

Applied Environmental Research!
Yale-NUS College, YID 4202, Global Room 2
Monday and Thursday, 1:00 – 2:20

Instructor: Matthew Schneider-Mayerson
Office: Elm 01-01D
Email: Schneider-mayerson@yale-nus.edu.sg
Office hours: Tuesdays from 10:00 -12:00 and 1:00-2:00
To book office hours appointments, go to schneidermayerson.youcanbook.me

In keeping with Singapore's declaration that 2018 is a Year of Climate Action, this iteration of "Applied Environmental Research" will be focused on climate change. We will assume, along with most social scientific scholarship, that we are collectively failing to appropriately respond to the existential threat of climate change not because of lack of scientific knowledge or technological capacity, but because of political, cultural, social, and psychological obstacles. As such, this course will concentrate on a particular avenue for facilitating climate action: values, beliefs, perception, and the role of environmental communication in influencing them.

In small groups (ideally between 3 and 5 students), you will be asked to produce a creative act of environmental communication centered around climate change, utilizing a particular medium, targeted at a specific audience (ideally a Singaporean audience), conveying a specific message or perspective. To do so, you will need to utilize the skills you have already developed, but you will also need to conduct original research appropriate to your chosen medium and audience. This might include important fields that many of you have yet to study, such as environmental communication, environmental psychology, and environmental education. You may also choose to consult or work with scholars and/or practitioners inside and outside the College, or draw on your social and professional networks.

Your product could take many forms, including but not at all limited to: a collection of short stories, a graphic novel, an interactive website, a play, an album, a choose-your-own-adventure novel, a children's book, visual art, a film, memes, a video blog from the future, a mock newspaper, street theatre, etc. You should draw on your existing skills and interests, but also be willing to develop new ones. In short, this course offers an opportunity to collaboratively direct your knowledge and abilities to create persuasive and effective cultural interventions at a historical moment when they are sorely needed.

Given that this is a semester-long project, the product is not intended to be a mere prototype but something that will actually be presented or made available to your target audience. I will be happy to work with you to achieve this goal, during and after the semester. Additionally, you will produce a detailed paper that explains your decision-making process, with journal-quality writing, contextualization, and references. If you so choose, I will be happy to work with you to publish this document.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

If all goes well, you will experience or enjoy:

- 1) The further development of your research skills.
- 2) An enhanced capacity to identify critical tasks in the formulation and completion of environmental research, and to act on these tasks in collaborative settings.
- 3) A deeper understanding of how and why communication and cultural products support (or fail to support) value transformation or policy change.
- 4) Learning about areas that our Environmental Studies curriculum does not focus on, such as environmental communication and environmental psychology.
- 5) Challenging yourself to be part of a team that produces a creative product.
- 6) The process of co-authorship of a high-quality paper.

ASSESSMENT

Five Response Papers (5% each, 20% total): Submitted via Canvas. You will be asked to write five responses to questions that I will pose, and I will count your four highest scores. The focus of the response papers will vary, and may include queries about your ongoing research, your reflections on your research, your participation in the group seminar, and your analysis of the group process. I will not share these responses with the class without checking with you first. You have one "24-hour" late pass to be used over the course of the semester.

Class Participation (10%): You should read any assigned materials before class and be prepared to actively participate in class discussions. Your participation grade is determined primarily on quality of participation, not quantity, though it will be difficult to do well if you rarely participate.

Proposal (10%): This proposal is similar to the proposal you have or will submit for your capstone, though much shorter. It should explain the shape of your creative product, and explain why you think this will (or could) be an effective act of environmental communication. It is due at the end of the fifth week of classes.

Creative Product (40%): By the end of the first week of the final exam period, each group will produce a creative act of environmental communication centered around climate change, utilizing a particular medium, targeted at a specific audience, and conveying a specific message or perspective. It is due at the end of the first week of exams. We will collectively develop a rubric for assessing these products.

Paper (20%): This document will be a journal-style paper that explains your goal(s), research, process, and final product, and situates your product within the scholarship and practice. It is also due at the end of the first week of exams. Since what we are doing in this class is quite innovative – researching environmental psychology and communication *before* designing a specific cultural artifact – it might very well be publishable in academic journal or book. We will discuss the parameters for this document over the course of the semester.

WORKLOAD

Expect to devote approximately 10-12 hours a week, on average, to this course, including time in class. Some weeks will be heavier, while some will be lighter. That said, if you wait until your capstone is finished (for example) to really begin work on this project, you will almost certainly be disappointed in your product – and your grade for this module.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Attendance: You will be asked to attend every class that is scheduled, though you will be given one get-out-of-jail-free pass for an ‘unexcused’ (undocumented) absence.

Late Submissions: You may submit late material at a cost of 10% of the assignment grade per 24 hours of tardiness.

Tardiness: We’ll aim to start class promptly. Please endeavor to be in a seat before then, as coming in late will be distracting given the configuration of the room.

Laptops: You may need access to your laptops for readings and research, but laptops in class can also be distracting. I may ask you to close your laptops from time to time; please don’t be offended when I do.

Academic Integrity

- This would be an unfortunate moment for you to run afoul of our shared understandings of academic integrity. Please see the Yale-NUS “avoiding plagiarism” website at <http://library.yale-nus.edu.sg/plagiarism/> PLEASE review the Cornell University Plagiarism Tutorial on this page. You should also review <https://studentlife.yale-nus.edu.sg/policies/academic-integrity/>
- Instances of lapses in academic integrity are easily found – see, for example, Melania Trump’s plagiarism at the Republican National Convention in 2016. But other, more subtle mistakes, often associated with sloppy paraphrasing, are equally common. Be especially diligent in your notetaking practice (consider using Zotero or another citation management to help you), and consider working closely with the library staff, the Writers’ Centre staff, and ES faculty if you have doubts about your ability to write in your own voice.

Schedule

Climate Psychology and Communication 101

January 18

- Per Espen Stoknes, *What We Think About When We Try Not to Think About Global Warming: Toward a New Psychology of Climate Action*, Part 1: Thinking (xiiv – 84)

January 22

- Stoknes, Part 2: Doing (87-162)

Climate Arts

January 25

- Adeline Johns-Putra, "Climate Change in Literature and Literary Studies: From Cli-fi, Climate Change Theater and Ecopoetry to Ecocriticism and Climate Change Criticism" (12)
- Joanna Nurmis, "Visual Climate Change Art 2005-2015: Discourse and Practice" (12)
- Harriet Hawkins and Anja Kanngieser, "Artful Climate Change Communication: Overcoming Abstractions, Insensibilities, and Distances" (10)

January 29

- Paolo Bacigalupi, "The Tamarisk Hunter" (13)
- Helen Simpson, "In-Flight Entertainment" (15)
- Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Simpson, "The Collapse of Western Civilization: A View from the Future" (14)
- Matthew Schneider-Mayerson, "The Influence of Climate Fiction: An Empirical Survey of Readers" (17)

Begin Proposal Research

February 1

- No scheduled reading. Each group outlines its plan to the class.

For the rest of the semester, we will select our readings collectively, and/or each group will pursue separate research tracks.