Climate Change in Media
UC Berkeley Spring 2024

Instructor on Record:
Kurt Spreyer

Primary Student Facilitators:
Erin Shaotran, Joanna Bai, Myroslava Fisun

Course Meetings:
Mondays from 5 - 6:30 pm in Etcheverry 3106

Office Hours:
By appointment. Email all three student facilitators to make an appointment.

Contact Information:
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Course Summary:
“This is not just about the environment, it’s about the community, it’s about jobs, it’s about justice.” ~ Eddie Bautista, September 21, 2014

This course focuses on how climate change is framed to the public. As the threat of climate change increases daily, we must analyze how climate change is framed, because the media can convince people of almost anything. This class is going to analyze how climate change is portrayed through various forms of media, including writing, documentaries, news outlets, and our daily surroundings. We will particularly be focusing on the concept of environmental justice when examining all these sources. In order to properly address climate change, we must build a framework that not only protects our planet but also ensures that the burdens and benefits of a sustainable future are shared equitably among all communities, leaving no one behind.

The course is open to students from all disciplines, backgrounds, and lived experiences to contribute to a diverse, engaging, and enriching classroom environment. The guiding motivation behind this course is to create a collaborative space for undergraduate students from diverse academic backgrounds to discuss climate change, environmental frameworks, and various environmental justice issues.
**Student Learning Objectives:**
By taking this course, completing the assigned readings, and participating in weekly classes, you will:

1. Learn to critically analyze various forms of environmental media.
2. Turn collaborative discussion, debate, and reflection on abstract concepts into concrete pathways for action and change.
3. Be a part of a diverse community of passionate, opinionated, and highly motivated students!

**Land Acknowledgement:**
[Together with] Native American Student Development, We recognize that UC Berkeley sits on the territory of xučyun (Huichin), the ancestral and unceded land of the Chochenyo-speaking Ohlone people, the successors of the sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County. This land was and continues to be of great importance to the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and other familial descendants of the Verona Band.

We recognize that every member of the Berkeley community has, and continues to benefit from, the use and occupation of this land, since the institution’s founding in 1868. Consistent with our values of community, inclusion, and diversity, we have a responsibility to acknowledge and make visible the university’s relationship to Native peoples. As members of the Berkeley community, it is vitally important that we not only recognize the history of the land on which we stand, but also, we recognize that the Muwekma Ohlone people are alive and flourishing members of the Berkeley and broader Bay Area communities today.

- This acknowledgement was co-created with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and Native American Student Development, and is a living document.

**Course Structure:**
This course will be taught in a lecture and participatory method of instruction and will meet once per week. A typical class will consist of a presentation by the course instructors on the week’s readings, topics, background information, and key terms. The presentation will then be followed by a discussion between the students, facilitated by the course instructors. We will then have a short class activity if time permits.

There are weekly reading discussion post assignments that are to be completed by their assigned date prior to the start of class. In addition, there is an interview assignment due at the start of the fourth unit and a required Final Project due the last week of class.
Grading Policy:
This course is a Pass/No Pass course. Students must receive a passing grade for credit. Students wishing to receive a passing grade must complete all assignments, have no more than two unexcused absences, and finish with a grade no lower than a C- (70%). Grades will be determined as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance &amp; Participation</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview Assignment</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weekly Discussion Posts</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pecha Kucha Presentation</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
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Readings:
Students will be required to read the required readings or videos listed on the syllabus. Students are expected to come to class having already read the assigned texts.

Weekly Discussion Posts:
Each week, students will post one discussion post [100 - 150 words] via google forms about their thoughts and takeaways from the weekly readings. These posts must be turned in at least one hour before class starts. Any discussion posts submitted less than one hour before class, during class, or after class will be marked late accordingly.

5 Minute Presentations:
During the last week of unit 2 (March 11), we will have group presentations in Pecha Kucha style. Each group will choose an environmental topic that is interesting to them and create a slideshow with pictures [no text]. The group must present while changing slides every 20 seconds. The presentations must not last more than 5 minutes.
Interview Assignment:
There will be one interview assignment that will be due at the beginning of the fourth unit (April 15). The purpose of this assignment is to understand certain people’s beliefs about climate change and to understand how they came upon those beliefs. Students will ask someone about their thoughts on climate change and write a paragraph [200 - 300 words] about what they gathered regarding that person’s beliefs/values (including their age and where they’re from!). Recording the interview is not required and the length of the interview is up to the student’s discretion. However, this paragraph must offer meaningful commentary that reflects that the student learned about the interviewee’s opinions.

Final Project:
The Final Project is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their creativity and display the types of media we discussed in class by creating a project on any issue related to climate change or the environment that is meaningful to them. Students can choose to write an environmental short story or create a documentary-style video. They may also choose to show/read their work during the last class period (optional).

- **Environmental short stories** must be five to ten pages long. Students may choose to write their short stories in any style of writing discussed in class. [Speculative Eco-Fiction, Eco-Nonfiction, Eco Poetry, Eco Journalism]. If the student decides to use any sources, these sources must be cited in a bibliography page. This bibliography page will not be counted in the total page count. Stories must be submitted before the last class, preferably in pdf format.

- **Environmental short documentaries** may range from five to ten minutes long. Students may include pictures or videos from the web only if they are properly cited in a bibliography page that is submitted along with the video. The video must be submitted via a link that will lead directly to the easily accessible video. Documentaries must be submitted before the last class.

Attendance Policy:
Students are expected to attend all classes. However, we understand that students are often balancing many additional responsibilities, in addition to their coursework. Therefore, students are allowed up to three unexcused absences without penalty. If students anticipate being absent from a class, please inform the three instructors as soon as possible via email, no later than three days before the start of the class you anticipate missing. If a student is missing class, they are still required to submit their weekly discussion posts. Students are allowed a maximum of three absences (unexcused and excused combined). Four or more absences will result in a NP.
**Class Participation:**
Attendance with a clear effort in-class participation is required to receive a passing grade in the course. It is expected that students will share meaningful comments in class at least ten times by the end of the semester.

**Late Assignments and Extension Policy:**
Unless clearly discussed with all of the course instructors, any assignment submitted late will result in a 10% reduction in the assignment grade. An additional 10% will be deducted every additional two days the assignment remains unsubmitted.

Extensions can be granted depending on the circumstances. While we understand that student life can be unpredictable, please reach out to all of the course instructors no later than five days prior to an assignment's due date. (Extension requests prompted by medical and family emergencies, or other serious situations, will be properly accommodated. The course instructors will work with such students to accommodate their needs as best as possible.)

**Course Materials:**
PDFs of the assigned readings will be provided and made accessible on the course BCourses site. Readings may be provided in alternative formats for purposes of accessibility, etc. Please reach out to the course instructors if you wish to be provided readings in an alternative format.

Course materials, including presentation slides, handouts, etc., will be uploaded to BCourses following the corresponding class.
Course Schedule:
*Please note that this course schedule is subject to change. Any changes and updates will be communicated and reflected in a new syllabus*

Unit 1: Climate Change in Writing
This unit is focused on how climate change is framed in writing. We are going to examine several environmental works of different writing styles. The biggest question we are going to be analyzing is: What key ideas can readers take away from certain environmental texts and are these ideas what they should be understanding from these texts?

- **Topic 0 (Week 1~ January 29): Introduction**
  - Reading: None
  - This week, we are going to get to know each other and learn some key terms that will be relevant throughout the semester. There will be no discussion post due before the first class of the semester.

- **Topic 1 (Week 2~ February 5): Speculative Eco-Fiction**
  - Reading: Part 1 of Carson's *Silent Spring* (A Fable for Tomorrow)
  - This week, we are going to be learning about Speculative Eco-Fiction. We will learn about the concept of Speculative Eco-Fiction, as well as why it is a useful tool to convince people about the effects of climate change. Speculative Eco-Fiction is often interpreted to be the most effective way to gain people's attention toward climate change. Is this true?

- **Topic 2 (Week 3~ February 12): Eco Nonfiction**
  - Reading: IPCC 2023 Section 2 only
  - This week, we are going to be learning about Eco Nonfiction and the IPCC. We will discuss the effectiveness of Eco Nonfiction in academic and research settings. Eco-nonfiction often sets out all the hard facts. Do people truly take these facts seriously? Why is the IPCC important?

- **Topic 3 (Week 4~ February 19): Eco Poetry**
  - Reading: Mother Earth: Her Whales - Snyder
  - This week, we are going to be analyzing how climate change is portrayed in poetry, particularly in Snyder’s “Mother Earth: Her Whales.” While poetry may not be commonly read, they are a wonderful form of activism. We are going to examine how poets have cried for climate activism with their works.
Unit 2: Climate Change in Video / Film
This unit is focused on how climate change is framed in videos, documentaries, and news broadcasts. Examining several types of visual content and seeing how climate change is portrayed in each, we will discuss the ways in which environmental issues are viewed in visual content. The biggest question we are going to be analyzing is: What are the most effective ways in which filmmakers portray climate change in order to garner a reaction?

- **Topic 1 (Week 5~ February 26): Documentaries**
  - Reading: Why it Matters how we Frame the Environment
  - This week, we will be learning about how climate change is portrayed in documentaries. We will spend the class watching the documentary “Al Gore’s Inconvenient Truth.”

- **Topic 2 (Week 6~ March 4): News Broadcastings**
  - Reading: (video) Climate change scorching Greece, bringing extreme heat and devastating floods
  - This week, we will be learning about how climate change is discussed in news broadcasts. We will discuss which types of environmental stories are talked about in the news and which are omitted and consider the role the news has as climate change progresses. As most people use the news to acquire information, we will discuss how disinformation, bias, and neutrality in news affect one’s opinions. Is the news unbiased?

- **Topic 3 (Week 7~ March 11): Music videos**
  - Reading (video): Choose one video, listen to it, and read the lyrics.
  - The Seed by Aurora
  - Earth by Lil Dicky
  - All the Good Girls Go to Hell by Billie Elish
  - Feels Like Summer by Childish Gambino
  - This week, we will be learning about how climate change is portrayed in various songs. In class, we will listen to a small selection of environmental songs and discuss their effectiveness in how they have influenced people’s opinions about climate change. Does popular media accurately reflect how most people view climate change?
  - 5 Minute Presentation Project: On any topic relating to climate change and including how it is framed in media
Unit 3: Climate Change in Speech

This unit is focused on how climate change is framed in speeches. We are going to examine a few environmental speeches, what was argued in the speeches, and how others have argued against those points. We will also examine what happened following these speeches to promote or refuse climate action, and whether or not speeches are truly effective to make change. The biggest questions we are going to be analyzing are: What are the most effective ways in which climate speeches encourage action? Does the government truly take enough action to address climate concerns?

- **Topic 1 (Week 8~ March 18): Intro to COP & Its Evolution**
  - *Reading:* (two videos) [What does COP Stand For?](#) [Will COP27 Address Africa’s Climate Challenges?](#)
  - This week, we will learn about the Conference of the Parties and how it has changed. Why is COP important? We are furthermore going to be discussing what COP excludes during these meetings, which is a key concept in the second video. COP27 was met with a historic protest for more climate equity, especially for certain marginalized groups. Is COP capable of making a true difference in terms of climate policy?

- **Topic 2 (Week 9~ April 1): Fossil Fuels**
  - *Reading:* For: [Fossil Fuels are Essential](#) Against: [Phase Out the Fossil Fuel Industry](#)
  - This week, we will be examining the arguments surrounding fossil fuels, specifically in terms of the oil industry. We will discuss the two videos arguing for and against fossil fuel use to see the dominant opinions and arguments surrounding this issue. How have fossil fuels affected the world thus far? Why are we still reliant on fossil fuels and how can we eliminate our dependence on it? We will also be talking about several recent fossil fuel-related bills and evaluating their effectiveness and shortcomings.

- **Topic 3 (Week 10~ April 8): Greenwashing/Green Marketing**
  - *Reading:* (video) [Greenwashing: A Fiji Water Story](#)
  - This week, we will be learning about the concept of greenwashing or green marketing, with a particular emphasis on the Fiji Water Company and its marketing. What is the true harm of greenwashing and why should we prevent this from happening? Why are companies choosing to greenwash? Is it truly the fault of individuals or large corporations for the state of the environment?
Unit 4: Climate Change in Your Surroundings

This unit is focused on how climate change is framed in our local surroundings (UC Berkeley and California). We are going to examine UC Berkeley and the entire UC system’s sustainability actions. The biggest question we are going to be analyzing is: Is UC Berkeley truly sustainable and, if so, has it always been this way?

- **Topic 1 (Week 11~ April 15): UC Berkeley and Climate Change**
  - *Reading: UC-Wide Climate Goals*
  - This week, we are going to be looking at UC Berkeley’s long history regarding climate action. We are going to look critically at what UC Berkeley has done right and wrong regarding sustainability and how UC Berkeley can move forward sustainably. We are also going to compare UC Berkeley’s sustainability initiatives to other college’s initiatives, such as the other UCs and NYU. What more can UC Berkeley do to be more sustainable, and how can students hold the university accountable?
  - *Interview Assignment Due:* The purpose of this assignment is to understand certain people’s beliefs about climate change and to understand how they came upon those beliefs. Students will ask someone their thoughts on climate change and write a paragraph [200 - 300 words] about what they gathered regarding that person’s beliefs/values (including their age and where they’re from!). Recording the interview is not required and the length of the interview is up to the student's discretion. However, this paragraph must offer meaningful commentary that truly reflects that the student learned about the interviewee’s opinions at a deep level. This assignment is due before class starts.

- **Topic 2 (Week 12~ April 22): California and Climate Change**
  - *Reading: What Climate Change Means for California*
  - This week, we are going to be looking at California’s long history regarding climate action. We are going to look critically at what California has done right and wrong regarding sustainability and how it can move forward sustainably. We are also going to compare California’s sustainability initiatives to the initiatives of other states. What can California do to improve its sustainability efforts?
  - Final Assignments Due before class starts
  - Fun final party and share final projects (if wanted)!
Resources and Accommodations:
Academic Accommodations: The purpose of academic accommodations is to ensure that all students have a fair chance at academic success. Disability, or hardships such as basic needs insecurity, uncertain documentation and immigration status, medical and mental health concerns, pregnancy and parenting, significant familial distress, and experiencing sexual violence or harassment, can affect a student’s ability to satisfy particular course requirements. Students have the right to reasonable academic accommodations, without having to disclose personal information to instructors. For more information about accommodations, scheduling conflicts related to religious creed or extracurricular activities, please see the Academic Accommodations hub website: https://evcp.berkeley.edu/programs-resources/academic-accommodations-hub#accommodations

Sexual Violence and Harassment: Sexual violence and sexual harassment have no place in a learning environment. Therefore, in alignment with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, it is the policy of the University of California (Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Policy) to prohibit sexual harassment, sexual assault, domestic/dating violence, and stalking. The UC Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment Policy requires that the University immediately implement interim remedies and permanent support measures, when necessary, for victims/survivors. If you or someone you know experiences sexual violence or harassment, there are options, rights, and resources, including assistance with academics, reporting, and medical care. Visit survivorsupport.berkeley.edu or call the 24/7 Care Line at 510-643-2005. The PATH to Care Center is also a very good source of confidential support if you are a survivor or victim of sexual harassment or violence. You can set up an appointment with the advocate by calling 510-642-1988.

Academic Integrity Policy:
“As a member of the UC Berkeley community, I act with honesty, integrity, and respect for others.”
Any form of academic dishonesty such as plagiarism will not be tolerated in this course and will result in a NP.

Anonymous Feedback:
We welcome any feedback on course readings, lectures, or the general classroom environment. You can offer your feedback here: https://tinyurl.com/MediaDeCal