

# Online Course Catalogue



EÖTVÖS LORÁND  
UNIVERSITY | BUDAPEST

## Course Title

**Current issues in communication and media research - Communicating for the environment in the age of ecological crisis**

## Study Field

**Social Sciences, journalism and information**

## University

**Eötvös Loránd University**

CHARM priority field

Faculty or department

Number of credit points:

[Sustainability and Climate Change](#)

[Institute for Art Theory and Media Studies, Department of Media and Communication](#)

4.0

Course code  
[BMA-MEDD-126](#) , [BMA-MEDD-601](#)

Study Level:  
[MA/MSc](#)

Name of instructor(s):

[Virág Vécsey](#)

## Short description of the course

The course is designed for MA students who are interested in the intersection of humanities, social sciences and ecology. No prior knowledge of the subject is a prerequisite.

Climate change, loss of biodiversity, soil degradation, rise of sea levels, plastic pollution and a range of other global environmental problems have become part of our everyday reality, requiring us to rethink the eternal, but ever changing relationship between humans and nature. The starting point for the course is the basic tenet of critical cultural studies that discursive practices in the public sphere mutually influence material reality. The news media, social media, mass culture, but also our everyday practices represent our relationship to the environment, and a meaningful analysis of these practices can help us understand the reasons of the current ecological crisis as well as explore possible adaptive and mitigating strategies.

The course consists of two modules. First, we will review different forms, actors and platforms of environmental communication (i.e. news media, political communication, pop cultural artefacts, social media etc.) and possible methods for their analysis (i.e. rhetorical analysis, critical discourse analysis). Next students will work in larger groups to identify the local level form of a global environmental problem to be addressed as a project for the rest of the course. The research-based project aims to explore the material and discursive aspects of the problem, the actors shaping it, while taking into account the three pillars of sustainability. Following the in depth investigation of the topic students are required to formulate an action plan that could lead to the solution or mitigation of the problem. The course aims to engage students in grassroots environmental activism at the local level using communication tools, through a project based on their own choice and interest

## **Full description of the course**

### 1. Introduction

Overview of the course syllabus, discussing the main requirements and outlines of the group projects. Familiarisation with online tools for learning and communication, e.g. project work aids and resources, course themes, bibliographies etc. Explanation of the evaluation criteria.

### 2. How to define the environment

A historical overview of cultural changes regarding the concept of nature and the environment. What economic, social or environmental processes have shaped the relationship between human and nature? Why is the idea of exploitation and domination of nature (i.e. the capitalist economic system) rooted in Europe? When and why did the idea of protecting the environment arise?

### 3. An introduction to the field of environmental communication

In contrast to critical categories of social oppression and inequality such as race, gender or class, has the issue of nature belatedly become a focus of cultural studies. What is the reason for this? What is environmental communication concerned with, what is ecocriticism and green cultural studies? The pragmatic and constitutive functions of environmental communication. Environmental communication as a crisis and care discipline. Is or should science be value neutral?

4. Research methods  
From ecocriticism, through critical discourse analysis to rhetorical analysis. An overview of the most common research methods when analysing environmental discourse.
5. "Nature will be fine"- the far right and the environment  
Authoritarian and populist political configurations are on the rise globally, which has alarming results for the environment. Exploring the commonalities of these regimes regarding their environmental politics and ideological ties to nationalism as well as their ambiguous relationship to neoliberal capitalism.
6. Project set up- first group presentation  
Each group presents its project plan to the other students. Which environmental phenomenon or problem do they want to reflect on? How does this problem manifest itself at the local level? Which actors play a role in shaping the problem? Which channels of communication will be explored and how? Drawing a mind map.
7. Nature in mass culture  
We explore how nature is being symbolically constructed culturally through various pop cultural artefacts. Animation and ecocriticism, the case of the Oscars. How Disney's Hollywood mammoth changed frames of nature from Bambi to Zootopia.
8. Greenwashing vs. Greenpeace  
Good and bad examples of environmental communication on an organisational level. Case studies of exemplary greenpeace campaigns as well as bad examples of corporate greenwashing.
9. Visual environmental communication on social media  
A case study about climate denier content on Instagram. How climate scepticism is embedded in a web of conspiracy theories related to the far right.
10. - 12. Group works and their presentations  
Each group presents its chosen topic, its investigative and problem-solving aspects. Students evaluate their own and each other's work. We reflect together on what has been presented.

## Learning outcomes

At the end of the course, students will be able to critically examine environmental communication in a meaningful way, identifying the actors and underlying power structures that determine it, and develop effective communication strategies around the topic.

## Additional information

Course requirements

**No prior knowledge of the subject is a prerequisite.**

Language of instruction

**English**

Start date of course:

**2/14/2024**

End date of course:

**5/15/2024**

Contact hours per week for the student:

**90 min max**

Specific regular weekly teaching day/time

**wednesday 10:45-12:15**

**CET**

Time zone

**CET (Spain, France, Germany, Netherlands, Hungary, Norway)**

Mode of delivery:

**hybrid (students of the CHARM partners join online, local students on campus)**

Planned educational activities and teaching methods

**Lectures and seminars dominate the first part of the semester, when discussing the theoretical defines the second half of the course.**

Learning Management System/

**Google classroom**

Assessment methods

**Assignment**

certification

**Transcript of records**

Number of places available for CHARM students

**5**

Contact mail address for further information about this course

**[vecseyvirag@gmail.com](mailto:vecseyvirag@gmail.com)**

Course literature (compulsory or recommended):

**Cantrill, J. (2015). Social sciences approach to environment, media and communication. In A.Hansen & R. Cox(eds).The Routledge Handbook of Environment and Communication(pp.49-62). Routledge**

**Clark, J. (2015). Selling with Gaia. Advertising and the natural world. In S., Cubitt, S., Monani & S., Rust (Eds.). Ecomedia. Routledge**

**Hansen, A. (2017). Using visual images to show environmental problems. In A.F. Fill & H. Penz (eds.). The Routledge handbook of ecolinguistics (pp. 179-195). Routledge.**

**Hochman, J. (1997). Green cultural studies: an introductory critique of an emerging discipline. Mosaic: A journal for the interdisciplinary study of literature, 81-96.**

**Jacobsson, D. (2019). In the Name of (Un)Sustainability: A Critical Analysis of How Neoliberal Ideology Operates Through Discourses About Sustainable Progress and Equality. TripleC 17(1), 19-37.**

**McCarthy, J. (2019) Authoritarianism, Populism, and the Environment: Comparative Experiences, Insights, and Perspectives, Annals of the American Association of Geographers, 109(2), 301-307, <https://10.1080/24694452.2018.1554393>**

**McLean, M. L. (2023, August 30). Why did tourists keep coming as Rhodes and Maui burned? It's about far more than denial. The Guardian. [https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/aug/30/tourists-rhodes-maui-burned-travel?utm\\_term=64f073df04791014327a3078482f0ee2&utm\\_campaign=DownToEarth&utm\\_source=esp&utm\\_medium=Email&CMP=greenlight\\_email](https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2023/aug/30/tourists-rhodes-maui-burned-travel?utm_term=64f073df04791014327a3078482f0ee2&utm_campaign=DownToEarth&utm_source=esp&utm_medium=Email&CMP=greenlight_email)**

**Pattberg, P. (2007). Conquest, domination and control: Europe's mastery of nature in historic perspective. Journal of Political Ecology, 14(1), 1-9.**

**Peeples, J., & Murphy, M. (2015). Discourse and rhetorical analysis approaches to environment, media, and communication. In A.Hansen & R. Cox (eds.). The Routledge handbook of environment and communication (pp. 39-49). Routledge.**

**Pezzullo, P. C., & Cox, R. (2018). Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere (5th Ed.). SAGE.**

**Pulido, L., Bruno, T., Faiver-Serna, C. & Galentine, C.(2019). Environmental Deregulation, Spectacular Racism, and White Nationalism in the Trump Era. Annals of the American Association of Geographers, 109(2), 520-532, <https://10.1080/24694452.2018.1549473>**

**Slovic, S., Rangarajan, S., & Sarveswaran, V. (Eds.). (2019). Routledge handbook of ecocriticism and environmental communication.(pp 1-5) Routledge.**

**Soles, C. & Chu, K-W. (2015). Overview: framing visual texts for ecomedia studies In S., Cubitt, S., Monani & S., Rust (Eds.). Ecomedia. Routledge**

**Vécsey, V.(2022) Ecocritical Readings of Academy Award-Winning Animated Shorts, Environmental Communication, 16(6), <https://723-738>, 10.1080/17524032.2022.2090980**