

# media ecologies and cultural politics

## the 2020 election/pandemic version

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|--------------------------|---|
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| <b>Office hours</b>      | Mondays & Fridays 10:30-12:00 by appointment (e-mail or via Outlook calendar)   |
| <b>Class meetings</b>    | Tuesdays & Thursdays 10:05-11:20 am, MS Teams   |
| <b>Course modality</b>   | Remote  |
| <b>Technical support</b> | <a href="https://www.uvm.edu/it/kb/student-technology-resources/">https://www.uvm.edu/it/kb/student-technology-resources/</a><br>or call Helpline 802-656-2604                |

### COURSE DESCRIPTION

As our nation continues to grapple with the Covid-19 pandemic and prepare for a potentially pivotal national election, and as climate and ecological crises continue to roil the body politic, it is crucial to understand how a rapidly evolving media sector—encompassing both mass media and digital social media—informs (or misinforms), shapes, and steers public opinion. This seminar course will present an advanced introduction to media and cultural studies in the context of social, political, and environmental movements that make use of, and in the process transform, the new media environments in which social and political life increasingly takes place.

We will study debates in “media ecology” and the cultural politics of new/emergent media, from Marshall McLuhan’s notion of media as sensory extensions of humanity to theories of “media convergence” and of “surveillance capitalism.” And we will study recent debates in cultural and political theory concerned with politics, democracy, and radical social change in an increasingly interconnected, globally mediated world.

Drawing on this combination of theoretical resources, we will examine and assess media use in a range of contemporary social movements and phenomena, particularly as these pertain to cultural and political debates in the run-up to and follow-up from the November elections. These may include debates over “fake news,” conspiracy theories, and media manipulation (by U.S.-based and international players), the roles of Facebook, Twitter, and other platforms in enabling and constraining various forms of political discourse, and movements aimed at addressing climate change through climate justice activism and a “Green New Deal,” “tactical media” interventions such as “culture jamming” and “hacktivism,” and others.

The course will not only be *about* media, and particularly “new” media (which for many of us are not new at all), but will also *make use of* these media. Class activities will include analysis of media objects as well as applied media production projects generally carried out in groups; collaboration will be a prominent focus of the class.

## **COURSE APPROACH & FORMAT**

**The fluid & experimental nature of the course:** The study of media today is a rapidly changing field; indeed, hardly a day goes by without some important development or controversy involving the role of digital media in our lives. For that reason, this course can only be considered as a kind of experiment – an on-the-run attempt to map out a territory even as that territory continues to change. Our focus on events surrounding the 2020 U.S. elections and the current global pandemic will guarantee that our material will continue to be fresh and to some extent uncertain and unsettled. This means that my role as instructor and your roles as learners may get a little blurred at times: we are all learners in a media environment that has never been exactly what it is today. And we are all practitioners, who can draw on our own experience of media within a cultural setting that is likely to remain perplexing and challenging over the course of the semester.

That said, to understand the role of media in our lives it is important to understand how media got to be the way they are: the historical processes, economic and legal frameworks, and cultural practices that shape and constrain media. This course aims to provide multiple approaches and perspectives on today's media landscape. Its orienting concept, or metaphor if you like, is that media today constitute a kind of ecological matrix, and that their relationship to politics, economics, and culture is complex and dynamic in the same way that ecology itself is complex and dynamic. We will at times look specifically at the relationship between media and *ecology the science*, but our primary focus will be the dynamic and systemic ways in which media shape and alter the cultural and political playing fields around us.

**Course structure:** The course arc will be as follows. We will begin by surveying several theoretical frameworks for understanding media, including media-ecological approaches (sometimes called "medium theory"), public-sphere and cultural hegemony frameworks, and political-economic approaches. We will then deepen our understanding of digital media in its many dimensions, including as "Web 2.0," "spreadable media," "platformization," "surveillance capitalism," and the open-access movement. This will lead to an examination of current debates over "fake news," disinformation, conspiracy theories, and the broader context of the so-called "culture wars" within which the U.S. seems currently embroiled. Finally, we will look more closely at the relationship between these media/cultural debates and the environment, including debates over climate change and environmental policy, "belief" or "disbelief" in climate science, the material and infrastructural ecologies of media (including energy consumption and e-waste), and perspectives on the future.

That at least is the "program," but depending on what happens in the world around us, we might deviate from it as we go. Because of the "live"—and lively—nature of the topic, our goal is to also pay attention to what is happening in the world that involves media (and culture, and politics) and to bring that into our studies and discussions. The course will take a seminar format (as best as possible in the online format), and readings and class discussions will be critical to its success. You should expect to read 40-65 pages of material per week, much of it scholarly and theoretical in nature. But you will also be expected to scan the news media on a regular basis and to share your findings in class. Regular reading response journals will document your ongoing "thinking through" of the readings and class themes.

Two extended projects will make up the class's high-impact learning experiences. The first will be an in-depth critical analysis of a media object or text (or set of media objects/texts) using analytical methods from the course; you will be expected to present the results in class and in a written report. The second will be an applied media project demonstrating some form of critical praxis (i.e., analysis and intervention) into the mediascape, informed by concepts from the course. These may be traditional media objects (web sites, blogs, videos, et al.) or "tactical media interventions" of one kind or another, which could be public or shareable through a course blog (or Blackboard). Both of these will ideally be carried out in small groups, though individual work is also possible.

**Weekly structure:** While we will have readings due on Tuesdays and on Thursdays, students' reading responses (see below) will normally be due at noon on Mondays. This will allow student "respondents" (and me) sufficient time to prepare commentaries. Tuesday's class will normally include a reading response by one student; Thursday's class will normally include a reading response by two students, with one of them being a "further research" piece on some angle of interest to the student. My own "lecturing" on weekly topics (usually brief "semi-lectures" and "backgrounders") will be interspersed through the classes as appropriate.

These will sometimes include information shared through Power Point or videos; other times these may be assigned for your viewing between classes. Note that this basic structure may evolve as we go forward.

**Covid-19:** Finally, we should acknowledge that this entire semester is an experiment. Online teaching and learning is still new to most of us (including myself) and some of the software we will be using, including MS Teams, is still being rolled out and refined as we prepare to begin the semester. I expect many glitches along the way, and it may take a few weeks for a sense of “classroom regularity” to settle in. I also anticipate that some of you may have to deal with extraneous factors related to Covid-19, protocols around it (such as quarantining) and technical (computer or broadband) difficulties. I will try to remain flexible with deadlines and expectations, but let me know if anything arises that makes it difficult for you to keep up with the class. We will try work-arounds where necessary. Please see **Course Policies** below for more on this.

## **LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Students successfully completing this course can expect to have gained the following:

1. A basic understanding of key theories of media, including digital or “new” media, as found in the fields of media studies, communication studies, and cultural studies.
2. A good working understanding of diverse perspectives on contemporary controversies over disinformation and misinformation, “fake news,” and the informational and political implications of major social media platforms.
3. An extended experience in applying relevant theoretical perspectives to the critical analysis of a select digital media object, product, discourse, or theme.
4. An extended experience in applying relevant theoretical perspectives to the production of some kind of media object or product.

## **COURSE MATERIALS**

1. **Online readings:** All course readings will be made available electronically in BlackBoard with the exception of the Maxwell & Miller book (see #2 below). I strongly recommend that you print out required reading materials beforehand, as there is good evidence that retention and comprehension of materials is significantly better when reading (and marking up) print materials than by reading online.
2. **Required and recommended texts:**
  - Richard Maxwell & Toby Miller, How Green is Your Smartphone (Polity, 2020). This short book will be a required reading. It is available for purchase online for under \$10. We will read it in November.
  - Benkler, Faris, & Roberts, Network Propaganda: Manipulation, Disinformation, and Radicalization in American Politics (Oxford University Press, 2018). This open-access book is readable and downloadable from the internet. We will read a few segments of it and potentially consult more of it, so a hard copy could be helpful.
  - Public Data Lab, A Field Guide to “Fake News” and Other Information Disorders (compiled by Bounegru, Gray, Venturini, Mauri; Public Data Lab, 2017). This open-access book is readable and freely downloadable from the internet.
  - Other media literacy and related reference resources are available in the “Reference Shelf” folder of “Course Materials” in the Blackboard course site.
3. **Videos:** All videos will be made available electronically to the extent possible. At least one video (the “Nosedive” episode of the series Black Mirror) will need to be viewed on a pay-per-view or subscriber platform such as Netflix or Amazon Prime.
4. **Platforms & Software:** We will be using MS Teams and Blackboard throughout the entire semester. Other requirements will be announced (in those two platforms) as we go.

## **GRADING & COURSE EXPECTATIONS**

Students' final grades will be subdivided as follows:

- Attendance & participation 20%
- Reading response journals & Blackboard participation 25%
- Critical media analysis (incl. presentation) 30%
- Applied media project 25%

### **1. Attendance & class participation (20%)**

The course will take a seminar format, and readings and class discussions will be critical to the success of the class. Students are expected to attend all classes, to do all required readings in preparation for their discussion in class, and to participate in class discussions and activities in an informed and respectful manner that contributes to the collective "thinking through" of the issues raised. (See more on this in [Course Policies](#) below.) Note that the Course Schedule below provides a tentative list of required readings, but all reading assignments will be provided in Blackboard. Please consult there regularly.

**Reading respondents:** As part of the participation grade, each student will be expected to act as a "reading respondent" at least once (this will be worth 5% of your grade). This will involve reading through the class's reading responses related either to (a) the Tuesday readings (to be reported back in Tuesday's class), (b) the Thursday readings (to be reported back in Thursday's class), or (c) a synthesis of the two sets, accompanied by additional "contextual" research on a topic of your choice (to be reported back in Thursday's class). These responses should summarize anything especially notable about the overall class response to the given set of readings (such as debates or key differences in perspective) and should draw out a question or two for the class to discuss. Students will sign up ahead for these class respondent roles.

**Found objects:** We will also regularly set aside time for sharing "found objects" relevant to the course. These can be physical or electronic/online things the student came across in their monitoring of real-world media related events, relevant to one or more course themes. Sharing these will involve sharing the object or an online link to it in Blackboard or in the Teams chat box and introducing it with a brief commentary (1 to 2 minutes is sufficient) in class. Students will normally be expected to share at least two of these over the course of the semester, though more will be appreciated. (This will not be worth more than 5% of the overall grade, and may be less if other forms of attendance/participation are good.)

**Non-attendance:** If a student cannot attend a given class, they should notify the instructor ahead of time. (MS Teams monitors your attendance, and I will be asking for video attendance where possible, since this will enhance the quality of seminar discussions. If you have any technical or personal issues restricting your capacity to attend "in person," i.e., by video, please let me know.) Those who miss more than three classes without prior notification will be at risk of failing the course. See more on the attendance policy in the "Course Policies" section of the syllabus.

### **2. Reading/response journals and Blackboard participation (25%)**

Reading responses and/or other online activities will be required in most weeks of the class. (You will be allowed two weeks "off" from these without penalty.) These are to be submitted online through Blackboard. Specific response questions or prompts will normally be announced in class and/or in Blackboard. If none are announced by the end of the previous class day (typically, Thursday, with responses due next Monday), students should submit a 200-300 word commentary responding to something that caught your greatest attention about the readings.

**Due:** These response journals will normally be due by 12:00 noon on Monday before Tuesday's class. This will allow time for student "respondents" (see #1 above) and me to read all the responses and prepare commentary. Weekly responses will not be graded individually, but will be graded as part of the student's overall writing and online participation profile, which will be valued at 20% of the grade in total. Students are invited to comment on others' comments and to participate in online discussions, which will also contribute to the participation profile.

**Final class reflection/position paper (and self-evaluation):** This 750-1100 word paper should summarize your informed position on the role of media in your life and in the world around you, with reference to the theoretical perspectives explored in the course. Further directions will be provided. An additional 200-500 word self-reflection should summarize the work you have accomplished in the class, including the strengths and weaknesses of your performance on the various class assignments and tasks (especially in group assignments). Together, these will factor into your overall participation grade and be worth an additional 5%. Due Dec. 8.

### 3. **Critical media analysis (30%)**

Students will be expected to carry out, ideally in groups of 2 to 3 students (though individual projects are possible), an in-depth critical analysis of a media object/text or set of media objects/texts using analytical methods from the course. This will take place in stages, as follows.

a) **Proposal** (worth 5%): This 1 to 2 page outline will be due in class on Sept. 24. (You will be asked to share a pre-proposal idea in class on Sept. 17.) It should detail

- the object of your analysis,
- your specific method(s) of analysis (which can be one of the theoretical frameworks discussed in the early weeks of the course, or some mix of analytical methods), accompanied by a rationale for choosing this method in relation to your object (with reference to other literature, if relevant),
- a description of the format for the analysis if is not a traditional written paper, and
- a description of the distribution of labor if you are working in a group with other students.

b) **Report/analysis** (worth 20%): This will be due on or before Nov. 3. It should include all the components of a scholarly paper, as outlined below, but its format can be either a regular paper or an infographic-style web site or series of web pages. The scholarly components should include the following:

- A brief introduction or abstract stating the topic, thesis, methodology, and results/conclusions.
- A description of the media objects under consideration, providing any essential background to understanding the object (no more than 2-3 paragraphs). If you are choosing an online format for your analysis, you may substitute this with directly accessible links (e.g., hyperlinks) to those objects.
- An in-depth analysis of the object as a form of social and/or environmental communication or as a media-ecological intervention, using some clearly defined analytical method(s). This should be the longest section of the assignment.
- Full bibliographic information on all relevant sources, in APA, MLA, Chicago style or another academically recognized style (except where web links may suffice).

Suggested length: This will depend on the format and the number of students involved. For individual written papers, it should be roughly 1200-1600 words; for multiple-authored work it will be longer.

c) **In-class presentation** (worth 5%): This should take up no more than 10 minutes of class time (less for presentations by single individuals). These will take place between mid-October and mid-November. Presentations should be organized in a way that presents sufficient depth of information in a short amount of time (i.e., by incorporating visuals, etc.). Please rehearse these ahead of time.

Further details about this assignment and the presentation will be provided in class.

### 4. **Applied media project (25%)**

Students will be expected to carry out an applied media project, which will demonstrate some form of critical praxis (i.e., analysis and intervention) into the mediascape, informed by concepts and practices explored in the course. These may range from more traditional media-based products, such as text-and-image web sites, to audio-visual essays, "tactical media interventions," or "ecoventions" of one kind or another. They may involve online as well as non-digital components (performances, exhibitions, etc.), but the latter should be documented in a way that is digitally accessible and presentable. We will explore the

possibility of an online public course blog for sharing these projects, but given the constraints of this pandemic semester, that may not be feasible.

These projects should typically be carried out in groups of 3 to 6 students, though alternatives (including individual projects) are possible. The topic and theme of this assignment may be related to your critical analysis assignment (i.e. being an extension of it in a more applied direction), or it may be something entirely different.

Like the above assignment, this will take place in stages:

- a) A **1 to 2 page proposal** (worth 5%) will be due in class on Oct. 15. (Pre-proposal ideas will be shared in class on Oct. 8.) This should outline the themes, format(s), methods and activities, and distribution of labor for the implementation of the project, as well as justification for your choices with each of these.
- b) **The project itself** (worth 20%), due on or before November. Because the format will be widely variable, expectations will vary as well.
- c) **In-class presentation**, on (valued as part of project grade).

Further details about this assignment and the presentation will be provided in class.

## **SCHEDULE OF READINGS & TOPICS**

This schedule is subject to change. Changes will be announced in class and online.

| <b>Date</b>            | <b>Topics</b><br>(F# = Bb readings folder)                        | <b>Required readings</b><br>(All are subject to change; please consult Blackboard for up-to-date assignments)  | <b>Due dates</b> |
|------------------------|---|--|------------------|
| <b>Sep</b><br>1        | Course Introduction   | Please read course syllabus beforehand if possible   |                  |
| <b>I. MEDIA THEORY</b> |   |  |                  |
| 3                      | Introducing the main perspectives (F1)                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tufekci, "YouTube, the great radicalizer"</li> <li>• Parkin, "The rise of the deepfake &amp; the threat to democracy"</li> <li>• Guardian, "The internet, but not as we know it"</li> </ul>   |                  |
| 8                      | Medium theory, a.k.a. media ecology (F1)                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laughey, "What are media?," pp. 1-3</li> <li>• McLuhan, "The medium is the message" excerpt</li> <li>• Ott and Monk, "Ecological analysis": read pp. 265-7 and 270-282 (skip "Equipment for living" section)</li> <li>• Sy Taffel, Media Ecologies Prezi</li> </ul>   |                  |
| 10                     | Democracy, the public sphere, & media as the "fourth estate" (F2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• "The mass media as fourth estate"</li> <li>• DeLuca and Peeples, "From public sphere to public screen": read pp. 125-7 (first section), 129-130 (from "Still, is it wise..."), ending at "If envisioning..."), and 133-7 ("Transforming Publicity," "Image Events in a Time of Distraction" sections).</li> </ul> |                  |
| 15                     | Media, culture, & the struggle for hegemony (F2)                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hebdige, "From Culture to Hegemony," pp. 144-152</li> <li>• Macnamara, "Understanding the mediascape": read "Major traditions" sections on "Political economy," "Cultural Studies," and "Medium Theory," pp. 60-67.</li> </ul>  |                  |

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| 17   | Political economy of media: the propaganda model (F2)        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Chomsky &amp; Herman, "The propaganda model"</li> <li>Fuchs, "Propaganda model 2.0"</li> <li>Video on the propaganda model</li> </ul>   | Critical analysis pre-proposal ideas                              |
| <b>II. DIGITAL MEDIA</b>                   |  |  |   |
| 22   | Web 2.0 as participatory culture: "spreadable media" (F3)    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creeber &amp; Martin, "What is new media?" and "Digital cultures," pp. 2-6</li> <li>Jenkins et al, "What Susan Boyle can Teach About Spreadability" and excerpt from "Conclusion," <u>Spreadable Media</u>, pp. 9-16, 295-300</li> <li>Henry Jenkins on 'Spreadable media' (part 2), interview</li> </ul> |   |
| 24   | Platformization (F3)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Van Dijck, Poell, De Waal, "The platform ecosystem," pp. 12-16, and "The geopolitics of platforms," pp. 26-30</li> <li>Van Dijck, "Platforms as technocultural constructs: Technology," <u>The Culture of Connectivity</u>, pp. 29-32</li> <li>Tufekci, "Names and Connections," pp. 164-172</li> </ul>   | Critical analysis project proposals due                           |
| 29   | Hashtag activism (F3)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Macdonald, "Hashtag activism"</li> <li>Jenkins, "Twitter revolutions?"</li> <li>Watts, "The coup that wasn't tweeted"</li> <li>Fuchs, "Twitter and democracy: a new public sphere?"</li> </ul>  |   |
| Oct 1                                      | And then this... (F3)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Singer &amp; Brooking, "The war begins," 1-11</li> <li>Rheingold, "Democracy is losing the online arms race"</li> </ul>   |   |
| Oct 6                                      | Surveillance capitalism (F4)                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Zuboff, "Big Other: surveillance capitalism &amp; the prospects of an information civilization"</li> <li>Video: Black Mirror "Nosedive" episode</li> </ul>  |   |
| 8  | The social media ideology (F4)                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lovink, "On the social media ideology"</li> <li>Deleuze, "Postscript on the societies of control"</li> <li>Sadowski, "Ten theses on digital capitalism"</li> <li>Feduchi &amp; Lovink, "Developing dissident knowledges"</li> </ul>   | Media project pre-proposal ideas                                  |
| <b>III. CONTROVERSIES IN MEDIA CULTURE</b> |  |  |   |
| 13   | "Post-truth": debates over disinformation & "fake news" (F5) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benkler, et al, <u>Network Propaganda</u>: ch. 1 &amp; 2.</li> </ul>  |   |
| 15   | (continued)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pomerantsev, "Cities of Trolls"</li> <li>Benkler, et al, <u>Network Propaganda</u>, ch. 3</li> </ul>  | Media project proposals due<br>Crit. analysis presentations begin |
| 20   | Political polarization & mistrust in science (F5)            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Benkler, et al, <u>Network Propaganda</u>, chapters 10 &amp; 11</li> <li>Pew Research Center, "U.S. media polarization &amp; the 2020 election"</li> <li>Iyengar &amp; Massey, "Scientific communication in a post-truth society"</li> </ul>  |   |

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| 22   | Conspiracy cultures in global network society (F5)                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LaFrance, "The prophecies of Q"</li> <li>• Ivakhiv, "Covid-19 conspiracies &amp; the media"</li> <li>• Aupers, "Trust no one': modernization, paranoid &amp; conspiracy culture"</li> </ul>   |                                     |
| 27   | Navigating the new information ecosystem (F5)                         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wardle, "Journalism &amp; the new information ecosystem," pp. 71-84</li> <li>• Wardle &amp; Derakhshan, "Executive summary," <u>Information Disorder</u>, pp. 4-9</li> <li>• Bowman &amp; Cohen, "Mental shortcuts, emotions, &amp; social rewards," pp. 223-230</li> <li>• Fernandez &amp; Alani, "Online misinformation: challenges &amp; future directions"</li> </ul> |                                     |
| 29   | (continued)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benkler, Faris, Roberts, <u>Network Propaganda</u>, ch. 12-14 (selections)</li> </ul>   | Critical analysis reports due       |
| <b>IV. ENVIRONMENT &amp; THE MATERIAL ECOLOGIES OF MEDIA</b> |   |  |                                     |
| Nov 3  | Climate science in the new information ecosystem (F6)                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lopez &amp; Share, "Fake climate news: How denying climate change is the ultimate in fake news"</li> <li>• Maxwell &amp; Miller, "The climate change propaganda machine"</li> </ul>   |                                     |
| 5  | Eco-activism in the new info. ecosystem (F6)                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pezzullo &amp; Cox, "Digital media &amp; environmental activism"</li> </ul>   |                                     |
| 10   | Infrastructure, e-waste & the material ecologies of global media (F7) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taffel, "Media, Materiality, &amp; the Environment" prezi</li> <li>• Marks et al, "Streaming media's environmental impact"</li> </ul>   |                                     |
| 12   | (continued)   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maxwell &amp; Miller, <u>How Green is Your Smartphone</u></li> </ul>  |                                     |
| 17   | Futures (F8)  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lovink, "Occupy &amp; the politics of organized networks", <i>Social Media Abyss</i>, 182-204</li> </ul>  |                                     |
| 19   | (continued)<br>Project presentations                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sadowski, "Demand oversight" and "Demand ownership," pp. 184-190</li> </ul>   | Media projects due                  |
| 24   | Project presentations   |  |                                     |
| 26   | Thanksgiving Day  | No class   |                                     |
| Dec 1  | Project presentations;<br>Review                                      |  |                                     |
| 3  | Final class: Synthesis & conclusions                                  |  |                                     |
| 8  |   |  | Final reflection/<br>position paper |

## **APPENDIX 1: COURSE POLICIES**

### **1. GRADING**

Grades in this course follow the standard UVM model, i.e., A=90's, B=80's, C=70's, D=60's, F=below 60, with minus ("-") grades for the low end in each (i.e. 70-72.9, 80-82.9, et al) and plus ("+") grades for the high end (x7-x9.9), with the exception of A+ being 98 and up. That said, with the goal of providing you with an easily understandable assessment of your performance in the class, my overall grading policy is fairly simple: **If you do all the things you're asked to do\* in the course, you will normally get a B. If you do them especially well—with rigor, insight, and effective expression\*\*—you will get an A.**

\* Regarding what you're "asked to do": The expectations are outlined either in the syllabus or in assignment instructions. If you mess up on a few little things (e.g., miss a class or two, hand in a couple of assignments late, do poorly on a quiz or written assignment, etc.) and this appears to be inordinately affecting your grade, let me know and I will consider an adjustment. (You can let me know these things in your final self-evaluation, which should be submitted with your Project Self-Evaluation; see above.) But if these appear to be a pattern, then your grade will be affected negatively.

\*\*Regarding how these qualitative criteria of "rigor, insight, and effective expression" will be assessed: I will be using models I have developed over 25+ years of grading student work as well as reading, writing, editing, and reviewing scholarly and professional writing. I will provide feedback where possible, but given class size and other constraints this may not always be feasible. If you need clarity on anything in particular, please talk to me about it. Note that these *qualitative* criteria do not directly extend to *quantitatively* work such as quizzes, correct-answer exams, et al., but I will attempt to follow them in the design of such work.

**Appealing a grade**: If you have any reason to appeal or contest a grade, please follow UVM procedures, as outlined here: <https://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/gradeappeals.pdf>. For information on grading and GPA calculation at UVM, see <https://www.uvm.edu/registrar/grades>.

### **2. ATTENDANCE**

Students are expected to attend all classes, unless you have an excused absence. (Absences are not excused unless they are personally cleared with the instructor by phone or email.) If you have to miss a class, please ask another student for assistance in catching up on the material. We expect you to make it a commitment to attend every class, both for your own learning and to contribute to the community of learning in the group. That said, you are adults and I am not interested in policing your attendance. Class participation grades are given as a small incentive for you and will not be worth more than 10% of the grade. They will be based on collection of class work (which may include free-writes, sign-in sheets for particular activities, online exercises, and so on) and other data for gauging your presence, including my own impression of your verbal contributions. (With online courses, attendance will be evident.) Since such impressions are necessarily subjective, it is up to you to ensure that I get to know you. I am not very good at remembering names, so please keep that in mind and help me out when possible.

### **3. RESPECTFUL CLASS CONDUCT**

The mission of the University of Vermont includes two components: the creation, evaluation, sharing, and application of knowledge; and the preparation of students "to be accountable leaders who will bring to their work dedication to the global community, a grasp of complexity, effective problem-solving and communication skills, and an enduring commitment to learning and ethical conduct" (emphases added; see [www.uvm.edu/president/?Page=mission.html](http://www.uvm.edu/president/?Page=mission.html)). Since environmental issues and personal creative work both often elicit deeply personal feelings, it is important that students feel welcome and safe in this class to express their views on the subjects of our study. Respectful treatment of others and their views is key to this (and not only because it is consistent with the "ethical conduct" aimed for in the University mission). I will do my best to uphold it in my own behavior, and will expect a similar effort from each student.

As a public university, UVM is also committed to the protection of free speech (which is guaranteed by the First Amendment, except in instances of defamation, obscenity, criminal conduct, or a "clear and present danger" to incitement of harm, injury, and violence). The classroom, however, is not a forum for the airing of any views whatsoever. It is a forum for learning about specific topics, and this is best done within a respectful and open-minded setting in which divergent views can be discussed, critically considered, clarified, and evaluated. In seeking

a balance between freedom of expression and respect for difference, I have found the following principles to be most helpful, and I suggest that we adopt them in our class:

- (1) Seek to *understand* other points of view, even if you disagree with them;
- (2) Where disagreement or criticism seem warranted, seek to engage *constructively* and to criticize ideas or behaviors (at most) but not the *people* who hold them;
- (3) When in doubt, practice kindness and civility.

Disrespect of individuals or groups, such as would create an atmosphere of hostility or fear, should not be tolerated in a classroom seminar. If such disrespect emerges, students should feel free to "flag" it without fear of retribution. In the end, however, it is in engaging with differences in perspective and expression that we develop our capacity for "ethical conduct" in a "global community" that is complex and deeply heterogeneous in its values, beliefs, and practices. Through practicing kindness with each other, we learn how to engage in civil conversation with our peers and to model such conversation in our country and in the world.

For further information on the UVM Code of Student Conduct, see

<http://www.uvm.edu/policies/student/studentcode.pdf>

#### **4. WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS & LATENESS**

Unless otherwise specified, all written work should be submitted in print, not electronically. Printed work should be typewritten, at least 1-1/2 spaced (or double-spaced), in a common font style (such as Times New Roman or Arial) no less than 11-point in size, and with at least 1" margins for comments. Pages should be numbered and stapled together. **Note that these requirements do not apply to fully online/remote classes.** But any material submitted online that might be printed out for grading must have your name on it.

Please spell-check and proofread your work, and please use inclusive language (i.e. be conscious of your use of gendered pronouns and referents, using "people" or "humanity" instead of "man", "he or she" or "they" instead of simply "he," and so on).

All submitted work should be turned in on time, i.e. by the beginning of class on the day the assignment is due. Late work is subject to penalties, with grades dropping half a letter grade each day your work is late unless you have a valid medical excuse or receive an extension from me beforehand. I will do my best to read all graded assignments soon after they are turned in and try to return them to you within two weeks at most.

#### **5. RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS**

UVM supports students' active involvement in their religious/faith communities. Students wishing to be excused from class participation during their religious holidays should submit a documented list of such holidays by the end of the second week of classes. You will be permitted to make up work within a mutually agreed-upon time. For more information, see UVM policy here: <https://www.uvm.edu/registrar/religious-holidays>

#### **6. COLLABORATION & ACADEMIC HONESTY**

You are encouraged to work with others in the class on your assignments, sharing resources and ideas and helping each other with direction, focus, clarity, and personal support. Please make an effort to get to know your peers. Many environmental initiatives have been built on collaborative networking, and such activity is encouraged.

At the same time, UVM's commitment to academic honesty will be followed. This means that unless otherwise stated, **all written and creative assignments should be your own.** If you draw on other sources, they should be **cited properly** to give adequate credit. If you work with other students to prepare for an exam, your written answers should be individually constructed, not copied from each other or shared notes. Work that appears to be plagiarized will be given no credit and students will be asked to meet with me to explain the situation. Plagiarism can also be of one's own work, if that work is presented as original for more than one course at a time; therefore any work that duplicates or overlaps with work that you are producing for another course should be clearly defined in terms of its originality and contribution for this course. **Plagiarism at UVM is grounds for academic suspension; don't do it.** Further information on plagiarism can be found in UVM's Statement on Academic Integrity; see <http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/acadintegrity.pdf>

## **7. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY / PROHIBITION ON SHARING ACADEMIC MATERIALS**

Students are prohibited from publicly sharing or selling academic materials that they did not author (e.g., course syllabus, outlines or class presentations authored by the professor, practice questions, text from the textbook or other copyrighted class materials). Students are prohibited from sharing assessments (e.g., homework or a take-home examination). These are University policies. Violations will be handled under UVM's Intellectual Property policy and Code of Academic Integrity.

## **8. COVID-19 POLICIES**

While this class is a remote/online class, students should be aware of and follow all of the University's Covid-19 policies where applicable. They are as follows.

**General statement regarding potential changes during the semester:** The University of Vermont reserves the right to make changes in the course offerings, mode of delivery, degree requirements, charges, regulations, and procedures contained herein as educational, financial, and health, safety, and welfare considerations require, or as necessary to be compliant with governmental, accreditation, or public health directives. See also <http://catalogue.uvm.edu/>.

**Green and Gold Promise:** The [Green and Gold Promise](#) clearly articulates the expectations that UVM has for students, faculty, and staff to remain compliant with all COVID-19 recommendations from the federal CDC, the State of Vermont, and the City of Burlington. This includes following all rules regarding facial coverings and social distancing when attending class. If you do not follow these guidelines, I will ask you to leave the class. If you forget your mask, you cannot enter the class and should go back and retrieve your mask. The [Code of Student Conduct](#) outlines policies related to violations of the Green and Gold Promise. Sanctions for violations include fines, educational sanctions, parent notification, probation, and suspension.

**Isolation & Quarantine:** If at any point in the course you need to isolate or quarantine, please make sure that your dean's office is informed of this. If this should affect your work in this class, please let me know, so that we can make arrangements to discuss any missed work.

## **9. RELATED RESOURCES**

**Concerns about community members or events:** If you are concerned about a UVM community member or are concerned about a specific event, we encourage you to contact the Dean of Students Office (802-656-3380). If you would like to remain anonymous, you can report your concerns online by visiting the Dean of Students website at <https://www.uvm.edu/studentaffairs>

**Statement on alcohol and cannabis in the academic environment:** Alcohol and cannabis use can seriously impair your ability to learn and retain information not only in the moment you may be using, but up to 48 hours or more afterwards. Both can also cause issues with attention, memory and concentration; negatively impact the quality of how information is processed and ultimately stored; and affect sleep patterns, which interferes with long-term memory formation. It is my expectation that you will do everything you can to optimize your learning and to fully participate in this course.

### **Remote learning resources:**

- Checklist for success in <https://learn.uvm.edu/about/support-for-students/checklist-online-credit-courses/>
- Academic support for online courses: <https://www.uvm.edu/academicsuccess/online-learning-student-resources-remote-instruction>

### **Other resources**

- 30-minute webinar on online learning success (Mar 2020): [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xp\\_MYsqQyvE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xp_MYsqQyvE)
- Grade appeals: <http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/gradeappeals.pdf>
- Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities: [www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/studentcode.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/studentcode.pdf)
- FERPA Rights Disclosure (student records privacy rights): <http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/ferpa.pdf>
- UVM policy on disability certification & student support: [www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/disability.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/~uvmppg/ppg/student/disability.pdf)
- Center for Health and Wellbeing: <http://www.uvm.edu/~chwb/>
- Counseling & Psychiatry Services (CAPS): (802) 656-3340

For all other policies, see [www.uvm.edu/academics/catalogue](http://www.uvm.edu/academics/catalogue) and click on Policies (A-Z).