UN 1001 Perspectives: Environment in the News: Coverage or Cover-up?
Fall, 2002. Section 37: MWF, 10:05 a.m. – 10:55 a.m.; Section 57: MWF, 2:05 p.m. – 2:55 p.m. Walker 143

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[Please feel free to contact me by Email; I check my Email often. I am more likely to check the pasty.com address on Tuesdays, Thursdays, evenings and weekends.]

Web site: www.keweenawnow.com
[We may be able to have a Web site for this course if students are willing to contribute articles, bibliography, etc., to it.]

Perspectives goal: Perspectives on Inquiry "engages students in college level inquiry through which they develop fundamental intellectual habits, understand how to integrate perspectives on knowledge, and begin to learn how to meet the changing needs of a global, technological, diverse, and environmentally sensitive society."

Course Description: This course is designed to prepare students to ask questions and think critically about the representation of environmental issues in the media. How often and how objectively are environmental issues reported in the media? Is the general public aware of "greenwashing" by the public relations industry on behalf of corporations who wish to hide certain impacts of their products on human health or the environment? This course will focus on various representations of environmental issues in the local, national and international media: newspapers, magazines, television, radio, and the Internet.

Students will compare and contrast media reporting on the environment with what they learn from knowledgeable visiting speakers and from articles, books, journals and films on these issues. They will also evaluate readings that are critical of environmentalists or conservationists.

Course objectives:

1. Students will acquaint themselves with a variety of media covering environmental issues and with books and other publications on environmental topics. They will also read and discuss a novel with a Great Lakes historical background.

2. Students will learn from comparisons of readings, media reports and visiting speakers to evaluate -- in oral discussion and in writing -- the accuracy and balance in the coverage (or lack of coverage) of local, national and international environmental issues.

3. Students will discuss -- both verbally and in writing -- how informed individuals or groups may respond to media representations of environmental issues when they believe these are useful or, on the other hand, falsified or dangerous.
Some examples of types of questions to think about as you read, listen to or watch media reports on environmental issues: How does the local press or TV station report an issue such as drilling in the Alaska Wilderness as opposed to the reporting in national newspapers (New York Times or Washington Post) or on Web sites of organizations such as the National Wildlife Federation? What do local residents know – from the local media – about the environmental issues closest to them? For example, how many Keweenaw residents have read about a possible electrical cable to be laid across Lake Superior from Thunder Bay, Ont., to the Keweenaw Peninsula and points farther south? What do residents of suburban Detroit know about the pollution problems of Windsor, Ont. or of inner-city neighborhoods just a few miles away? Most Americans have heard of Chernobyl’s nuclear disaster, but how many know about Chelyabinsk -- where hundreds of thousands of local residents were exposed to harmful radiation in nuclear disasters kept secret by both the Soviet Union and the C.I.A? What is the responsibility of the media to human health and well being vs. economic prosperity? Or to economic and environmental sustainability? Are these two types of sustainability mutually exclusive or is it possible to have jobs as well as clean air and water, housing and services without destructive sprawl? Is it possible to have a variety of outdoor recreational activities as well as wilderness/habitat preservation and conservation of open space and biodiversity?

Required readings to purchase in the Campus Book Store:


Required readings on reserve in the MTU Library: Selections of pages from these books will be assigned to be read by certain dates. Additional readings – both required and optional – may be recommended during the course by both instructor and students.) Note that most of the readings have extensive bibliographies that may help you with the essays you will write.


Articles from newspapers, magazines, Web sites and newsletters may also be distributed in class or assigned for reading on the Internet. Students may be asked to share with the class useful titles they have read on their own (supplementary readings).

Workload and expectations: You may find this class more demanding than some of your classes in high school. Keep in mind that Perspectives is important as a preparation for future college work. Each Perspectives class centers on an inquiry into a different unresolved question, but all Perspective classes share similar goals intended to help the student. Expect to be assigned a substantial amount of college-level reading and writing as well as independent research work outside of class. Be prepared to put in an average of 6 hours of work outside of class in addition to the 3 hours in class each week. Some of the assignments, such as presentations, will be done in groups.

Attendance and class participation (15% of grade): Since much of the class will consist of discussion of readings, group interaction and presentations, and occasional visiting speakers, you cannot afford to miss a class. Expect your final grade to be lowered considerably if you have more than 3 unexcused absences in the semester. Expect to participate actively in each class. Take notes on the reading assignments and bring them to class to help you share your ideas.

Journal writing (informal) (20%): The graded informal writing for this class will be an in-class or at-home journal entry for each reading or media assignment (including possibly TV or radio news). A question or questions will be given at the beginning of class on the class day before the assignment is due or at the beginning of class on the day it is due. You may use the book or article or your reading notes to help you answer the question. The journal entry will be collected in class the day the reading is due. Since the purpose of the journal is to help you organize your thoughts and prepare for class discussion, these will not be accepted late (possible exception for serious excused absence). Your reading notes, class notes, etc., are considered informal writing but will not be collected or graded.

For the journal entry use lined 8.5 x 11 paper. Put your name and the date at the top and write clearly, skipping lines. The journals are graded on quality and quantity of what you say – not necessarily on organization. Don’t be afraid to write on both sides of the paper! Please provide, by the second day of class, a pocket folder for the journal. Your journal will be available in my office and returned to you with a grade after we have completed each of the major readings.
Three short essays (formal writing) (60%): Your reading notes, journal entries and notes on class discussions, films and guest speaker presentations should help you prepare for the 3 required essays. For each essay (4-5 pages) you will be asked to do research, submit a proposal of a topic, hand in a draft of the paper, revise the draft and hand in the final paper with the draft. Save both your draft and final copy on your computer or on a floppy disk. (Give them distinct file names.) You may be asked to revise the final copy if it is not satisfactory. Both the draft and the final copy should be double-spaced and typed using Microsoft Word or a Rich Text format that shows italics, etc. Leave at least an inch margin all around. Use Times New Roman or Arial 12-pt. font.

Essay #1: For this first essay you will choose a current international environmental issue (something outside your own country). Relate it to the assigned class readings and discussions. Find at least four sources (outside the class readings) for your research. (These may include media, books or scholarly journals. At least two of them should be newspaper articles.) Discuss whether the authors express similar or differing viewpoints on the issue. Compare and contrast these with any TV or radio news on the issue, if any. (Sometimes TV and radio reports can be found on the Internet. Examples are the Great Lakes Radio Consortium, http://www.glrc.org/, National Public Radio, http://www.npr.org, and BBC News http://news.bbc.co.uk ) Indicate whether you believe the reports are balanced and accurate and why. In the essay you may wish to examine whether the issue is something that poses a potential threat to the world community or whether progress is being made to solve the problem. Include endnotes or notes within the text and a bibliography of your sources. Use the Modern Language Association (MLA) style for documentation of your sources. We will talk about how to do this during a class session before the first paper is due.

Essay #2: In this essay you will describe a local environmental issue in your town, county or state – something you have read about or heard about in the media. Choose a topic that interests you. Find at least four articles from your local or state newspapers, magazines or newsletters and discuss whether they express similar or differing viewpoints on the issue. Compare and contrast these with any TV or radio news on the issue, if any. (See above for sample Internet sources for these.) Indicate whether you believe the reports are balanced and accurate and why. Incorporate ideas from class readings and discussions. Include notes and bibliography, as in Essay #1.

Essay #3: Choose a current controversial local, state or national environmental issue which has led to public involvement. People organizing to work for or against a change in their own environment that affects their quality of life or economic survival. Local land use planning efforts; organizations opposed to building of paper mills, nuclear power plants, nuclear or hazardous waste dumping; recreational groups concerned about public access, etc., are some examples. You will research two opposing or differing viewpoints described in the media and interview at least two persons involved or people in the community affected by the event. Try to interview enough people to show differing points of view. Find at least four media sources in addition to the interviews. You may interview people by phone, email or letter, but start early to find your contacts and give
them time to reply. You will need to summarize the history of the controversy if it has been going on for some time.

Oral presentations (5%): Once you have handed in your draft of Essay #1 or #2, you will be asked to give a brief oral presentation on one of these to share your ideas with the class and possibly receive input from them to add to your essay before you do the final draft. Depending on the time available, you will speak about 4 minutes. You should talk about your paper—not read it. Be prepared to give the class a handout or use at least one overhead transparency showing the thesis statement and outline of your paper. For Essay #3, each student will give a formal presentation to the class after the final essay is handed in. For this presentation, use a creative visual to illustrate important points in your paper. This can be a constructed model, a poster, photos or drawings. If you need any audio-visual equipment other than the overhead projector, please inform me a week in advance. (I would prefer that you not use Power Point unless you really feel it is necessary to provide illustrations.)

Feel free to come to my office (341 in Walker) if you have questions on assignments or class procedures.

A note on plagiarism: Plagiarism—using the ideas or words of others without acknowledging the source—is unethical and a violation of university policy. Plagiarism cases will be handled by the Office of Student Affairs. Some consequences of plagiarism could be failure of a paper or course. The University has subscribed to an anti-plagiarism service that can detect plagiarized material. We will discuss correct documentation of sources in class. Afterwards, if you still have questions about the proper way to cite the ideas of someone else, please see me.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION POLICY: MTU complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination, including the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). If you have a disability and need reasonable accommodation for equal access to education or services at MTU, please call Dr. Gloria Melton, Associate Dean of Students (487-2212). For other concerns about discrimination, you may contact me, your advisor, department head, or the Affirmative Action office (487-3310).
Course Schedule:

**Week 1 (Aug. 26-30)**

**M**  Introduction to course. Newsletters to be distributed.

**W**  Discuss Newsletters. *(UPEC and Superior Vision)* Bring to class for discussion at least one newspaper article that talks about one of the issues in one of the newsletters or something closely related. Be ready to make comparisons.

**F**  *Earth Odyssey*, pp. 5-16 (Introduction and Prologue) and Ch. 1, "...We Are Still Here," pp. 17-48. Bring to class a current article dealing with an environmental issue in China or an African country or with the ongoing World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa (Aug. 26-Sept. 4, 2002). Be ready to give a one-minute summary of the article.

**Week 2 (Sept. 2-6)**

**M**  Labor Day Recess (no class!)


**F**  *The Environment: Opposing Viewpoints*, pp. 9-16 and Ch. 1, "Is There an Environmental Crisis?" pp. 17-38 *(on reserve)*

**Week 3 (Sept. 9-13)**

**M**  *Earth Odyssey*, Ch. 3, "The Irresistible Automobile," (Bangkok, Athens, Paris, L.A.) pp. 81-118. PROPOSAL FOR ESSAY # 1 DUE (one paragraph stating what you would like to write about and how it relates to what we are reading for class)

**W**  *Divorce Your Car* *(on reserve in library)* Ch. 3-5, pp. 32-61. Note: For reserve books tell the library Section 37. The books are all under one section number. *(Please treat these reserve books with care, especially the personal copies donated for your use. If you wish to xerox pages, be careful of the bindings and do not write in the books.)*

**F**  *Earth Odyssey*, Ch. 4, "To the Nuclear Lighthouse," (Russia) pp. 119-155. *LIBRARY TOUR* Meet inside the main entrance to the library at 10:05 a.m., sharp. Be prepared to research the topic of your proposal. Some time will be given to let you try out the sources indicated to you by the librarian. You may decide to change your proposal. If so let me know.
Week 4 (Sept. 16 – 20) (Possible guest speaker one day this week. On that day we will omit student presentations and hope to complete all of them in 2 days.)

M Earth Odyssey, Ch. 5, "Is Your Stomach Too Full?" (China) pp. 156 – 188. DRAFT OF ESSAY #1 DUE. Student presentations: Half the class (tentative).

W Earth Odyssey, Ch. 6, "How Population Matters," (Brazil, women in developing countries, poverty) pp. 189 – 220. Student presentations (tentative).

F Earth Odyssey, Ch. 7, "The Hurricane of Hell," (China) pp. 221 – 259. Divorce Your Car, pp. 63 – 76. Student presentations (tentative)

Week 5 (Sept. 23 – 27)

M Earth Odyssey, Ch. 8, "Sustainable Development and the Triumph of Capitalism," pp. 260 – 288 Ch. 8. GUEST SPEAKER: Prof. Linda Nagel of MTU Forestry Dept. ESSAY # 1 DUE.

W Earth Odyssey, Ch. 9, "Living in Hope," pp. 289 – 318 and Epilogue, pp. 319-335. Conclusions. Bring to class two different articles on the Johannesburg Summit and be ready to discuss how they are different.

F The Environment: Opposing Viewpoints, Ch. 4, "Is Ecological Conservation Bad for the Economy?" pp. 122 – 150. (On reserve in library.)

Week 6 (Sept. 30 – Oct. 4)

M Great Lakes Journey, pp. 17-48. (On reserve in library.)

W Toxic Sludge is Good For You. Different groups will be assigned pages to read, discuss and present to the class.


Week 7 (Oct. 7 – 11)

M Toxic Sludge ... Group presentations.

W The Environment: Opposing Viewpoints, Ch. 3, "Is the American Lifestyle Bad for the Environment?" pp. 93 – 120. (On reserve in library.) GUEST SPEAKER: Prof. Christa Walck, MTU School of Business and Economics.

F Sleeping Bear Dunes controversy. (Handouts of articles.) (Mid-term grades due.)
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| Week 13 (Nov. 18 – Nov. 22) |
M  *The Underpainter*, pp. 241–305. PROPOSAL FOR ESSAY # 3 DUE. (Note: For this essay you may wish to schedule interviews during Thanksgiving Break.)


**THANKSGIVING BREAK**

**Week 14** (Dec. 2 – Dec. 6) Readings to be announced.

M  Film: *A Civil Action*. DRAFT OF ESSAY # 3 DUE

W  Film: *A Civil Action*.

F  Conclusion of film and discussion.

**Week 15** (Dec. 9 – Dec. 13) Readings to be announced.

M  ESSAY # 3 DUE. Student presentations.

W  Student presentations.

F  Student presentations. Conclusions.