Environmental Communication
CAS NS 332 (3 credits)

Course Catalog Description:
Seminar- and workshop-driven course focusing on communication skills development for environmental scholars. Introduces climate and environmental communication and examines related attitudes and behaviors.

Instructor: Jeff Wescott, Ph.D. jwescott@sea.edu

Locations: SEA campus in Woods Hole, MA.

Course Philosophy and Approach:

In this course, students will explore methods for communicating climate change themes, issues, and information to a broad audience of stakeholder groups, including the general public. The course will focus on three primary themes: strategies for conveying scientific data; the role of storytelling in climate change communication; and building a powerful and cohesive narrative through teamwork. Coursework will consist primarily of seminars, skill-building workshops, and in-class discussions guided by course readings.

Learning Objectives:

1. Understand key strategies in the field of environmental communication.
2. Learn how to synthesize scientific data, policy, and storytelling techniques to craft persuasive messages for a range of target audiences.
3. Develop skills that lead to further participation in environmental research and outreach.

Evaluation:

Video Topic Selection	10%
Storyboard Exercise	20%
Final Video Project	40%
Project Review Essay	10%
Participation	20%

The video project

In teams, you will choose a topic that focuses on climate change, either as a source of confusion for people or as a pervasive if indeterminate presence in everyday life. Your team will design a storyboard that outlines your video's basic narrative, then write a script that will guide the video's production. We will discuss ways to convey effectively scientific data and other information in narrative form and will cover editing and other technical considerations step by

step. All videos will be six to eight minutes in length. I have provided a detailed FAQs page in Google Classroom.

Here is the grading rubric for the video project:

Know your audience. It will be clear who the intended viewers are.

Present the data. Your team will select data that are topic-relevant, well-synthesized, and presented in ways that are comprehensible to your intended viewers.

Tell a compelling story. Does the narrative proceed logically? Did your team introduce the problem, explain the importance of addressing the problem, and find creative ways to lead viewers from question to answer? Remember to aim for description, not prescription.

Edit carefully. Are the video edits smooth? Are the audio tracks (narration, music, incidental sound) placed in ways that serve the story?

Share the effort. Everyone will write a brief description of the specific work they contributed to their team's project (Project Review Essay). You will submit these papers directly to me; they will remain confidential.

Student Hours:
I will let you know during every class meeting when I will be in my office. I will happily provide individual or team assistance by appointment. There is no issue too large or too small. I am here to discuss anything with you. Except golf. I know nothing about golf.

Important note: We've all needed help with something at some point in our lives. If you find yourself having difficulty with the assigned readings, lectures, or class activities, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Other Very Important Stuff:
The papers that you submit in this course are expected to be *your original work.* You must take care to distinguish your own ideas and knowledge from wording or substantive information that you derive from one of your sources. The term "sources" includes not only published primary and secondary material, but also information and opinions gained directly from other people and text that you cut and paste from any site on the Internet.

Using internet sources: As you browse websites, assess their usefulness very critically. Who posted the information and why? Can you trust them to be correct? Authoritative? Unbiased? Your annotation should include the name of the author or organization originating any material that you reference. If you can't identify the source, don't use it!

Please consult information in the SEA Student Handbook on Academic Integrity and direct any questions to SEA Semester faculty.

Inclusivity and Classroom Culture:
Our SEA community embraces diversity of age, background, beliefs, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, and other visible and nonvisible categories. We expect each one of you (and you should expect the same from us) to contribute to a respectful, welcoming. and inclusive environment. If you feel that you are not being welcomed, included, or accepted here, please reach out to one of your teachers or one of the deans at SEA to share your concern.

Course Calendar:

Topic	Readings/Assignments Due
Week 1	
Thu: Introduction to the themes and expectations for the course. Intro to video projects. Communicating the science of climate change, with Dr. Heather Goldstone	
Week 2	
Tue: Lecture - Climate, cognition, and communication. Team video work **Thu:** Storyboard practice	**Due Mon:** Team video topic selection
Week 3	
Tue: Workshop - Information design and data visualization with Skye Morét, Part 1 **Thu:** Workshop with Skye Morét, Part 2	**Readings:** Read by Tuesday, in the following order: 1. Cairo. The Functional Art. 2. Christiansen. Tip Sheet: Designing Science Graphics. Link See optional readings in Google Classroom.
Week 4	
Tue: Speculative futurism, with Dr. Vandana Singh **Thu:** Video production workshop	**Readings:** Singh 2021a. Imagination, climate futures, and the politics of "positivity." Link

	Optional: Watch Singh 2021b. A sci-fi story of Earth's renewal. Link
	Due Tue: Video storyboard
Week 5	
Tue: Video production and editing workshop **Thu:** Video editing	
Week 6	
Tue: Video editing **Thu:** Video presentations	**Due Thu**: Team video project **Due Fri**: Individual video essay