

**VIRGINIA TECH NORTHERN VIRGINIA CENTER  
COLLEGE OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

*Course Syllabus*

**NATURAL RESOURCES COMMUNICATION APPLICATIONS  
NR 5854 (CRN 95835)  
Fall Semester 2009**

**Semester information:** Fall Semester, 2009, class starts August 24, 2009

**Course Number/Index:** NR 5854; CRN 95835

**Course Credits:** 3 Semester Credits

**Course Instructor:** Dr. Jennifer Plyler, (Ph.D. Forestry, Virginia Tech, 1997)  
Visiting Assistant Professor, College of Natural Resources, Northern  
Virginia Center, Virginia Tech

**Telephone:** (240) 893-5940, call before 8 PM

**E-Mail:** pls98@verizon.net

**Appointments:** I am available for phone appointments. Leave a phone message or send me an e-mail.

**Course Description:** The instructor will present an in-depth analysis of current communication strategies and theories used to address natural resource issues, how to evaluate these strategies, and the elements necessary for a successful communication program. Students will apply communication theories and models to a variety of natural resource issues.

**Course Prerequisites:** Baccalaureate degree and professional experience.

**Course Objectives:** Having successfully completed, the student will:

- Explain how public values, behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions effect communications efforts
- Apply communication theories to natural resource issues as a way to effectively address and better prepare for these issues
- Describe interpersonal and organizational messages more effectively
- Recognize when a communication program is necessary and the strategies that best fit the issue and targeted audiences
- Critically evaluate and show how audience and source traits, message development, and the impact of the various media available interact to strengthen a communication program
- Write a communication program including with goals, objectives, key messages, key audiences, strategies, tactics, and evaluation measures

**Grades:** I use the following grading scale when computing final grades:

A+ <sup>1</sup> 97-100	B+ 87-89	C+ 77-79	Below 70-Failing
A 94-96	B 84-86	C 74-76	
A- 90-93	B- 80-83	C- 70-73	

### **Curricular Materials**

Readings are drawn from the required textbooks as well as from a compilation of articles from scientific and professional journals, books, newspapers, and other source materials. A video is also included. Weekly reading/viewing assignments are posted in **Modules** on the course web site. Some curricular material can be found in the required/supplemental textbooks listed below; the rest can be accessed as PDFs or URL links in **Modules**.

**Readings:** The required book for this course is available on-line at amazon.com or some other on-line bookstore. The journal articles and other readings are posted as pdf files, word files, or web links on Scholar.

#### ***Required Readings:***

Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. 2006. *Effective Public Relations*. 9<sup>th</sup> Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, INC. p. 588.

or

Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. 2005. *Effective Public Relations*. 8<sup>th</sup> Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, INC. p. 486.  
(*The syllabus reflects page numbers for both the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> editions*)

The instructor will post on Scholar, as pdf files, a compilation of articles from scientific and professional journals, excerpts from books and newspaper clippings, and other sources.

#### ***Supplemental Textbook Readings:***

Fazio, J.R. and Gilbert, D.L. 2000. *Public Relations and Communications for Natural Resource Managers*. 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company. p. 420.

Jacobson, Susan K. 1999. *Communication Skills for Conservation Professionals*. Washington, DC: Island Press. p. 315.

### **Course Syllabus**

Visit **Syllabus** on the course web site for an online presentation of the information contained in this document. The course syllabus is a work in progress and its content may be altered occasionally during the semester. The instructor will inform students of any changes via email and postings in **Announcements** on the course web site. [Warning: information in this version of the course syllabus may not be updated as reliably as that posted on **Syllabus**. When referring to this document, be sure to check the date at the top right corner of each page to make sure you

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<sup>1</sup> While Virginia Tech does not recognize an A+ in its formal grading scale, the instructor does.

have the latest iteration. When in doubt, refer to *Syllabus* on the course web site for the most current and accurate course information.]

### **Citations**

Advice on citations: If you have a quote, reference it. When you define a theory or concept, reference it. Include FULL citations at the end. No foot or end notes. No page numbers in the text. Only author last name and year. If there is anything in your paper that is not your original thought, reference it. If you use the required textbooks, reference them. When you use terminology, define it and then reference your source. As a writer, assume your audience is not knowledgeable.

For guidelines on citation formats, go to

[http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools\\_citationguide.html](http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html)

You are welcome to use any style guidelines and I just want the references to be consistent and standardized.

### **Grades**

***Participation and online discussions (25 percent of semester grade):*** Students are expected to visit *Forums* on the course web site regularly to answer the weekly study questions and contribute to the online discussions. Students are encouraged to play an active role in learning and teaching others by sharing their professional work experiences as appropriate. The online class replaces attending a traditional “face-to-face” class. For a course offered in the Natural Resources Graduate Program, students spend approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes per week seated in a traditional classroom. You are expected to spend roughly the same amount of time interacting online in *Forums*. This time does not include that spent preparing for class, writing papers, or completing the readings.

Here is how I grade your participation on forum:

- 1) Whether you post answers to the study questions.
- 2) Quality of posts
- 3) Do you respond to others' posts?
- 4) Do you respond to my questions?

My personal approach to forum is that I spend about 80 percent of my time on the current week (this is a Monday to Sunday) and if I have time, I'll look back to the previous week. For the most part, the current week is my primary focus.

***Conference Calls:*** Three conference calls are scheduled to answer questions and get to know each other a little better. I expect your full participation in these calls - they count toward your participation grade. If you have a scheduling conflict, you must inform me prior to the call. Anyone absent from part or all of a call is responsible for getting the information discussed from fellow students.

All conference calls convene promptly at 6:00 pm (EST) and usually last 30-60 minutes. The call in number is **1-800-704-9804**; passcode **185622**. Conference calls will take place:

**Tuesday, September 8, 6 pm (EST)**

**Tuesday, October 6, 6 pm (EST)**

**Tuesday, November 3, 6 pm (EST)**

**\*\*\*ALL PAPERS ARE DUE BY 5 PM IN DROP BOX ON SCHOLAR UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED OR AN ALTERNATE TIME AND DATE ARE PREARRANGED WITH THE INSTRUCTOR\*\*\***

*Communication Analysis Papers (20 percent: Pass/Fail)* Students will write two, two-page (no more than two pages and the references can be on the third page ) double-spaced thoughtful analysis of a natural resource issue applying a (one) communication concept you have learned in class. Students will be required to retrieve articles and information from the internet and/or print/electronic media for topics for the Communication Analysis Papers. The articles may be no more than five pages in length. **PROPER CITATIONS ARE REQUIRED!!\*\***

***The papers and articles are due in drop box on Scholar September 14 and October 5***

These papers **are not** merely a summary of an article. You must identify a (one) communication concept you learned as a result of this class and apply it to your selected article. You cannot use articles we discussed in class and your analysis paper cannot be a topic for your mid-term or final paper or vice versa.

Additionally, the communication analysis papers are an iterative process. You will likely do rewrites until I am satisfied that you have grasped the application of the concept you selected. You should receive full credit for all the analysis papers unless you choose not to complete a rewrite as requested.

*I will not grade papers that do not have references in the text and a list of citations at the end of the paper.*

*Extra Credit:* Submit a third analysis paper (same format and requirements as described above) any time prior to **October 26 (No extensions are granted for the extra credit paper under any circumstances--plan ahead)** for the opportunity to receive two additional points on your cumulative semester grade.

*Mid-term paper (25 percent)* Students will write a 5 to 7 page (double spaced) paper applying a communication theory to a current natural resource issue. The mid-term paper topic could be a start to the final (longer) paper. **PROPER CITATIONS ARE REQUIRED!!\*\*** Here is the schedule for mid-term papers:

*I will not grade papers that do not have references in the text and a list of citations at the end of the paper.*

***Outline: October 9 NOTE THAT THIS IS A FRIDAY NOT A MONDAY***

***Feedback for outline: October 12***

***<sup>2</sup>First draft of mid-term: October 19***

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<sup>2</sup> I will provide feedback on a first draft (optional) of your fire policy course paper should you chose to submit one. What this means is that if you submit your first draft on or before 10/19/09, I will get back to you with comments and a preliminary grade. You can then either: 1) incorporate my feedback and resubmit the paper for a final grade, or 2) elect to accept the grade assigned, eliminating the need to submit a final draft. If you do not submit a first draft, the grade you receive on your final draft is *final*. I give feedback along with a grade for all final drafts, but students will not be allowed to rewrite and resubmit final drafts in

***Feedback for first draft of mid-term: October 25***

***Final mid-term: November 2***

*Final paper (30 percent)* Each student will develop a communication campaign addressing a current natural resource issue. You will define the issue, justify why a communication program would be beneficial to address the issue, define the goals of the program, explain the theoretical underpinnings, how they would implement such a program, define the program audience, identify channels, strategies, and key messages for reaching the audience and why these channels and messages were selected, and explain how they would evaluate the campaign. The final paper should be no longer than 10 double spaced pages, 12 pt font. **PROPER CITATIONS ARE REQUIRED!!\*\*** Here is the schedule for final papers:

*I will not grade papers that do not have references in the text and a list of citations at the end of the paper.*

***No outline for final since the template is the outline***

***<sup>3</sup>First draft of final: November 16***

***Feedback for first draft of final: November 23***

***Final draft due: December 7***

## **Class Schedule**

### **Date, Lesson Topic, and Required and Supplemental Readings**

**August 24: Introduction to communication theories to understand the importance of key components of communication including receiver and audience values, attitudes, perceptions, and behavior**

*Required Reading:*

9<sup>th</sup> ed. Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. pp. 195-220. Chapter 8. Communication and Public Opinion.

8<sup>th</sup> ed. Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. pp. 251-281. Chapter 8. Communication and Public Opinion.

Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. 1985. *Effective Public Relations*. 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall, INC. p. 260-272.

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hopes of earning a better grade. [Note: outlines are required for the final regardless of whether you submit a first draft or not.]

<sup>3</sup> I will provide feedback on a first draft (optional) of your fire policy course paper should you chose to submit one. What this means is that if you submit your first draft on or before 11/23/09, I will get back to you with comments and a preliminary grade. You can then either: 1) incorporate my feedback and resubmit the paper for a final grade, or 2) elect to accept the grade assigned, eliminating the need to submit a final draft. If you do not submit a first draft, the grade you receive on your final draft is *final*. I give feedback along with a grade for all final drafts, but students will not be allowed to rewrite and resubmit final drafts in hopes of earning a better grade.

**August 31: Introduction to communications, organizational and interpersonal communication theories (i.e., Source-Channel-Receiver-Effectiveness-Exposure-Message model, two-step flow theory, and opinion leaders)**

*Required Readings:*

9<sup>th</sup> ed. Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. pp. 1-28. Chapter 1. Introduction to Contemporary Public Relations.

9<sup>th</sup> ed. Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. pp. 174-193. Chapter 7, Theoretical Underpinnings

8<sup>th</sup> ed. Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. pp. 1-28. Chapter 1. Introduction to Contemporary Public Relations.

8<sup>th</sup> ed. Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. pp. 219-247. Chapter 7, Theoretical Underpinnings: Adjustment and Adaptation.

**Week of September 7: Organizational and interpersonal communication theories: Diffusion of Innovation**

**Conference Call Sept 8 at 6 pm**

*Required Readings:*

Rogers, Everett M. 1995. *Diffusion of Innovation*. New York: The Free Press. pp. 284-299 and pp.1-37.

**September 14: Coorientation theory**

**#1 Communication Analysis Paper due Sept 14**

*Required Readings:*

Broom, G.M. and Dozier, D. M. 1990. *Using Research in Public Relations*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall. pp. 32-39.

Champion Paper Company case study applying coorientation and two step flow theory: for Publication Analysis of a pulp and paper company's communication campaign

*Supplemental Readings:*

Wackman, Daniel B. Interpersonal Communication and Coorientation. *American Behavioral Scientist*. pp. 537-550.

**September 21: (continue with theories): Situational Theory**

*Required Readings:*

Grunig, James. 1983. Communication behaviors and attitudes of environmental publics: two studies. *Journalism Monographs*. No. 81: pp. 9-16.

Grunig, James. 1994. A situational theory of publics: a conceptual history, recent challenges, and new research. *A paper presented to the International Public Relations Research Symposium*. Bled, Slovenia. pp. 1-10.

**September 28: Summary of the theories. Thirty-mile Fire case study applying all theories.**

*Required Readings:*

Thirty Mile Fire case study using situational theory: communication plan (handout) and executive summary. See [http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/safety/investigations/30mile/30mile\\_exesum.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/safety/investigations/30mile/30mile_exesum.pdf)

**October 5: Developing a communication campaign—knowing when to implement one.**

**#2 Communication Analysis Paper due October 5**  
**Conference Call Oct 6 at 6 pm**  
**Outline for mid-term paper due Friday, October 9**

*Required Readings:*

9<sup>th</sup> ed Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. pp. 281-307. Chapter 11. Defining Public Relations Problems.

8<sup>th</sup> ed. Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. pp. 339-364. Chapter 10. Defining Public Relations Problems.

Grunig, J.E.; Dozier, M; Ehling, W: and et.al. 1992. Strategic Management. In *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*. J. E. Grunig (ed). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc. pp. 119-146.

*Supplemental Reading:*

Jacobson, Susan K. pp.29-82

**October 12: Developing a communication campaign—knowing when to implement one.**

**Mid-term Evaluation Due**

*Required Readings:*

9<sup>th</sup> ed. Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. pp. 308-337. Chapter 12. Planning and Programming

8<sup>th</sup> ed. Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. pp. 369-401. Chapter 11. Planning and Programming

*Supplemental Reading:*

Jacobson, Susan K. pp.83-101

**October 19: Evaluating communication campaign**

**First draft of mid-term due October 19**

9<sup>th</sup> ed. Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. pp. 361-385. Chapter 14. Evaluating the Program.

8<sup>th</sup> ed. Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. pp. 429-456. Chapter 13. Evaluating the Program.

*Supplemental Reading:*

Dozier, D. M. and Ehling, W. P. 1992. Evaluation of public relations programs: what the literature tells us about their effects. In *Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management*. J. E. Grunig (ed). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Assoc. pp. 159-184.

**October 25: Issue Management**

**Extra Credit analysis paper due October 25**

*Required Readings:*

Jones, B. L. and Chase, H. W. 1979. Managing Public Policy Issues. *Public Relations Review*. pp. 3-23.

Crable, R. E. and Vibbert, S. L. 1985. Managing Issues and Influencing Public Policy. *Public Relations Review*. pp. 3-15.

Discuss the Healthy Forests Initiative ([www.healthyforests.gov](http://www.healthyforests.gov))

**November 2: Communications strategies: mass media, value advocacy, rhetoric, grassroots efforts, and partnerships**

**Final draft of mid-term due November 2**

**Conference Call Nov 3 at 6 pm**

*Required Readings:*

Dowling, J. and Pfeffer, J. 19???. Organizational Legitimacy: Social Values and Organizational Behavior. *Pacific Sociological Review*. pp. 122-136.

Lange, J. 1993. The logic of competing information campaigns: conflict over old growth and the spotted owl. *Communication Monographs*. 9(60): 239-257.

Bostdorff, Denise M. and Vibbert, Steven L. 1994. "Values advocacy: enhancing organizational images, deflecting public criticism, and grounding future arguments. *Public Relations Review*. Summer. 141-158.

Case study: Organizational legitimacy- The Nature Conservancy

*Supplemental Reading:*

Jacobson, Susan K. pp. 137-183.

9<sup>th</sup> ed. Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. pp. 251-280. Chapter 10. External Media and Media Relations.

8<sup>th</sup> ed. Cutlip, S.M. Center, A.H., and Broom, G. M. pp. 283-337. Chapter 9. External Media and Media Relations.

**November 9: (continued) Case study: Grassroots efforts and communication strategic plan based on case study.**

*Required Readings:*

Wiebner, Michael. 1995. The Battle of Bull Run: how insurgent grassroots lobbying defeated Disney's proposed Virginia theme park. *Campaigns and Elections*. December/January. 44-49.

**November 16: Discuss questions about final paper and communication plan template**

**First draft of final paper due November 16**

*Required Readings:*

Communication plan template (find under handouts on BB)

**November 23: NO CLASSES. University closed for Thanksgiving Break**

**November 30: Class end. Final questions and wrap up**

**Final Evaluation Due**

*Required Readings:*

None

**December 7:**

**Final paper due December 7**

## **GRADUATE HONOR CODE**

The tenets of the Virginia Tech Graduate Honor Code will be strictly enforced in this course, and all assignments shall be subject to the stipulations of the Graduate Honor Code as outlined in the 2001-2003 Graduate Catalog. For more information on the Graduate Honor Code, please refer to the GHS Constitution, located online at <http://fbox.vt.edu/studentinfo/gradhonor/>. Please contact the instructor immediately if you have questions.

## **SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS**

Students with special needs or circumstances are encouraged to meet with the instructor after the first class or ASAP. Please do not wait till later in the semester. In all cases, please feel free to contact the instructor should you have any questions.

## COURSE EVALUATIONS

In the spirit of continuous improvement, the instructor seeks ways to improve this course and values your input. **To that end, you will be asked to complete a mid-term and final instructor evaluation during the weeks of October 12 and November 30,** respectively in addition to the formal evaluation provided by the college. At any point during the course, your suggestions and comments are most welcome.

**NOTE:** The course syllabus is a work in progress. Changes and updates will be made to accommodate the needs and interests of the students. Modifications may also be made if natural resource communications issues surface during the semester that may provide a unique learning experience for students.

## POLICY ON PLAGIARISM AND ACADEMIC HONESTY

The Virginia Tech Honor System is in effect for this course. Please take the time to read this document and make sure that you understand your responsibilities as a student. The Graduate Honor System can be accessed online at <http://filebox.vt.edu/studentinfo/gradhonor/>. The Undergraduate Honor System can be accessed online at <http://www.honorsystem.vt.edu/>. The following statement, taken from the Graduate Honor System, describes the types of violations covered under the Honor System:

All forms of academic work performed by any graduate student enrolled on a part-time or full-time basis under any of the admission categories shall be subject to the stipulations of the Graduate Honor Code. Such work includes, but is not limited to, course work, labwork, thesis or dissertation work, research, teaching, and extension. Violations of the Graduate Honor Code are categorized as follows: *Cheating, Plagiarism, Falsification, and Academic Sabotage* . . . . Cheating is defined as the giving or receiving of any unauthorized aid, assistance, or unfair advantage in any form of academic work . . . . Plagiarism is a specific form of cheating, and is defined as the copying of the language, structure, idea, and/or thoughts of another and claiming or attempting to imply that it is one's own original work . . . . Students who falsify, orally, in writing, or via electronic media, any circumstance relevant to their academic work shall be guilty of a violation of this Code . . . . Academic sabotage is purposeful vandalism directed against any academic endeavor or equipment (from the Virginia Tech Graduate Honor System, accessible online at: <http://filebox.vt.edu/studentinfo/gradhonor/>).

Be advised that plagiarism or other forms of violations of the Virginia Tech Honor System will not be tolerated.