this early in the semester. I will try my best to exchange the time in the field for class time if it is not during normal classes.

WEEK 1 • Jan 16, 18

Course overview / What is climate change? / What is storytelling?

WEEK 2 • Jan 23, 25

Science of climate change

Guest Speaker - Josh Haner (Tue, Jan 23)

Guest Speaker - Nathan Eddingsaas (Thur, Jan 25)

WEEK 3 • Jan 30, Feb 1

Denial and Politics

Guest Speaker - Larry Torcello (Tue, Jan 30)

Guest Speaker - Sue Hughes Smith (Thur, Feb 1)

WEEK 4 • Feb 6, 8

Sustainability and Al Gore

Guest Speaker Randall Curren (Tue, Feb 6)

Guest Speaker Susan Spencer (Thur, Feb 8)

WEEK 5 • Feb 13, 15

Sustainability and Energy in Rochester and @RIT

Guest Speaker - Anne Spaulding ??? or next week

Guest Speaker Enid Cardinal (Thur, Feb 15)

WEEK 6 • Feb 20, 22

Energy in Upstate New York / Wind / Solar

Guest Speaker - Neely Kelly (Tue, Feb 20)

Field Trip to Factory

WEEK 7 • Feb 27, Mar 1

Sustainability

WEEK 8 • Mar 6, 8

"The Visual Turn" - Truth in Imagery

Guest Speaker - Tim Engstrom (Thur, Mar 8)

WEEK 9 • Mar 13, 15

Spring Break

WEEK 10 • Mar 20, 22

Regional Environment

Guest Speaker - Karl Korfmacher (Thur, Mar 22)

Field Trip to Farm

WEEK 11 • Mar 27, 29

Agriculture in Upstate New York

WEEK 12 • Apr 3, 5

Food production in Upstate New York

WEEK 13 • Apr 10, 12

Final Project Production/Critiques

WEEK 14 • Apr 17, 19

Final Project Production/Critiques

WEEK 15 • Apr 24, 26

Final Project Production/Critiques

EXAM WEEK • First week of May (scheduled exam day)