Environmental Reporting Course Development  
By: Tim Hanson, Francis Marion University

Below is a syllabus for our new "Environmental Reporting" class, which will be taught for the first time during Spring semester 2004 at Francis Marion University. The exact time of the class is tentative, as are the dates scheduled for the guest speakers. Those times and dates should be confirmed before the end of year.

**Environmental Reporting**

Critical Issues in Mass Communication (430)  Spring 2004  
Instructor: Tim Hanson  Time: TBA  
Office: Media Center 111B  Classroom: CC-113  
Office Phone: 661-1560  
E-mail: thanson@fmarion.edu

Office Hours: Monday through Thursday – 12:30 – 3 p. m

**Required texts:**

- *The Reporter’s Environmental Handbook*, by Bernadette M. West
- *Encounters With the Archdruid*, by John McPhee
- *Through Green-Colored Glasses: Environmentalism Reconsidered*, by Wilfred Beckerman

**Prerequisite**: Mass Com 201 or permission of Department

**Grading:**

- 10 percent – Article #1  
- 10 percent – Article #2  
- 15 percent – Article #3  
- 20 percent – Article #4  
- 25 percent – Tests  
- 15 percent – Final Exam  
- 5 percent – Participation

**Note:** There will be no opportunity to make up missed tests or other assignments.

90-100=A (4)  85-89=B+ (3.5)  80-84=B (3)  75-79=C+ (2.5)  70-74=C (2)  
65-69=D+ (1.5)  60-64=D (1)  Below 60=NC
Goal: This course is designed to expose students to numerous environmental issues of the day through reading, videos, guest speakers, research and the writing of several articles. This course also will underscore the importance of good, clear writing and accurate reporting.

Requirements: Over the course of the semester, students will be required to produce four environment-related stories. Each story should focus on an environmental problem affecting Francis Marion University, Florence, Florence County or South Carolina in general. In other words, each story should have a “local” angle. These articles should be well researched, well written and be the product of original reporting. That means that the information you use to produce your stories should come from interviews you have personally conducted. Each article must be a minimum of 1,500 words long and must be prepared as if it were going to be submitted to a newspaper or magazine editor. Do not include a cover sheet, title page or clip art with your articles. Staple all pages together. Manuscripts must be typed on good-quality, white bond paper. Please note that each story must be submitted to the instructor via e-mail before 8 a.m. on the day the story is due. The original must be brought to class. Points will be deducted from the original if an e-mail version was not filed by the appointed time.

Additional Reading Assignments: Throughout the semester, additional reading – such as newspaper and magazine articles – will be assigned. Students should read all assignments and come to class prepared to discuss the works in detail. Quizzes may cover the assigned reading material.

Guest Speakers: Several guest speakers will visit the class throughout the semester. Each person has expertise in one or more environmental issues affecting Carolina. Students are encouraged to ask questions and engage in discussion with each of the speakers.

A Word About the Required Texts: John McPhee’s “Encounters With the Archdruid” provides students with examples of first-rate reporting and compelling writing on environmental issues. For those interested in how McPhee conducts his interviews and gathers his research, you should read “The John McPhee Reader,” particularly the
introduction to that work. “The Reporter’s Environmental Handbook”, meanwhile, provides general guidance in covering environmental stories. It also offers more specific suggestions about covering such issues as ozone depletion, pesticides and global climate change. Finally, Beckerman’s “Through Green-Colored Glasses” provides students with some alternative views about otherwise widely accepted claims concerning the state of the environment. This text is included to encourage students to evaluate all sides of an issue and arrive at – as the Washington Post’s Bob Woodward says – the “best obtainable version of the truth.”

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**Attendance:** Attendance will follow school policy, which means you must be present 85 percent of the time to receive credit for the course. Absences beyond FOUR (4), excused or unexcused, will result in a grade of NC or W.

**Participation:** Each student is expected to read all assignments and to be prepared to discuss the material in class.

**Make-up assignments and exams:** There will be no make-up assignments or exams in this course.

**Plagiarism:** If you hand in a story that was written by someone else or is copied, in whole or in part, from another source (another student, a magazine, newspaper, etc.) then you are guilty of plagiarism. Any student who engages in plagiarism will be dropped from the course.

**Deadlines:** Assignments handed in after deadline will receive a 15-point deduction per day, including weekends.

**Tentative Dates, Class and Assignment Schedule (Subject to Change)**


Jan. 15 – How to generate story ideas on environmental issues; Begin reading Introduction and Part I (p.1-103) of “Through Green-Colored Glasses.”

Jan. 20 – Bring two story ideas to class for group discussion. Read Part I (“A Mountain”) of “Encounters With the Archdruid.”

Jan. 22 – Research, Interviews, Article Structure, Writing Your Article

Jan. 29 – Guest speaker from the South Carolina Wildlife Federation

Feb. 3 – One-on-one critique first 500 words of story, tentative outline for the rest of the story and interview notes for Article #1; One-on-one critique; quiz on Reporter’s Environmental Handbook” chapters: *Tracking Down a Company’s Environmental Record*” and “Finding an Expert.”

Feb. 5 – Video: “For Earth’s Sake: The Life & Times of David Brower”; Quiz on Part I (“A Mountain”) of “Encounters With the Arch Druid.”

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Feb. 10 – Article #1 Due; Read Part II (An Island) in “Encounters With the Archdruid.”

Feb. 12 – Bring two story ideas to class for group discussion.

Feb. 17 – Guest Speaker: Jimmy Chandler of the South Carolina Environmental Law Project


Feb. 24 – One-on-one critique of first 500 words of Article #2, tentative outline for the rest of the story and interview notes; Quiz on Reporter’s Environmental Handbook” chapters: “Who Sets the Environmental Agenda?” and “Thoughts on the Future of Environmental Policy and Regulation.”


March 2 – Article #2 Due

March 4 – Bring two story ideas to class for group discussion.

March 9 – Spring Break

March 11 – Spring Break

March 16 – Guest Speaker from The Nature Conservancy

March 18 – Discussion and quiz on Section II (A Mountain) of “Encounters With The Arch Druid.”
March 23 – One-on-one critique of first 500 words of Article #3, tentative outline for the rest of the story and interview notes

March 25 – Video: “Blowpipes and Bulldozers: The story of the Penan, a tribe of rainforest nomads in Borneo, as seen by Bruno Manser.”

March 30 – Discussion and quiz on Part II of “Through Green-Colored Glasses”

April 1 – Video: “Borderline Cases – Environmental Matters at the United States-Mexico border.”

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April 6 – Article #3 due.

April 8 – Bring two story ideas to class for group discussion.

April 13 – Discussion and quiz on Section III (A River) “Encounters With the Archdruid.”

April 15 – Guest Speaker: TBA

April 20 – One-on-one critique of first 500 words of Article #3, tentative outline for the rest of the story and interview notes.

April 22 – Article #4 due. Video: “Empty Oceans, Empty Nets”, an examination of the global marine fisheries crisis and the efforts to implement sustainable fishing practices.

FINAL EXAM – TBA