

# Ecologue

*For members of NCA EC division and friends*

A Quarterly Newsletter

Summer 2007

## Back to School

*For an innovative teaching assignment by Sue Senecah see page 4.*

*If you have any new teaching ideas or techniques to share with others, please send for the next issue to Trudy Milburn CSUCI*

[trudy.milburn@csuci.edu](mailto:trudy.milburn@csuci.edu)

## Appointment News...

*If you've been appointed to a new position, please email and let us know.*

*For recent appointments see page 3*



## In the News...

*Chronicle of Higher Education recently published an article about a student project in an Environmental Communication course. Students created a guide to sustainable living for Muhlenberg College.*

*More information can be found in the full article at:*

<http://chronicle.com/temp/reprint.php?id=gakq0k574zgcc86b3w8y4l91sbrnkkk1>



## COCE

*Tracylee Clarke reviews the recent conference - page 3*

## Interdisciplinary Feature

*Articles Wanted...Please send updates on your interdisciplinary projects -- cross-disciplines, cross-universities, or cross-country collaborations... Let us know about your work.*

**NCA in Chicago**  
November 15 – 18  
Chicago, IL  
Hilton Chicago & Towers

**Program Now Online**  
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## Tarla Rai Peterson

*Boone and Crockett Chair of Wildlife & Conservation Policy, Texas A&M University*

**What question do you ask when you begin an envirocomm study?** How can a communication-centered inquiry into \_\_\_ enhance our ability to live more peaceably with our fellow humans, as well as other creatures?

### What/who inspired you to research in this area?

There were two main influences: My childhood as a farm kid and Chris Oravec's first piece on John Muir. From my first memories I was aware of strong bonds between humans and other animals, and I knew there was conflict in that relationship. We named all our animals, and cared for them as individuals. We didn't stop at basic food and shelter. We hugged and petted them and scratched their backs. At the same time, we sometimes ate them. If the electricity went out in a storm, we milked our

cows by hand (even if we were going to miss half the school day), because they would suffer excruciating pain otherwise. We harvested and ate wild greens, but we also grew a garden and pulled out any "weeds" that dared to grow among our vegetables. When we harvested our fields, we ran over mice nests and once destroyed an owl nest. Dad brought the juvenile owl to the house, and he lived on the back porch until he could fly away. My sisters and I tried to save the tiny baby mice, but they always died. When I was in junior high school, my dad informed us that the town council had decided to cut down all the old trees in the local park because leaf removal was too expensive. My sisters and I made posters protesting the carnage. Then Mom drove us into town, where we trudged from one shop to another, begging them to let us put up our posters. They cut the trees down anyway. For big excitement, Dad took us on trail rides in the Tetons. I had the best mountain horse in the world. She was legendary among riders in our community. She loved the mountains, was sure footed as a mule, and never got tired. Because she was not frightened by swift water, bears, grouse, or anything else, I often got to lead. Part of my pleasure came from the sense that Doney Gal and I were co-leading an expedition of discovery.

Chris Oravec's first piece on John Muir led me to realize that it was possible to be a professor and focus on environmental communication.

### How does your research methodology help you to answer your questions better than another methodology?

I have to agree with people who tell me I am eclectic to a fault when it comes to methodology. Generally speaking, I use a modified ethnographic approach to rhetorical criticism. This works for me for several reasons. One is that it enables me to be involved at more than a theoretical level. It's important to engage directly with these issues. Another reason is that ethnographic approaches offer a superb foundation for trying to understand phenomena at a cultural level, and rhetorical approaches offer great tools for trying to understand symbolic interaction intended to influence others.

### How long have you been researching in this area? What compels you to stick with it?

Many years.

(continued on Page 2)

I'm motivated both by success and failure. It seems obvious to me that our current patterns for living are failures. They are not sustainable; but perpetuate injustice and extinction. That means we need alternatives, and that is what rhetorical analysis is all about—discovery of alternatives.

I define success completely differently for each endeavor. I'm really interested in trying to help people see themselves as part of a larger biotic community. But, for some people, even seeing themselves as part of a human community is a major improvement. When I help craft a communication venue that encourages people to participate more fully in environmental governance, I'm happy. And if they go further, organizing offshoot entities that continue the struggle to restore/preserve/care for a creek/meadow/forest that matters in their lives, I'm absolutely thrilled.

#### **What differentiates this research area from any other communication research?**

Especially for those who come from a rhetorical perspective, the materiality of environmental communication research has to stand out. It's also an area that flirts with considering itself a "crisis discipline" (see articles in the first issue of our new journal).



#### **What areas do you see as most fruitful for future research?**

International work; we need to avoid becoming parochial.

#### **Next scholar profile:**

**Phaedra Pezzullo, Assistant Professor,  
Indiana University**



#### **Tarla's Favorite Research Articles...**

This is really difficult to do. It really depends on the specific project. I'll limit my list to articles that I see as explicitly environmental communication focused.

And, this doesn't ask for books, which are coming out now also. The two that have been most useful to me are

Kevin Deluca's *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism*, Guilford (September, 1999).

Steve Daniels & Gregg Walker's (2001). *Working Through Environmental Conflict: The Collaborative Learning Approach*. Praeger Publishers.

The volume Steve Depoe put together on *Public Participation* also is fantastic.

#### **ARTICLES:**

Cox, Robert J. "The Die is Cast: Topical and Ontological Dimensions of the Locus of the Irreparable" *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 68 (1982): 227-239.

Hamilton, Jennifer Duffield and Caitlin Wills-Toker, "Reconceptualizing Dialogue in Environmental Public Participation," *The Policy Studies Journal*, 34 (2006): 755-775.

Killingsworth, M. J., & Palmer, J. S. The Discourse of "Environmentalism Hysteria". *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 81(1), (1995): 1-19.

Lange, John, "Refusal to compromise: The case of Earth First!" *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, 54 (1990): 473-494.

Oravec, Christine. "Conservationism Vs. Preservationism: The 'Public Interest' in the Hetch Hetchy Controversy" *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 70, (1984): 444-458.

Pezzullo, Phaedra C. "Resisting 'National Breast Cancer Awareness Month': The Rhetoric of Counterpublics and their Cultural Performances." *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 89 (4), (2003): 345-365.

Rogers, Richard A. "Overcoming the objectification of nature in constitutive theories: Toward a transhuman, materialist theory of communication."

*Western Journal of Communication*, 62, (1998): 244-272.

Senecah, Susan L. "The Process Trinity of Voice, Standing, and Influence: The Role of Practical Theory in Planning and Evaluating the Effectiveness of Environmental Participatory Processes," in Depoe, Stephen P., Delicath, John W., Elsenbeer, Marie-france Aepli (Eds), *Communication and Public Participation in environmental decision making* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2004).

Also, there are a couple of new articles, one by Steve Schwarze (QJS) and one by Julie Schutten (Western) that I will use in future research.

## *New Interest Groups*

### **Western States Communication Association**

Plans for creating an Environmental Communication Interest Group at WSCA are moving along nicely. At COCE in June, we attained the 25 signatures of WSCA members needed to move this initiative forward. The WSCA Executive Council will vote on whether or not to accept this interest group in November 2007. We are hoping to have a business meeting scheduled at the February 2008 WSCA conference to be held in Colorado and to accept paper and panel proposals for the 2009 conference.

**For more information contact: Julie Schutten**  
<[Julie.Schutten@NAU.EDU](mailto:Julie.Schutten@NAU.EDU)>

### **Southern Communication Association**

The process is just beginning, inspired and sparked by Julie's efforts to create a division/interest group at WSCA. The petition process has now begun to ensure that there are enough members to make the interest group sustainable. Bill Kinsella at NC State and Robbie Cox at UNC have shown early support for the initiative.

Cindy will present the proposal/petition to the Executive Board at SSCA in Savannah in March 2008. It seems we only need about 14-15 people to get this interest group "off the ground."

Julie lent her support and we'll be sharing some of our resources as the process moves forward at both Western and Southern. Historically, there have been few environmentally-themed presentations/panels at SSCA and it may be due to the fact that there is no "home" for these kinds of submissions at the conference. Given both the importance of and the increasing relevance of environmental communication to our contemporary political and everyday lives -- and the growing number of scholars in the South who do this kind of work -- it makes sense to see if we can find a home at SSCA.

**For more information, contact: Cindy Spurlock**  
<[cspurlock@sixthgear.homeip.net](mailto:cspurlock@sixthgear.homeip.net)>

# COCE in review

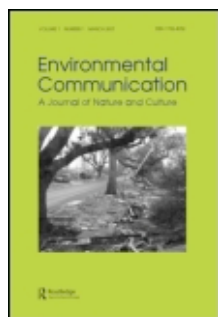
by Dr. Tracylee Clarke

On June 22-25 of this year the Conference on Communication and the Environment (COCE) held its 9th Biennial meeting in Chicago, Illinois. The conference was hosted by the Department of Communication and the Institute for Nature & Culture at DePaul University, and centered on the theme "Communication at the Intersections of Nature and Culture." This year's COCE, as with COCE's in the past, was an academically enriching experience for all who attended. What sets apart COCE from other conferences is its interdisciplinary nature, the sense of community developed among participants during the conference, and the presented and accessible opportunities for scholarly collaboration.

The study of environmental communication is in itself interdisciplinary and provides opportunity to bridge theories and scholarship from a variety of fields to address environmental issues. This year's COCE was again a manifestation of that interdisciplinarity. Dr. Julian Agyeman, Associate Professor and Chair of the Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning at Tufts University opened the conference as the keynote speaker addressing the connections between environmental justice and sustainability specifically, the possibility of a "just sustainability." Describing himself as an academic with trans or post disciplinary interests, Dr. Agyeman's welcome address set a tone of interdisciplinary collaboration that continued to grow as the conference progressed. Nils Peterson, Assistant Professor with the Department of Forestry and Environmental Resources at North Carolina State University said of the conference, "What I liked most about COCE is that it was truly interdisciplinary. People were genuinely listening to each other and seeking to understand the intersections between different academic interests and approaches." Leah Sprain, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Communication at the University of Washington also noted the collaborative tone of COCE. She stated, "I thoroughly enjoyed my first COCE. I appreciated the shared focus on environmental issues, which people approached from a variety of different perspec-

tives. This made for exciting and productive exchanges." Interdisciplinary conversations were a defining attribute of this year's COCE and will continue to become a hallmark of COCEs in the future.

An exciting event at this year's COCE was the launching of the new journal, *Environmental Communication: A Journal of Nature and Culture*. A reception to introduce the new journal was held during the conference and all conference participants received a complimentary copy of the first issue. In an introductory editorial note, Stephen Depoe stated, "we hope that this new journal serves as a place of global connection and conversation among scholars working in and across a variety of academic disciplines" (2007, 1). Barb Willard, this year's Conference Director and Associate Professor of Communication and Envi-



ronmental Policy at DePaul University, believes the new journal will "increase COCE's visibility among other disciplines, creating an increasingly interdisciplinary conference." COCE is partnering with the new *Environmental Communication* journal and will produce a special issue in 2008 containing the top papers presented at COCE. Willard will serve as Guest Editor of the special issue.

The sense of community developed among participants during the conference was another defining feature of COCE. The informal and friendly tenor of the conference allowed participants to get to know one another on both a professional and personal basis. "Part of the reason that the COCE conferences are so successful" said Willard, "is because they are small and community-oriented. This allows participants the opportunity to take the time out to discuss scholarly work as well as getting to know colleagues on a social level. I think everyone agrees that this combination makes for an ideal conference." There were many opportunities for conference participants to socialize in the beautiful city of Chicago. Gail Walker a recent graduate of the Communication program at DePaul and native of Chicago led a group on a tour of the beautiful city pointing out different architecture and landmark sites. One of the best traditions at COCE is the communal dinner organized by Jean Retzinger and Emily Plec who made cooking dinner for over 40 people in a dorm kitchen look like taking a Sunday afternoon stroll. Both were gracious hosts and the dinner was fabulous.

The created sense of community and the open format of the conference allowed for conversations of potential collaboration among participants to occur. The mornings were dedicated to presentations and panel discussions and the afternoons were free for participants to have personal time or schedule impromptu meetings to exchange research ideas and interests. Many took advantage of this opportunity and synergistic conversations could be heard through the corridors as conference goers discussed with their colleagues ways to combine research interests. Graduate student, Leah Sprain stated, "My favorite aspect of COCE was that panels sparked conversations, and the schedule provided opportunity to continue discussions during breaks and evening meals. I left the conference feeling as though I was part of a community of scholars driven by a shared commitment." The opportunity for engaged discussions, both formal and informal, created an occasion for the intellectual rigor and quality of scholarship that characterizes the study of Environmental Communication to foster and grow.

This year's COCE provided a profound experience for its attendees. The interdisciplinary nature, the sense of community, and the opportunities for scholarly collaboration set it apart from other conferences and distinguish it as a truly interdisciplinary conference. Future COCE organizers should continue these traditions but may be faced with the challenge of growth. One challenge as suggested by Willard, will be "to continue to increase the conference size and visibility while still maintaining the personalized nature of the conference." When asked how to improve COCE in the future, some participants suggested having a scheduled environmental field trip to contextualize the themes that emerge during the conference. Whatever is planned, if it continues in the same spirit, it will be well worth attending. The next COCE will be held in the summer of 2009 in Portland, Maine and hosted by Travis Wagner, Associate Professor in the Department of Environmental Science at the University of Southern Maine.

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Depoe, S. (2007). Environmental Communication as Nexus. *Environmental Communication* Vol. 1, No. 1, May 2007, pp. 1-4.

# Teaching Resources

## Creative Assignments

by Dr. Sue Senecah

EST 361 ENS 696 Political/Cultural History of the American Environmental Movement

### Assignment #1: Personal Environmental History

Assignment: To understand our culture's environmental identities, we must also write our own individual story. This assignment asks you to consider your sense of place, pondering the people, events, landscapes, species, communities, friendships, and other things that have woven the tapestry of your personal geography and environmental identity. Think about where you grew up and the part that key humans/non-humans played in determining how you view the natural and human-made world and your place in it. Also consider experiences, events, and places that were significant in forming the environmental values that you hold today. Remember that although major events, places, or people may have had profound influence on us, the smaller, more everyday experiences may have left even deeper impressions.

This assignment consists of two parts:

1. Part A: Sketch out a visual, informal time line that traces your life according to the experiences, places, events, or people that have influenced your attitude/s towards the natural world (land, animals, etc.). You have these impressions regardless of whether you grew up in an urban or rural setting and whether they are negative or positive. We will begin this in class and it will be due during

class time. I will check your timeline for details and effort and return it to you eventually, but be sure to make a copy of this timeline or make notes of it for your use in completing Part B.

2. Part B: Choose two pieces from your timeline and flesh them out in a narrative essay. This short paper (3–4 pages, typewritten) will recount and tell the stories of two of the most significant (for whatever reasons) markers of your time line. Be sure to have an introduction and a conclusion. This narrative essay is due during class time. Come prepared on Sept.15 to briefly and very informally share one story with the class. Late papers are penalized: see the syllabus.

Assignment Evaluation: This assignment will be evaluated according to the following scale and criteria for an average percentage and count as 15% of your final course grade.

90+ excellent  
85+ above average  
75+ satisfactory, what I expected for this assignment  
60+ needs improvement; be cautious about continuing to perform at this level  
<60 unacceptable for the criteria being evaluated.

\_\_\_\_\_Time line deadlines met and reflects effort and thoughtfulness.

\_\_\_\_\_Mechanics: Essay is 3–4 pages, 10–12 point print, with minimum mechanical/grammatical errors (maximum of 3).

\_\_\_\_\_ (x 3) Organization is coherent, easy to follow manner; that is, the organization of the essay is clear (intro, body, conclusion), transitions are helpful, and sentence structure is coherent and appropriate for college level writing

\_\_\_\_\_ (x 3) Details & Content: You provide enough sensory and narrative details to give the reader access to the experience. That is, you show us rather than tell us. You take us there.

\_\_\_\_\_ (x 3) Insight: You provide insightful personal interpretation/reflection about the significance and positive/negative value of the experiences (you interpret the experience).

Remember to use the Writing Support Center. It's there for you!

For further questions, please contact:

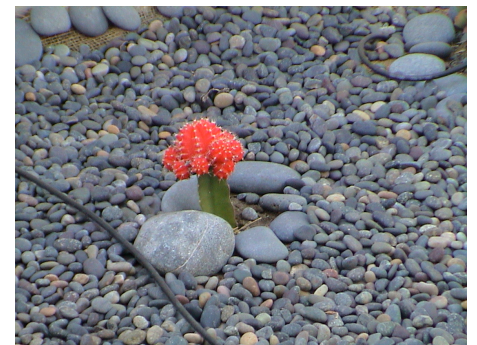
Dr. Sue Senecah [senecah@esf.edu](mailto:senecah@esf.edu)  
SUNY College of Environmental Science & Forestry

## Scholarly Appointments

Tracylee Clarke (Ph.D., University of Utah) has been appointed Assistant Professor in the new Communication Program at California State University Channel Islands.

Tema Oliveira Milstein, who successfully defended her dissertation in July (University of Washington) is an Assistant Professor in the Communication and Journalism Department at the University of New Mexico.

Julie Kalil Schutten completed her Ph.D. from the University of Utah in August and has joined the faculty of the School of Communication, Northern Arizona University, Flagstaff, AZ.



### Ooops...Last issue left out...

The Greylock Video mentioned in Donal's Carbaugh's scholar profile can be obtained at the scholarworks site which contains many of the articles and the Grelock video. It can be found at this website: [http://scholarworks.umass.edu/donal\\_carbaugh](http://scholarworks.umass.edu/donal_carbaugh)

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