

**Environmental Journalism, Fall 2017**  
**Undergraduates: JOU 4930-0029**  
**Graduate students: MMC 6936-148H**  
**Tuesday, periods 3 to 5 (9:35 to 12:35)**  
**Weimer Hall (UF's College of Journalism & Communications) Room 3324**

**Instructor: Cynthia Barnett**

**Email:** clbarnett@jou.ufl.edu

**Phone:** 352-376-4440 (call or text)

**Twitter:** @cynthiabarnett, Class hashtag: #EJUF

**Office:** 3326 Weimer Hall

**Office hours:** Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

**Sometimes I am traveling on a story so best to make an appointment.**

**Environmental Journalism, the challenge:** Living in what some scientists term the Anthropocene Era (*anthropo*: man, and *cene*: new), in which human activities have ever-more serious impacts on our local regions and the planet, it is increasingly important to report on and improve public understanding of climate change; freshwater scarcity; the decline of our oceans, fish, and wildlife; environmental health; sustainable energy, agriculture, and food systems; and more. But complex science and uncertainty, public apathy and politics, well-funded counter-narratives, zealous stakeholders, and what can (incorrectly) appear a lack of news hook for stories playing out slowly in the decades of a comp plan or two centuries of CO2 emissions make Environmental Journalism one of the most challenging specializations in our craft.

**Environmental Journalism, the course:** This course will introduce you to Environmental Journalism and elucidate the roles and differences between journalism and communications; help you find the most accurate, credible and timeliest information on science and issues; and ground you in the essentials of environmental reporting – discerning uncompromised expert sources, using human narratives and descriptive storytelling to relate real-world impact, and tapping the databases, records and other tools commonly used by environmental reporters.

The primary work of the course and determinant of your grade is a hands-on journalistic series that we'll work on together and (hopefully) publish on WUFT platforms at semester's end. I'd like you to leave class with a significant, compelling work of environmental reporting that is relevant for your audiences – and an excellent story clip and byline for you.

Each weekly class is divided into two parts. The first half is lecture/discussion: We'll delve into the craft of Environmental Journalism and its promise and challenges through a topical theme in EJ, often with a guest speaker. The second half will be devoted to our class project and practicalities of the profession: hands-on reporting, developing, funding, crafting and publishing environmental stories.

**Course readings, participation, assignments and grades:**

**READINGS:** Undergraduates are not required to buy any books. Please read the assigned works of journalism each week before class. Most are here on the syllabus and some will be added

based on the news of the day; check email Thursday evenings for updates. Graduate students are required to read and review one work of nonfiction environmental reporting, preferably either *The Unnatural World: The Race to Remake Civilization in Earth's Newest Age*, by David Biello; *The Water Will Come: Rising Seas, Sinking Cities and the Remaking of the Civilized World* by Jeff Goodell (out 10/24/17); or *Engineering Eden: The True Story of a Violent Death, a Trial, and the Fight Over Controlling Nature* by Jordan Fisher Smith. Biello, Goodell and Smith will all visit campus this fall and you'll have an opportunity to meet them. However, if you are hankering to read and review a different EJ book that will inform your own work, you may run it by me for approval.

For all students, our weekly assigned articles and essays are available free online, or through UF's electronic databases. All are also expected to keep up with the Environmental Journalism of the day. This is best accomplished by checking the Society of Environmental Journalists' "EJ Today," a well-chosen collection of top headlines from the beat updated every weekday morning. You do not have to be a member of SEJ to access the daily links, here: [www.sej.org/headlines/list](http://www.sej.org/headlines/list). You may want to join (\$25 for students) if considering EJ as a career.

**PARTICIPATION – both in person and online – is part of your grade.** Since we meet in person only once a week and we need everyone to make our published project excellent, **class attendance is mandatory, as is social-media engagement, with a minimum of one Twitter post a week.** Twitter has its pros and cons, but is worth trying this semester for its vigorous discussion of the environment. I will tweet (from @cynthiabarnett) about Environmental Journalism and our class using the hashtag #EJUF. For a good overview of EJ on Twitter, also follow the Society of Environmental Journalists @SEJORG. If you are on Facebook, please "like" **UF Environmental Journalism** for yet more insights & connections.

### **Overnight field trip to Seahorse Key! Saturday and Sunday Nov. 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>**

Getting your boots muddy in the field is perhaps the most important element of environmental storytelling. So, our field experience is a key part of class, and the related assignment a key part of your grade. On Saturday morning Nov. 4<sup>th</sup>, we'll head an hour's drive west of Gainesville by car, then another mile into the Gulf of Mexico by boat, to the Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge, a chain of rare undeveloped barrier islands. We'll share a potluck dinner and spend the night in an old lighthouse on the island of Seahorse Key. There is a field trip fee that I will keep to less than \$100, due just before the trip. Please let me know early in the semester if this will be a financial hardship, and I will work on funding for those who need it. Details, directions and contacts in class and by email. **Everyone who comes on the field trip can miss one of the 16 class meetings – no questions asked.**

**ASSIGNMENTS** (You have five of them, due over the course of the semester.)

### **EJ Assignment 1: ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM PRESENTATIONS.**

**Undergrads:** A 500-word critique of a work of Environmental Journalism you choose + informal class presentation on the strengths and weaknesses of the piece. It could be a long-form

story; conservation film; conservation photography project; multimedia story; one of the nonfiction books listed above for grad students; or other EJ work. Please get my approval for your piece.

**Grad students:** A 500-word analysis + formal class presentation on a special problem or issue in Environmental Journalism. This could relate to your graduate study or a special interest you have, and ideally should teach the rest of us something. Here are just a few possibilities; feel free to come talk to me about others, and get my approval for your topic: The lack of diversity in environmental journalism; “junk science”; battling climate denial; covering GMOs; environmental journalism in the Trump administration; the problem of doomsday climate reporting; digital security for journalists and researchers; etc.

**Due midnight Sun. Sept. 17<sup>th</sup>; undergrads, turn in text on Canvas. Grad students should turn in text, + slides for an approx. 15-min. class presentation.**

### **EJ Assignment 2: GREENWASHING ANALYSIS.**

**A 500-word critique and informal class presentation on a corporate press release, website, or green campaign.** You may feature a campaign that really is making a difference, or expose one that is greenwashing or pink-washing, ie, pink-ribbon-promoting companies whose products are linked to increased risk of breast cancer, see [thinkbeforeyoupink.org](http://thinkbeforeyoupink.org). **Due midnight Sun Oct. 1<sup>st</sup>.**

### **EJ Assignment 3: YOUR PROJECT STORY PITCH**

**A reported, 500-word story pitch (plan) for your project story.** This is essentially the skeleton of your story – the angle; the data on which the story is based; the sources you’ll interview (5 at minimum); any places you’ll visit and describe; and the outline you envision. I will get these back to you quickly so that you can dive into your stories. **Due midnight Sun Oct. 15<sup>th</sup>.**

### **EJ Assignment 4: SEAHORSE KEY STORY**

A 500-word, descriptive story reported during our field trip. The format is flexible, so that you can challenge yourself to use a new story form. You may tackle place, ecological biography, botany, climate, environmental history, a wildlife or ocean story, a clam-aquaculture story, a work of nature writing, anything goes. Each piece should include a compelling storyline; detailed descriptive writing; and credible sources, among other tenets of good journalism, storytelling and observation that we’ll talk about on the island. Video/audio/other formats OK with my approval. **Due midnight Sun Nov. 12<sup>th</sup>.**

### **EJ Assignment 5: PROJECT STORY, DUE IN TWO PARTS**

Your project story should be between 800 and 1,200 words unless we agreed during the pitch phase on a nontraditional story such as a documentary video, NPR-style audio story, data

visualization, interactive graphic or photojournalistic essay. **A first draft of your story – text only – is due midnight Tues 11/21. Note: A first draft is not a rough draft!** You'll be graded on your effort to make this draft as complete as possible. I need this opportunity to edit your piece so during the last two weeks you can polish it for publication.

**The final draft of your class project is due midnight Sun 12/3.** A polished, fact-checked, final story with my questions answered and edits made from the first draft and at least two added elements – photos; audio or video clips; graphics; timelines or others to draw people in.

**GRADES:** Your final grade is made up of the EJ assignments and participation:

- Environmental Journalism presentations, **due Sun 9/17, 100 points.**
- Critique and class presentation on a corporate press release or green campaign, **due Sun 10/1, 100 points.**
- Pitch/plan (as if you are making a pitch to an editor) for your project story, **due Sun 10/15, 100 points.**
- Seahorse Key story, **due Sun 11/12, 100 points.**
- First draft of class project (text only; let me know what added elements you plan), **due Tues 11/21, 200 points.**
- Final draft of class project (text + at least 2 added elements), **due Sun 12/3, 200 points.**
- Class and field trip attendance, discussion of weekly readings, engagement w/ guest speakers and online w/ hashtag #EJUF, **200 points.**

Each class missed for reasons outside those listed in the UF attendance policy (link at last page of this syllabus), will result in automatic deduction of 25 points per absence. If I've marked you present 16 times between classes and field trip, and if you do the required readings, participate and engage w/ speakers and at least once a week on social media (through the semester – not 16 Tweets in the final week!), you'll earn all 200 participation points. (Again, everyone who comes on the field trip can skip one class, No Questions Asked.)

**TOTAL POINTS POSSIBLE: 1,000**

**GRADING SCALE:**

**930-1,000 points: A**

**900-929: A-**

**880-899: B+**

**830-879: B**

**800-829: B-**

**780-799: C+**

**730-779: C**

**700-729: C-**

**680-699: D+**

**630-679: D**

**600-629: D-**

**599 or below: E**

## 2017 ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM CLASS PROJECT

### Energy Poverty (We'll brainstorm and choose the real title together).

Many of America's poorest households pay disproportionately the highest utility bills in the nation, and must spend a significantly higher percentage of their income for electricity. An analysis of census, utility and property records shows that the same holds true for Alachua County. Moreover, African American residents of the county pay the highest utility rates per square foot *and* the most for electricity as a percentage of their household income, while using the least energy overall. (For example, black households served by Gainesville Regional Utilities pay about 19% more for their utilities by square-foot area than the GRU average.) Working with UF's Program for Resource Efficient Communities, the fall 2017 Environmental Journalism class will report on this data, finding and telling the most compelling human stories behind it. Students will choose their own stories based on our class research and interviews and your reporting. The stories might include investigative pieces on how well or poorly local landlords, including private landlords and public-housing operators, maintain rental properties; human-interest stories on how local families juggle choices such as paying for food vs. utilities; how the energy-efficiency movement seems to have forgotten the poor and how local organizations are working to change that; or the high percentage of black families who live without air-conditioning in one of the hottest regions in the United States. (20% of black households in Alachua County have no mechanical air conditioning, according to Property Appraiser and U.S. Census records.)

This project is designed to give Environmental Journalism students hands-on experience working with data, reporting and crafting human stories, and publishing on professional platforms. Stories spanning narrative writing, photography, videography, audio and graphics, should expose the problems; elucidate their connection to the larger arc of climate change; and most importantly offer solutions -- both those underway and those the community can aspire to. By the end of the semester we hope to help improve student and public understanding of nuances at the cross-section of energy, poverty and race, and to have made a difference in the local community.

**Course schedule and weekly content (Please look for my Thursday evening email prior to Tuesday's class for updates/substitutions.)**

#### **Week 1, August 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**Course intro and policies; philosophy and history of EJ:** Modern Environmental Journalism has roots in the seventeenth century, when **John Evelyn** writes "Fumifugium, or the Inconvenience of the Aer and Smoake of London Dissipated" (1661), proposing remedies for London's choking black air: *The immoderate use of, and indulgence to, sea-coale in the city of London exposes it to one of the fowlest inconveniences and reproaches that can possibly befall so noble and otherwise incomparable City. Whilst they are belching it forth their sooty jaws, the*

*City of London resembles ... the suburbs of Hell [rather] than an assembly of rational creatures.* We'll take a look at the history of this vigorous field from Evelyn to Florida's own **Marjory Stoneman Douglas** – a journalist and author long before she became an environmental activist at age 76 – and **Rachel Carson**, whose 1962 book *Silent Spring* remains one of the best-known works of Environmental Journalism for its profound impact. *Silent Spring* helped launch the modern environmental movement, spurred the federal government to ban DDT, and helped bring about a remarkable recovery of eagles, falcons and other fish-eating birds then at the brink of extinction.

**Prepare for class:** 1) Read the syllabus through to the end and bring any questions you have! 2) Aldo Leopold, "Thinking like a mountain," essay from *A Sand County Almanac*, 1949. 3) "Marjory Stoneman Douglas, 'Voice of the River,'" by Tim Collie, the *Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel*, May 18<sup>th</sup> 1998. 4) "Silent Spring Turns 50," by Elizabeth Grossman, June 25<sup>th</sup> 2012, *Atlantic*. 5) *Silent Spring Part I* – Carson's first excerpt in the *New Yorker*, published in the June 16<sup>th</sup> 1962 issue: <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1962/06/16/silent-spring-part-1>.

**Class story meeting: Introductions:** To each other, including your interests in the environment and the place(s) most important to you. To the syllabus and course mechanics. **In-class documentary films:** Annie Leonard's "The Story of Stuff" and "The Story of Bottled Water." Many core issues on the EJ beat, from water to energy to food, circle back to over-consumption and waste. First part of Mark Kitchell's "Fierce Green Fire" if we have time.

### Week 2, August 29<sup>th</sup>

**Environmental Journalism, the beat:** We'll launch into the profession at the local level: Even given the global problems of climate change, deforestation and emptying seas, the best place to help people understand what's happening to the environment is to show them in their own backyards, drinking water supplies, etc.

**Guest speaker:** Dinah Voyles Pulver of the *Daytona Beach News Journal*, who has won the prestigious Waldo Proffitt Award for Excellence in Environmental Journalism not once, twice, or three times, but four!

**Prepare for class:** 1) Dinah's five-part multi-media series [Troubled Water: The Indian River Lagoon in Peril](#). 2) Click around "Losing Ground," interactive on vanishing Louisiana by Bob Marshall, Jacobs and Al Shaw, for ProPublica & The Lens; 3) Review some of Climate Central's [computer-animated stories](#): including "[This is how climate change will shift the world's cities](#)," by Brian Kahn

**Class story meeting: Introduction to our class project on energy and poverty. Review some multiplatform projects.**

### Week 3 September 5<sup>th</sup>

**Covering Freshwater:** Water lies at the heart of all the planet’s biggest environmental stories – climate change, and human and ecosystems health, along with the competition among water, food and energy. Reporting on freshwater encompasses both quality – nitrates and other pollutants; and quantity, which involves the sustainability of water extraction for human use and equity among different users from ag to utilities (us) – and ecosystems.

**Prepare for class:** 1) Check out ACLU of Michigan’s Curt Guyette’s coverage of the Flint Water Crisis. 2) “In Flint Crisis, a New Model for Environmental Journalism,” by Cynthia Barnett, *Yale Environment* 360. 3) (Scroll) USA Today’s investigative series “[Beyond Flint](#).” 4) Project: Blue Ether, the 2016 Environmental Journalism class project, stories at <https://www.wuft.org/specials/water/>.

**Class story meeting:** Hal Knowles and Lynn Jarrett of UF’s Program for Resource Efficient Communities will come talk with us about the local data and findings we’ll be using in our 2017 class project. Begin to brainstorm project.

#### Week 4 September 12<sup>th</sup>

**Climate Change, the story of our time:** Just as the science of climate change – and the tangible impacts around us – become increasingly clear, the United States is retreating from years of work to try and lower emissions and to make the nation more resilient. Helping the general public understand the global-to-local story of Earth’s warming and its impacts has become more important than ever before – as has making the climate change story engaging. **In-class documentary film:** *Before the Flood*, Leonardo DiCaprio.

**Prepare for class:** 1) *The New York Times*’s interactive three-part series, “Antarctic Dispatches,” May 2017. 2) David Wallace-Wells controversial cover story on climate change in *New York Magazine*, [The Uninhabitable Earth](#), July 9<sup>th</sup> 2017. 3) “Goodbye Miami,” by Jeff Goodell, *Rolling Stone*, June 2013.

**Class story meeting:** We’ll look at emerging multimedia, graphics, mapping and reporting platforms that can help audiences visualize climate change. Members of Gainesville’s Community Weatherization Coalition will visit to further help us brainstorm the stories in our class project.

#### Week 5, September 19<sup>th</sup>

**Conservation photography** tells a purposeful story. “The images exist for a reason,” explains *National Geographic* photographer [Joel Sartore](#). “To save the earth while we still can.” We’ll dig into this dynamic form and how it differs from traditional nature or landscape photography; the key role of imagery in environmental storytelling; and strategies for shooting photos that help audiences understand environmental issues and their personal connection.

**Guest speaker:** Conservation photographer Jennifer Adler, National Geographic Explorer and UF doctoral candidate in Interdisciplinary Ecology.

**Prepare for class:** 1) “Conservation Photography Art, Ethics, and Action,” published in the *International Journal of Wilderness*, by Cristina Mittermeier, founder of the International League of Conservation Photographers. (On Canvas.) 2) “Assignment Earth: How Photography Can Help Save the Planet, *American Photo* magazine Sept.-Oct. 2007, pages 58-83. (Available on Google Books.) 3) Explore our guest speaker’s National Geographic project, Walking on Water. (<https://walkingonwaterfl.org>) 4) View Jenny’s TEDx talk, “Illusions: A Lens into Our Fragile Freshwater” ([http://bit.ly/TEDx\\_JenniferAdler](http://bit.ly/TEDx_JenniferAdler)). 5) View this short video on Joel Sartore’s Photo Ark project: <http://video.nationalgeographic.com/video/ng-live/151208-sartore-photo-ark-lecture-nglive>

**Class story meeting: Project story ideas, reporting strategies, begin building our story budget and assignments.**

### **Week 6, September 26<sup>th</sup>**

**Greenwashing and spin:** Is that new housing development really green? How much water will the proposed organic beef operation pump? Is phosphate feeding the world or depleting the Earth? Asking the questions and the follow-up questions... reporting with sophistication and fairness ... and recognizing greenwashing vs. effective corporate social responsibility/sustainability programs. **In-class documentary film:** *Merchants of Doubt*, Robert Kenner.

**Guest speaker:** Jasper Fessmann, UF doctoral candidate in Mass Communications with a specialization in Public Interest Communications, who will help us identify and counter the PR strategies and tactics used to manipulate journalists and the public.

**Prepare for class:** 1) Read Part I of the series “Exxon: The Road Not Taken,” by Neela Banerjee, Lisa Song and David Hasemyer, September 2015, reporting for the Pulitzer Prize-winning nonprofit news site Inside Climate News. 2) “BP Labors to Cast Doubt on Spill Study It Dislikes,” by Bryan Gruley and Bradley Olson, Bloomberg Business, March 11<sup>th</sup> 2015. 3) Click around BP’s Gulf spill website, The Whole Story, at <https://www.thestateofthegulf.com/the-whole-story/>

**Class story meeting:** Brainstorm ideas for your greenwashing assignment, due Sunday night.

### **Week 7, October 3<sup>rd</sup>**

**Energy:** Coverage blends the old-fashioned skill of following the money and the modern challenge of reporting on the sustainability of our energy choices and sources. As we transition to the low-carbon future, part of the journalist’s watchdog role involves reporting on the feasibility of new technologies and being able to spot hype.

**Guest speaker:** David Biello, science curator at TED Ideas, contributing editor at *Scientific American* and author of *The Unnatural World: The Race to Remake Civilization in Earth's Newest Age*.

**Prepare for class:** 1) Read some of *The Guardian's* award-winning multi-media investigation, "Big Carbon," story links below. It is not necessary to read all of this, but definitely get to: "The Truth Behind Peabody's Campaign to Rebrand Coal as a Poverty Cure."

1. ["The Real Story Behind Shell's Climate Change Rhetoric"](#)
2. ["Shell Accused of Strategy Risking Catastrophic Climate Change"](#)
3. ["Where There Is Oil and Gas There Is Schlumberger"](#)
4. ["Coal Giant Exploited Ebola Crisis for Corporate Gain, Say Health Experts"](#)
5. ["The Truth Behind Peabody's Campaign To Rebrand Coal As a Poverty Cure"](#)
6. ["Revealed: BP's Close Ties with the UK Government"](#)
7. ["BP Ditched Arctic Concerns for Strategic Deal with Russia"](#)
8. ["Colombian Takes BP To Court in UK Over Alleged Complicity in Kidnap and Torture"](#)
9. ["Gilberto Torres Survived Colombia's Death Squads. Now He Wants Justice."](#)

2) Scroll through and get the gist of the Climate Central series "Pulp Fiction," parts 1, 2, and 3, a five-month investigative series by reporter John Upton on the global trade in wood pellets, revealing renewable energy doesn't necessarily mean clean energy. 3) Read our guest speaker's story, "Electric Cars are Not Necessarily Clean" (your battery-powered vehicle is only as green as your electricity supplier, by David Biello, May 11<sup>th</sup> 2016, *Scientific American*).

**Class story meeting: Complete class project story budget and assignments.**

### **Week 8, October 10<sup>th</sup>**

**The Oceans** Sea stories are among the best read in Environmental Journalism because audiences often already care about beaches, charismatic creatures like dolphins and their favorite seafood dinner. What if the story doesn't involve a dolphin with a cute name, rather, complexities such as ocean acidification and red tides, or highly politicized issues such as the Apalachicola oyster collapse?

**Read ahead for class:** 1) "Sea Change: The Pacific's Perilous Turn," 2013 *Seattle Times* series on the global impacts of ocean acidification, by reporter Craig Welch and photographer Steve Ringman. Scroll through the seven stories online at the *Seattle Times's* main link <http://apps.seattletimes.com/reports/sea-change/> so you can view the videos and interactive graphics. 2) "[How Virtual Reality Can Help Us Feel the Pain of Climate Change](#)," Randy Reiland's story in Smithsonian.com about VR as a way to show people the future acidifying sea.

**Class story meeting: Class project.**

**For your calendars:** Thursday October 12th, 2 to 4:30 p.m., Reitz Union's Rion Ballroom: [UF's 3rd annual Climate Communications Summit](#): "Diving Deeper, Immersive Storytelling for Climate Science," will explore virtual reality and other types of immersive storytelling that hold promise for helping people visualize the climate-changed future. The keynote is Jeremy Bailenson, founding director of [Stanford's Virtual Human Interaction Lab](#), behind the ocean acidification VR. {If you would like to go, please sign up at the link. It's free.}

### Week 9, October 17<sup>th</sup>

**Environmental Health and Chemicals** Are chemicals behind the plunging sperm counts of western men (by more than half) over the past forty years, and other “modern ills”? Understanding epidemiology & risk, and more investigative reporting on the environmental beat. Chemical pollution lies at the major intersection of environmental, health, and science reporting.

**Guest speaker: Joe Delfino, UF Professor Emeritus of Environmental Engineering Sciences.**

**Read ahead for class:** 1) “Welcome to Beautiful Parkersburg, West Virginia,” Mariah Blake’s multimedia narrative on a town devastated by the chemical C-8, an ingredient in the making of Teflon. <http://highline.huffingtonpost.com/articles/en/welcome-to-beautiful-parkersburg/> 1) [This excerpt](#) from Theo Colborn’s *Our Stolen Future*, Chapter 6, “To the Ends of the Earth.” And [this short biography](#) of Theo Colborn by Lizzie Grossman.

**Class story meeting:** Q&A with Dr. Delfino, with brainstorming on our class project.

### Week 10, October 24<sup>th</sup>

**Environmental Justice:** We know by now from the class project data that the poor have higher burdens for energy, transportation and other costs. Low-income, minority neighborhoods also tend to bear the brunt of environmental threats such as exposure to chemical plants, Superfund and other toxic waste sites. A growing body of research “suggests that the chronic stressors of poverty may fundamentally alter the way the body reacts to pollutants, especially in young children,” according to the Environmental Health News Network.

**Prepare for class:** 1) “Toxic City,” the Philadelphia Inquirer investigation that uncovered thousands of poor children poisoned by lead – all preventable by landlords – in Philly, [http://www.sej.org/sites/default/files/SEJ\\_ToxicCity.pdf](http://www.sej.org/sites/default/files/SEJ_ToxicCity.pdf). 2) The interactive story “[Cancer Alley: Big Industry, Big Problems](#),” Photography by Matt Black, Writing by Trymaine Lee, published on MSNBC, funded by the Pulitzer Center for Crisis Reporting.

**Class story meeting:** Ensure everyone has their story idea ready to craft their pitch. Share story ideas, strengthen pitches before they are due Sunday night.

### Week 11, October 31<sup>st</sup>

### **Nature writing**

Environmental journalists are journalists working to cover the environment and not environmentalists trying to practice journalism. Still, nature writing has an important place in EJ. Lyrical descriptions of sea or forest, personal narratives, sense of place pieces and adventure tales all can help draw new readers to environmental stories. This week we take a break from issues-based research and storytelling to think about how to help people connect to and contemplate Earth's awe and wonder.

**Prepare for class:** 1) Read Chapter 6, "Cedar Keys," in John Muir's *1,000 Mile Walk to the Gulf*. 2) Sy Montgomery, "Deep Intellect," *Orion* magazine, October 2011. 3) Mark Cocker, "Death of the naturalist: Why is the 'New Nature Writing So Tame?'" *New Statesman*, June 2015. 4) Robert Macfarlane, "Why We Need Nature Writing," *New Statesman*, September 2015.

**Class story meeting:** Details, preparations for field trip, go over Seahorse Key story assignment.

### **Week 12 November 7<sup>th</sup>**

#### **This land is our land: America's national parks**

Dubbed "America's best idea," the national parks celebrated their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary last year but face unprecedented threats between climate change, oil and gas drilling and budget cuts. Meanwhile President Trump has ordered a major review of national monuments to determine if they should be rescinded, resized or otherwise changed. The parks embody the ideal that the nation's magnificent natural wonders should be available to everyone – but does it really mean everyone, and can the ideal survive the troubled times?

**Guest speaker: Western park ranger turned environmental journalist [Jordan Fisher Smith](#)**, author of *Engineering Eden: The True Story of a Violent Death, a Trial and the Fight Over Controlling Nature*.

**Prepare for class:** 1) "It All Began with Conservation," by Wallace Stegner, *Smithsonian* magazine, v. 21 n1, p. 35-43, April 1990. 2) "America's National Parks, By Definition," the first essay in Terry Tempest Williams's *The House of Land: A personal topography of America's national parks*. 3) "What if I'm not white?" A former sports writer tries to find a place for himself in the outdoors," by Glenn Nelson, *High Country News*, June 27<sup>th</sup> 2016. 4) "From Glacierless National Park to the Neverglades: Meet your future national parks" by Kate Yoder, *Grist*, August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2016.

**Class story meeting: Class project.**

### **Week 13 November 14<sup>th</sup>**

**Wildlife & biodiversity: Connecting audiences with the web of life.** Earth is losing species 100 to 1,000 times faster than natural extinction, a rate that has not occurred since the dinosaurs and many other species disappeared 65 million years ago. Scientists say habitat degradation is

the main cause. What are some ways to report on the biodiversity crisis, and make endangerment of Florida's frosted flatwoods salamander as interesting as our charismatic Florida panther?

**Guest Speaker: Dr. Tom Hctor, UF Center for Landscape Planning**, on Florida Wildlife corridors, and efforts to predict and mitigate the effects of sea-level rise and land-use changes on Florida's imperiled species.

**Read ahead for class:** 1) Watch "We Are the Asteroid," a video by Peter Sinclair, Yale Climate Connections. 2) "The Sixth Extinction: A Conversation With Elizabeth Kolbert," by Robert Kunzig, National Geographic, February 18<sup>th</sup> 2014. 3) View on-line interactive report, "Florida Wildlife Corridor Expedition," by conservation photographer Carlton Ward Jr. and National Geographic, <http://www.floridawildlifecorridor.org/geostory/>.

**Class story meeting: Class project.**

### **Week 14 November 21<sup>st</sup>**

**Agriculture and food:** A sprawling and complex topic covering everything from pollution and water/land use to genetically modified crops and the question of how to feed the world. Americans' renewed interest in organic food and urban farming, and their perpetual interest in healthful eating, can make these some of the best-read stories on the environmental beat. How can environmental journalists accurately and fairly report big trade-offs like food vs. fuel, subsidies vs. groundwater extraction, the most productive corn region in the world vs. the Gulf of Mexico dead zone, etc?

**Guest speaker, Anna Prizzia, UF campus food systems coordinator and co-founder, Alachua County's Forage Farm.**

**Read ahead for class:** 1) "A Race to Save the Orange by Altering its DNA," Amy Harmon, *The New York Times*, July 27<sup>th</sup> 2013. 2) "Pointed talk: Michael Pollan and Amy Harmon Dissect a GMO controversy," by Nathanael Johnson, GRIST, August 2013. 3) "A Journalist and a Scientist Break Ground in the GMO Debate," by Amanda Little, *The New Yorker*, April 25<sup>th</sup> 2014. 4) Check out some of the infographics produced by the Food & Environment Reporting Network, thefern.org, particularly, "The Mississippi River and the Making of a Dead Zone."

**Class story meeting: Class project.**

### **Week 15 November 28<sup>th</sup>**

**International Environmental Reporting:** 21<sup>st</sup> Century globalism means we're all connected to life, water, and land on other continents, from toxic chemical pollution in China linked to our products and companies to the dumping of our digital waste in Ghana. Climate change, species extinction, water strife, and all major environmental issues are at once local and global. Making the international connections offers great opportunities for journalists and also requires overcoming lots of assumptions about the rest of the world. (Including assumptions about the p-

word, population growth. For example, many studies indicate the developed world's consumption trumps population growth when it comes to contributing to climate change.)

**Prepare for class: 1) “The Poacher's Pipeline”** by Deborah Davies for Al Jazeera Media Network (47-minute documentary, this fresh and powerful investigative angle on the familiar subject of rhino poaching focuses not only on the poachers and the consumers, but the middlemen. 2) “Famine is a feminist issue,” by Lisa Palmer, Slate, April 10<sup>th</sup> 2014. 3) View, “China on the Brink: Photographer Sean Gallagher on an Environmental Crisis,” available on Sean's website.

**Class story meeting:** International reporting and resources, grants available for international environment, climate, population and health journalism.

### **Week 16 December 5<sup>th</sup>**

**Sustainability and success stories:** Humans have turned around major environmental crises, including acid rain at the global level; littering at the national level; the clean-ups of severely polluted water bodies from the Hudson River to Tampa Bay. Reporting on both steady progress and success is crucial to give people a sense of solutions – and hope for the future.

**Prepare for class:** 1) Lest we don't talk enough about the importance of humor: View this [frank video](#) of Chip Giller, founder of Grist, on helping create the “future that doesn't suck.” <https://vimeo.com/121081128>. 2) “Envision 2050: The Future of Cities,” By Todd Reubold, *Ensia* magazine. June 16<sup>th</sup> 2014. 3) “In Kenya, a Transformation in Shades of REDD,” by Amy Yee, *Undark* magazine, July 28<sup>th</sup> 2017.

**Class story meeting: Getting Published, Promoting Your Work and Careers in Environmental Journalism.** The good, the bad, and the ugly of making EJ a career. Also: pitching your story to professional outlets; building your brain trust; finding and keeping professional mentors; social media and how to promote your work without being insufferable.

**AND, WE'LL CELEBRATE FINISHING OUR CLASS PROJECT!**

## **LAST BUT NOT LEAST ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM CLASS POLICIES**

**Academic Honesty** is expected at all times. As a UF student, you've agreed to comply with the University Honor Code. Please make sure you understand the code and consequences, which are here: <https://www.dso.ufl.edu/sccr/process/student-conduct-honor-code/>. Any violations of this code in Environmental Journalism class will be reported to the Dean of Students. You must also pay special attention to journalistic ethics and issues of plagiarism and copyright; please read and understand UF's College of Journalism and Communications statement on these matters: [www.jou.ufl.edu/academics/bachelors/journalism/academic-honesty/](http://www.jou.ufl.edu/academics/bachelors/journalism/academic-honesty/)

**Class attendance:** Requirements for class attendance and other work fall under UF policies: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>. Any reason for absence from regular class that does not appear on this list of excused absences will result in an automatic 25-point deduction per missed class.

**Late assignments:** Meeting deadline is crucial to your future success and relationship with bosses/editors, whether in journalism or any other field. On all assignments, your grade will drop one full letter grade for each day overdue.

**Students with disabilities:** All reasonable accommodations will be made. Should you need them, please register first with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/)) and provide appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Please follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

**Class Sustainability Policy: Please, no bottled water or any beverages in throw-away bottles. Beverages in durable, reusable containers are fine.** Starting with the syllabus, I will distribute all course materials/hand-outs electronically, either through email or Canvas. All assignments should be turned in via Canvas. Regarding the nonfiction books graduate students and some undergrads will read: As a reader and author, I do not consider printed books waste, especially if you enjoy keeping favorite books, hand-writing your impressions in them, or collecting author signatures/inscriptions. This semester, you'll have the opportunity to spend some meaningful time with both authors on our syllabus, so if you'd like David Biello, Jeff Goodell or Jordan Fisher Smith to autograph your book, buy the printed text. Otherwise, e-readers or used copies are both great ways to read more sustainably and cut down on accumulations.

**Course and instructor evaluations:** Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last weeks of the semester; you'll be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available for students at: <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>

**Your instructor: Cynthia Barnett** is Environmental Journalist in Residence at the UF College of Journalism and Communications. She is author of the water books *Mirage: Florida and the Vanishing Water of the Eastern U.S.* (2007); *Blue Revolution: Unmaking America's Water Crisis* (2011); and *Rain: A Natural and Cultural History* (2015), long-listed for the National Book Award and a finalist for the PEN/E.O. Wilson Award for Literary Science Writing. She's written on the environment for *National Geographic*, the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, the *Atlantic*, *Discover*, *Salon*, *Politico*, *Orion*, *Ensisia* and many other publications. She earned her bachelor's in journalism and master's in environmental history, both from UF, and spent a year as a Knight-Wallace Fellow at the University of Michigan specializing in freshwater.