



Environmental Journalism, Fall 2022

Undergrads JOU 4314/Grads MMC 6936

Mondays 9:35 a.m.-12:35 p.m.

Weimer Hall 2056

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Class hashtag: #EJUF

Office Hours for Students: Walk-in @ 3063: Mondays 1 p.m.-4 p.m.

By appointment: Phone; Zoom; or Walk & Talk in Florida Park neighborhood.

Environmental Journalism, the craft: Living in what scientists term the Anthropocene Era (anthropo: man, and cene: new), in which human activities have ever-more serious impacts on our communities and the planet, it is increasingly important to report on and improve public understanding of climate change; freshwater quality and 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.



EJUF COURSE OUTCOMES:

By the end of the course, you will:

- Understand the specialization of Environmental Journalism and its role in an informed citizenry, including both watchdog and storytelling roles.
- Evaluate pressing environmental issues with objectivity and fairness.
- Analyze sources and differentiate among them, including ranges of scientific, policy, activist and corporate sources and their press releases; and including the ability to discern manipulation such as greenwashing from scientifically valid research.
- Critique a range of nonfiction environmental communications, from film to photography and from activist missives to scientific research.
- Demonstrate ability to communicate in-depth environmental issues in journalistic form to lay audiences in compelling ways.



EJUF COURSE READINGS, PARTICIPATION & GRADES:

READINGS: Please read the assigned works of journalism each week before class. Most are here on the syllabus and some will be added based on news of the day. Grad students are required to read and review a nonfiction book of environmental journalism, science writing or environmental history **by Thanksgiving**. Please talk with me about your interests so we can find the right book for you.

For all students, our weekly assigned articles and essays are available free online, or through UF's electronic databases. Please also do your best 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. You will want to join (\$25 for students) if considering EJ as a career.

PARTICIPATION: Being engaged in this class is part of your grade. Class time will consist of discussion, with each other and some terrific guest speakers. It's essential that you keep up with the readings, come to class prepared and participate: Share your insights, ask questions, challenge respectfully. **With only 14 classes periods together, 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, and to connect with our guest speakers. 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. (On Insta, I am: @cynthia_barnett.)

OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIP TO SEAHORSE KEY! Saturday Oct. 22nd and Sunday Oct. 23rd

Getting your boots muddy in the field is an important element of environmental storytelling. The field experience is a key part of class, and the related assignment part of your grade. 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. Thanks to a CJC donor, there is no field trip fee this year, but please plan to contribute a dish for dinner and offer to drive carpool if you are able. More details and directions in class and by email.

GRADES

- Attendance & Engagement in EJ class: **100**
- Assignment 1: EJ presentations: **100** (9/11)
- Assignment 2: Greenwashing analysis: **100** (10/2)
- Assignment 3: Climate change story: **100** (10/16)
- Assignment 4: Place-based story: **100** (10/30)
- Assignment 5: Pitch and Outline, Final #EJUF Environmental Story: **200** (11/13)
- Assignment 6: Scientific study story: **100** (11/27)
- Assignment 7: Final draft, environmental story: **200** (12/7) **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



EJUF COURSE ASSIGNMENTS

EJ Assignment 1: ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM PRESENTATIONS

Undergrads: A 500-word critique of a work of Environmental Journalism you choose from this list of the winners of this year's SEJ Annual Awards for Reporting on the Environment:

<https://www.sej.org/winners-sej-21st-annual-awards-reporting-environment>

Plan to give us an informal class presentation on the strengths and weaknesses of the piece. It could be a long-form story; conservation film; data story; conservation photography project; multimedia story; or other EJ work. Please post the story you choose on the Canvas discussion thread where I've asked so we don't have duplicates.

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"; climate propaganda; covering GMOs; the problem of doomsday climate reporting; sexism in science writing; etc.

Due midnight Sunday Sept. 11th; undergrads, turn in text on Canvas with link to story or trailer etc. Grad students should turn in text, + slides for an approx. 15-min. class presentation. **All students should be prepared to present as of Monday Sept. 12th; we will schedule presentations over the next few weeks.**

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. **Due midnight Sunday Oct. 2nd;** please include link to company or ad etc., and **be prepared to present over the next few weeks.**

EJ Assignment 3: CLIMATE STORY: Your first story for #EJUF is a climate change story spanning any beat, from agriculture to real estate to sports to weather. Think about our guest speakers Hannah Brown and Alex Harris, and how they localize and humanize this global crisis. You can tackle a local, state or national story, newsy or featurey. The key requirement is that it intersects with the science of climate change, ie, heat records and Gator games or local crops; solar energy and carbon emissions; whether/how local businesses or residents can take advantage of the new climate bill; the UF English professor who plants trees with his students for climate mitigation etc. A 500-word written story; a data-viz story; or 2-3 minute audio or video story. **Due midnight Sunday Oct. 16th.**

EJ Assignment 4: FIELD TRIP (PLACE-BASED) STORY: A 500-word, descriptive story reported during our field trip weekend. The format is flexible; consider trying out 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 description of nature and place; and credible sources, among other tenets of good journalism, storytelling and observation. 500-word written piece; multimedia package; or 3-min video/audio story. **Due midnight Sunday Oct. 30th.**

EJ Assignment 5: PITCH AND OUTLINE, #EJUF FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL STORY: A reported, 500-word story pitch (plan) for your major Environmental Journalism story that will be due on the last day of the semester. 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. **Due midnight Sunday Nov. 13th; this should look like a formal, national magazine pitch; we will devote an entire class to how to map it out.**

EJ Assignment 6: SCIENTIFIC STUDY STORY: The “study story” is a basic of science and environmental journalism; a new study publishes and you translate the research into a story that draws in your audience and helps them understand what’s important. Sometimes you’ll get a head’s up about a study from a scientist you’ve gotten to know, but you can also follow journals in your area of interest and sign up for email alerts. We’ll talk about how to find research; how to access journals and avoid scammy ones; and how to write the story—including interviewing not only one of the study’s authors, but at least one independent source who was not involved in the research. 350-500 word written story; a data-visualization story; or 2-3 minute audio or video story. **Due midnight Sunday Nov. 27th** but try for before Thanksgiving. Please provide me a PDF of the study when you turn in your story. If your story is audio or video, please also provide a transcript.

EJ Assignment 7: #EJUF FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL STORY: Your final story should be between 1,200 and 1,500 words unless we agreed on a video story, NPR-style audio story, interactive graphic, or other form. The story should include at least two additional elements—photos; audio or video clips; data visualizations; a timeline or other elements to draw people in. This piece should have a compelling storyline and a good blend of storytelling and science. It should be clear and well-organized and get across why it’s important. It should include at least five sources and be fact-checked by you. It should answer any questions I raised in your pitch/outline. An “A” story is one that I find ready for publication. **Due midnight Wednesday Dec. 7th.**



DETAILED EJ CLASSTIME AGENDA & WEEKLY READINGS

Week 1, Monday Aug 29th, INTROS: Intros to the course, syllabus and each other, including mutual interests in the environment and the place(s) most important to you. Intros to the craft, which stretches back to 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 foulest 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.*

PREPARE: 1) Read this #EJUF course syllabus in full

NO CLASS FOR THE LABOR DAY HOLIDAY, MONDAY SEPT 5TH

Week 2, Mon Sept 12th, HISTORY: To finish introducing EJ and its history, we’ll devote some time to the 20th Century environmental reporting that changed America’s (and Florida’s) environmental ethos and helped give rise to modern environmental protection, including a look at Florida’s 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 EJ 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: 1) “Marjory Stoneman Douglas, ‘Voice of the River,’” by Tim Collie, the *Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel*, 1998; 2) *Silent Spring* Part I, Carson’s first excerpt in *The New Yorker*, published in the June 16th 1962 issue, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1962/06/16/silent-spring-part-1>.

Week 3, Mon Sept 19th, PLATFORMS & PEOPLE:

Whether on the *Washington Post* climate desk or one of the dynamic new nonprofit news sites covering the environment, some of the most impactful Environmental Journalism connects intimately to the lives of people and their places. The planet will survive as it has for 4.5 billion years, but environmental crises such as climate change, water pollution and the loss of forests around the world have profound consequences for humanity, offering rich opportunities to tell human stories that make a difference. This week looks at the range of Environmental Journalism platforms and how to center people in EJ stories. {Don’t worry, we’ll also devote an entire class session to reporting on animals. 🐾 🦋 🐸}

Guest speaker: #EJUF alumnus Dr. Hannah Brown co-founder, The Marjorie. @hannah_o_brown

PREPARE: “This tree has stood here for 500 years. Will it be sold for \$17,000?” By Juliet Eilperin, *The Washington Post*, Dec. 30th 2021. [Here is a gift link to the article.](#)

Read **one** of these three major investigative series by The Marjorie; we'll be discussing them with our guest speaker, and different students should contribute to the conversation depending on which one you read. **Please read each part of the series you choose.**

Fruits of Their Labor by Hannah Brown, Rebecca Burton, Lyndsey Gilpin, Carly Berlin and Anna Hamilton, *The Marjorie*, Oct. 19th 2020.

Hog-Tied by Hannah Brown, Rebecca Burton and Anna Hamilton, *The Marjorie*, Feb. 17th 2020.

A Sugarcane Boiling Point by Hannah Brown, Rebecca Burton and Anna Hamilton, *The Marjorie*, March 26th 2019.

Week 4 Mon Sept 26th GREENWASHING & CLIMATE MISINFORMATION: 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.

Guest speaker: #EJUF alumnus Dr. Jasper Fessmann, UWVa professor of public interest communications, who will help us identify and counter the misinformation and greenwashing PR strategies and tactics used to manipulate journalists and the public. @JasperFessmann

PREPARE: 1) Watch the documentary film *Merchants of Doubt*, directed by Robert Kenner. The film is available free online UF students via the UF Library's catalogue. Watch this fantastic movie with a friend/classmate if you can. (93 minutes) 2) Read "Climate disinformation continues to leave a mark as world gets hotter," by David Keppler, *The Associated Press*, July 2022.

Week 5 Mon Oct. 3rd, COVERING CLIMATE CHANGE, THE STORY OF OUR TIME:

Covering the climate crisis is an "all-hands-on-deck affair," as CNN climate correspondent John Sutter points out, a story for all beats. But climate journalism is also an in-demand specialization requiring fundamental knowledge of climate science, a willingness to do investigative reporting, skepticism for false solutions, and other nuances. Helping the public understand warming, its human causes and its impacts to the Earth and its life is one of the great challenges of journalism, and one of the great stories of our time.

Guest speaker: #EJUF alumnus Alex Harris, climate change reporter, *The Miami Herald*, @harrisalexc

PREPARE: By our guest speaker, all in *The Miami Herald*: 1) "Feds Consider a Plan To Protect Miami-Dade From Storm Surge: 10-Foot Walls by the Coast"; 2) "As Seas Rise, Your Coastal Home in Florida Could Lose Value. One Report Says 15% by 2030"; 3) A Town's Pioneering Plan To Fund Retreat From Sea Rise: Have New Development Pitch In"; 4) "Sea Rise makes septic tanks 'ticking bombs.' Why does Miami-Dade still allow them?"; 5) "At \$60 Million a Mile, The Keys May Abandon Some Roads To Sea Rise Rather Than Raise Them."

AND: “Dispossessed, Again: Climate Change Hits Native Americans Especially Hard,” by Christopher Flavelle and Kalen Goodluck, *The New York Times*, October 28th 2021.; “In Georgia’s Peach Orchards, Warm Winters Raise Specter of Climate Change,” by Meera Subramanian, *Inside Climate News*, August 2017; “I work in the environmental movement. I don’t care if you recycle.” By Mary Annaisse Heglar, *VOX*, June 2019; and “Climate change: Where we are in seven charts and what you can do to help,” Brad Plumer, the BBC, January 2020.

Week 6, Mon Oct. 10th, ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: While climate change is a global phenomenon, its negative consequences are more severely felt by poor people and poor countries, and by low-income people within wealthy countries. In the United States as in many parts of the world, minority neighborhoods bear the brunt of environmental threats such as exposure to chemical plants, Superfund and other toxic waste sites. Research shows that the chronic stressors of poverty fundamentally alter the way the body reacts to pollutants, especially in young children. Meanwhile the environmental movement and Environmental Journalism alike have faltered in inclusion, cultural sensitivity and work on vulnerable communities.

Guest speaker: NKwanda Jah, chair, Alachua County NAACP Environmental and Climate Justice Committee.

PREPARE:

- 1) Energy Burden, Part I, Energy comes at a much greater cost for Gainesville’s poor: <https://www.wuft.org/news/energy-burden/>
- 2) Energy Burden Part II, the Power of Irma: www.wuft.org/news/energy-burden/the-storm/
- 3) Letter from SouthWest Organizing Project to the president of the National Wildlife Federation, March 16th 1990: <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/swop.pdf>;
- 4) “This is Environmental Racism,” By Darryl Fears and Brady Dennis, *The Washington Post*, April 6th 2021.
- 5) “To stop a scrapyard, some protesters in a Latino community risked everything,” By Darryl Fears and Robin Amer, *The Washington Post*, Oct. 22nd 2021.
- 6) “The rural South’s invisible public health crisis,” by Lyndsey Gilpin, *Southerly*, July 5th 2018.

Week 7, Mon Oct 17th, CONSERVATION PHOTOGRAPHY: 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 and National Geographic Explorer Carlton Ward Jr.

- PREPARE:** 1) “How America’s most endangered cat could help save Florida,” story by Douglas Main, photographs by Carlton Ward Jr., *National Geographic*, March 9th 2021.
- 2) “Protecting the Florida Wildlife Corridor,” by Jennifer Reed, *Gulfshore Life*, March 31st 2022.

- 3) Familiarize yourself with floridawildlifecorridor.org, including “About the Corridor,” and “Inspired by a Bear.”
- 4) View: Witness: Defining Conservation Photography (17 minutes).
- 5) “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.)

Sat & Sun Oct. 22nd and 23rd: FIELD TRIP WEEKEND! More details for the trip, including Packing List and planning the car pool, in class. The field trip experience is also “Nature Writing Week” in #EJUF; here are some reading materials to prepare as we talk about the genre:

PREPARE: 1) “The Cedar Keys,” by John Muir in *1,000 Mile Walk to the Gulf*, trek taken in 1867, book published posthumously in 1919. {On Canvas.} 2) “Nature Writing is Survival Writing: On Rethinking a Genre,” by Michelle Nijhuis, Lit Hub, April 2022. 3) “Out There, Nobody Can Hear You Scream,” by Latricia Graham, on the Black experience in the outdoors, Sept. 2020 in *Outside Magazine*, and a humorous counterpart: 4) Drew Lanham, “9 Rules for the Black Birdwatcher,” *Orion Magazine*, Oct. 2013.

Week 8 Mon Oct. 24th ENVIRONMENTAL FILMMAKING: Shorts & documentaries, dead-serious or hilarious, environmental films can raise awareness, expose wrongdoing, promote solutions, inspire action and bring about profound change like few other forms. A single documentary, *Blackfish*, ended SeaWorld’s killer whale breeding program and theatrical orca shows, impact now known as “The Blackfish Effect.”

Guest speaker: CJC alumnus and Emmy-winning journalist Oscar Coral, producer of several environmental documentaries including “The Fellowship of the Springs.”

PREPARE: 1) View: “The Fellowship of the Springs.” (Private link and password provided on email.) 2) Read: Laure Boissat et al., “Nature documentaries as catalysts for change: Mapping out the ‘Blackfish Effect’,” *People and Nature*, 2021; 3: 1179-1192.

Week 9, Mon Oct 31st INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL REPORTING: An 8-billion population, resource extraction and global trade and travel connects us all 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. We’ll also spend time on travel grants available for international environment, climate and health journalism.

Guest speaker: Gloria Dickie, London-based global climate and environment correspondent for Reuters. Gloria has reported from five continents and on topics as diverse as maggot farming and giant pandas for *The New York Times*, *National Geographic*, and many other publications. Her forthcoming book, *Eight Bears*, explores our relationships with bears around the world.
@GloriaDickie.

PREPARE: Read some of our guest speaker's favorite stories: 1) How to Make Peace with the World's Deadliest Bears, National Geographic (grant funded); 2) Green Glove, Iron Fist, Biographic Magazine; 3) These scientists created a 'cloud curtain' in Peru's tropical forests to mimic the future, PRI's The World; 4) Amid High-Tech Options, a Reckoning for Iceland's Glacier Keepers, Undark; 5) The Polar Crucible, Scientific American.

Week 10, Mon Nov 7th PREPARE, PLAN, PITCH: With the pitch and outline for your final environmental story due next week we'll spend class workshoping everyone's final story ideas; brainstorming reporting suggestions and strategies; and talking about pitches.

PREPARE: Please spend some time with the Open Notebook's "Pitch Database," a fantastic resource for learning to write great pitches: <https://www.theopennotebook.com/pitch-database/>. Everyone should bring a favorite successful pitch.

Week 11, Mon Nov 14th THE ART & SCIENCE OF SCIENCE REPORTING: Translating scientific research and interviewing scientists can be challenging; the key is to be prepared. Going in with a knowledge gap is OK. After all, you're there to bridge the knowledge gap between the science and your audience. Just in time for your Scientific Study Story due Nov. 27th, we'll cover how to find newsworthy scientific research; tips for finding and interviewing scientists; and tricky issues that come up, such as the scientist who asks to read your draft or the one who seems to be speaking an alien language.

Guest speaker: CJC Librarian April Hines on tapping UF's online science/research databases. @UFCJCLibrarian.

PREPARE: 1) The 500 Women Scientists' GAGE Resources page will help put you in touch with more women scientists, and scientists from underrepresented backgrounds. 2) "How to Find Scientist Sources and Plan Interviews," by Abdullahi Tsanni, The Open Notebook, April 27th 2021.

Week 12 Mon Nov 21st DATA REPORTING & DATABASES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STORYTELLERS: Environmental databases can be the most frustrating part of the beat given zealous electronic gatekeepers, but also the most rewarding, offering important and sometimes off-the-beaten-path story ideas on topics like extreme heat with the CJC Heat & Health Tracker; industrial chemical releases via EPA's Toxic Release Inventory; rain and other weather records with NOAA's Data Discovery Portal; Greenhouse Gas Emissions by state and industry with the Greenhouse Gas Inventory Data Explorer and countless others.

Guest speaker: (Invited) Ken Ward Jr., a MacArthur Foundation "Genius Grant" recipient who cofounded the Mountain State Spotlight after three decades reporting for the Charleston Gazette on the impacts of coal mining, chemical manufacturing and natural gas drilling in his home state of West Virginia. Part of the ProPublic "Sacrifice Zones" team. @Kenwardjr

PREPARE: These stories in "Sacrifice Zones: Mapping Cancer-Causing Industrial Air Pollution," by Al Shaw, Lylla Younes, Ava Kofman, Lisa Song, Max Blau, Kiah Collier, Ken Ward Jr., Alyssa Johnson, Maya Miller, Lucas Waldron and Kathleen Flynn for *ProPublica*, with The

Texas Tribune and *Mountain State Spotlight*, is worth your time. This unprecedented data investigation identified more than 1,000 hot spots of hazardous industrial air pollution across the U.S. that elevate the cancer risk of more than a fifth of the nation's population. More than 76 local news outlets ran the analysis, and ProPublica has made its mapping tool available to other reporters.

1) "[Poison in the Air](#)" 2) "[The Most Detailed Map of Cancer-Causing Industrial Air Pollution in the U.S.](#)" 3) "[What's Polluting the Air? Not Even the EPA Can Say.](#)" 4) "[The Dirty Secret of America's Clean Dishes](#)" 5) "[A Plant That Sterilizes Medical Equipment Spews Cancer-Causing Pollution on Tens of Thousands of Schoolchildren.](#)"

Week 13 Mon Nov 28th ANIMAL WEEK IN #EJUF! Earth is losing species at a rate 100 to 1,000 times faster than natural extinction, a pace that has not occurred since the dinosaurs and many other species disappeared 65 million years ago. Environmental Journalists have special ethical considerations toward the animals we cover. These creatures also help tell and sell our stories, from polar bears struggling to survive a warming Arctic to sharks, which marine scientists have found are more harmed than helped by Discovery Channel's Shark Week, the longest-running cable series in history. How do we avoid the "Jaws Effect"? Should we avoid anthropomorphizing animals? 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?

1) "[Deep Intellect](#)," by Sy Montgomery, *Orion Magazine*, first published in 2011/ 2) "[One of the World's Biggest Sea Snails at Risk of Extinction](#)," by Cynthia Barnett, *National Geographic*, April 6th 2022. 3) [Q&A with author and shark biologist David Shiffman](#), *Mongabay*, June 2022. 4) "[Sharks, Lies and Videotape: Scientists Document Many Problems with Shark Week, Marine Biologists Biggest Stage](#)," Allegheny College, July 2021. 5) "[Are wild animals really 'wild'?](#)" TED Talk by the environmental writer Emma Marris, followed by Q&A with TED science curator David Biello, September, 2021. 6) "[Modern Zoos Are Not Worth the Moral Cost](#)," Opinion piece by Emma Marris, *The New York Times*, June 11th 2021.

Week 14 & last day of class, Mon Dec 5th SOLUTIONS JOURNALISM, 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 without false promises. Also! *Getting Published, Promoting Your Work and Careers in Environmental Journalism*. The good, the bad, and the ugly of making EJ a career; 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.

PREPARE: 1) View this [frank video](https://vimeo.com/121081128) of Chip Giller, founder of Grist, on helping create the "future that doesn't suck." <https://vimeo.com/121081128>. 2) "Climate Journalism Enters the Solutions Era," by Abby Rabinowitz, *Columbia Journalism Review*, April 21st, 2021. 3) Peruse the episodes of the fantastic podcast [How to Save a Planet](#) with Dr. Ayana Elizabeth Johnson, and choose one to listen to and talk discuss in class.



YOUR INSTRUCTOR

Cynthia Barnett is Environmental Journalist in Residence at UF's College of Journalism and Communications. She is an award-winning journalist who has reported on water and climate change around the world, and the author of four books including her most recent *The Sound of the Sea: Seashells and the fate of the Oceans*, named one of the best science books of the year by NPR's Science Friday. She also wrote *Mirage*, *Blue Revolution*, and *Rain: A Natural and Cultural History*, 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*, *Hakai*, *Orion* and many others. 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. She is mom to two college students, lives just north of campus in the Florida Park neighborhood and likes to do walk-and-talk office hours.



COURSE POLICIES

Student Health and Wellness: Your well-being is important to me, and to everyone here at the University of Florida and our College of Journalism and Communications. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging everyone to look out for one another and reach out for help if anyone is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the person in distress. A nighttime/weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. Please remember that asking for help is a sign of strength. In case of emergency, call 911.

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/) and provide appropriate documentation. Once registered, you'll receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to me when requesting accommodation. Please follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

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.

Class attendance: Requirements for attendance and other work fall under UF policies: <https://catalog.ufl.edu/ugrad/current/regulations/info/attendance.aspx>. If you need to miss for COVID or other illness, I will provide Zoom links from virtual lecturers or slides from mine; please get notes from a classmate. Otherwise, any reason for absence from regular class that does not appear on UF's 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.

Diversity & Inclusion: The College of Journalism and Communications is committed to an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity along a number of dimensions, including race, ethnicity and national origins, gender and gender identity, sexuality, class and religion. We expect each of our journalism courses to help foster an understanding of the diversity of peoples and cultures and of the significance and impact of mass communications in a global society.

Our classrooms are places where you will be treated with respect. We welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, beliefs, ethnicities, genders, gender identities, gender expressions, national origins, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, ability—and other visible and nonvisible differences. All members of this class are expected to contribute to a respectful, welcoming and inclusive environment for every other member of the class.

Class Sustainability Policy: Please, no bottled water or any beverages in throw-away bottles. Beverages in durable, reusable containers are fine. Starting with this 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 book graduate students 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. Otherwise, e-readers or used copies are both great ways to read more sustainably and cut down on accumulations.

Storytelling Sources, Diversity and Conflicts of Interest: For our class and always, please pursue storytelling that is fair, accurate and complete—and based on information gathered from a variety of diverse sources. A greater understanding of the cultural and ethnic differences in our society will enhance learning, and help students develop habits and sensitivities that will be of great value in their workplaces and communities. This emphasis on diversity of sources shall not focus just on race and ethnicity or sexual orientation, but also age, education, gender, geography, occupation, politics, religion, socioeconomics, etc.

Avoid conflicts of interest at all times. Students in this course shall not be used as sources for your assignments. The same applies to relatives, roommates, friends (from campus or back home), sorority sisters, fraternity brothers, or members of any other co-curricular or extracurricular organizations to which you belong. Interviewing UF faculty, staff, or employees may be allowed provided they and the student are not friends.

Sources must be interviewed either in person, by phone or via Zoom or other virtual platform. Email interviews are discouraged and permitted only with my permission in advance of that interview. Sometimes a source will want you to let her read a story before it's submitted or published. Do not do so. It may be appropriate – sometimes, depending on the story, even ideal – to call the source back to confirm facts or context, or, in the case of complex science, to read a sentence back to ensure

you've accurately translated the science. Be wary, however, of allowing someone else to steer, censor or otherwise undermine your reporting or story approach.

Multiple sourcing is required – and “sources” means interacting with real human beings, not simply relying on organizational statements, news releases or websites. This also involves contacting as many people or obtaining as much related documentation as you can. It's wise to interview as many sources as possible, so you have more than you need for your story.

All facts and opinions in your story must be attributed to sources. Anonymous or off-the-record material is not acceptable any more than fictional people. If there's a compelling reason to not use a source's full name in a story, you must run it by me before agreeing.

Assignments not abiding these sourcing, diversity and interview mandates will lose points.

Course and instructor evaluations: Finally, please 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/>