



## Environmental Journalism, Fall 2023

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 urgent 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, disinformation, public apathy and politics, 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 rising CO<sub>2</sub> 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 and disinformation 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.



## EJF COURSE READINGS, PARTICIPATION & GRADES:

**READINGS:** Please read (or view/listen to) 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—look for my weekly email, usually on Thursday mornings, with reminders for the following Monday class. 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; make sure you've downloaded the [Gatorlink VPN](#) so you can access them. 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](http://www.sej.org/headlines/list). You will want to join ([\\$25 for students](#)/first year) if considering EJ as a career.

**PARTICIPATION:** Being engaged 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, I expect you to attend every class**, and to engage with us on Twitter ("X"!) with a minimum of one original post a week. Even given its downsides, Twitter is worth paying attention to for its vigorous discussion of the environment, and to connect with guest speakers. I will tweet from @cynthiabarnett 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. Instagram: @ejufcjc.

**OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIP TO SEAHORSE KEY! Sun Oct. 29<sup>th</sup>-Mon Oct. 30<sup>th</sup>.** Getting out in the field is crucial to the best environmental storytelling. Our field trip is a key part of class, and the assignment part of your grade. Sunday morning, we'll drive an hour west 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 Seahorse Key. Thanks to a CJC donor, there is no fee, but please plan to contribute a dish and offer to drive carpool if you are able. More details and directions in class and by email. Please request time off work and other 10/30 classes now; [an acceptable absence under UF attendance policies](#).

### GRADES

- Attendance & Engagement in EJ class: **100**
- Assignment 1: EJ presentations: **100** (due Fri 9/8 @ 6 p.m.)
- Assignment 2: Climate change story: **100** (due Fri 9/22 @ 6 p.m.)
- Assignment 3: Scientific study story: **100** (due Fri 10/6 @ 6 p.m.)
- Assignment 4: Greenwashing/disinformation analysis: **100** (due Fri 10/20 @ 6 p.m.)
- Assignment 5: Pitch and Outline, #EJUF final story: **100** (due Fri 10/27 @ 6 p.m.)
- Assignment 6: Place-based (field trip) story: **100** (due Fri 11/3 @ 6 p.m.)
- Assignment 7: First draft, #EJUF final story: **100** (due Fri 11/17 @ 6 p.m.)
- Assignment 8: Final draft, #EJUF final story: **200** (Due Weds 12/6 @ 6 p.m.)

**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 the most recent winners of the 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; climate disinformation; covering GMOs; the problem of doomsday climate reporting; sexism in science writing; etc.

**Due Friday Sept. 8<sup>th</sup> @ 6 p.m.:** 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 Mon Sept. 11<sup>th</sup>; we'll schedule over the next few weeks.**

**EJ Assignment 2: CLIMATE STORY:** A climate change story spanning any beat, from agriculture to real estate to sports to weather. Think about our guest speakers Alex Harris, Hannah Brown and Becca Burton 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; 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 Friday Sept. 22<sup>nd</sup> @ 6 p.m.**

**EJ Assignment 3: 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 Friday Oct. 6<sup>th</sup> @ 6 p.m.** 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 4: ANALYSIS OF MISINFORMATION, DISINFORMATION, FALSE SOLUTIONS or GREENWASHING.** A 500-word critique and informal class presentation on a current example of misinformation/disinformation or alleged false solution or greenwashing. You could analyze a political or corporate press release, website or green campaign. You may feature an effort that really represents a tangible solution or makes a difference—or expose one that is spreading disinformation, greenwashing or pink-washing. (Pink-ribbon-promoting companies whose products are linked to increased risk of breast cancer, see [thinkbeforeyoupink.org](http://thinkbeforeyoupink.org).)

**Due Friday Oct. 20<sup>th</sup> @ 6 p.m.** Please include link to company or ad etc., and **be prepared to present informally over the next few weeks.** No slides necessary but do show us the campaign, advertisement, etc.

**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 Friday Oct. 27<sup>th</sup> @ 6 p.m.** This will take the form of a formal, national magazine pitch; we will devote an entire class to how to map it out.

**EJ Assignment 6: FIELD TRIP (PLACE-BASED) STORY:** A 500-word, descriptive story reported during our field trip. 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 Friday Nov. 3<sup>rd</sup> @ 6 p.m.**

**EJ Assignment 7: FIRST DRAFT, #EJUF FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL STORY:** Your final environmental 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. First draft is not a rough draft! You'll be graded on your effort to make this draft as strong and complete as possible.

**Due Wednesday Nov. 22<sup>nd</sup> @ 6 p.m.** I will return edits the weekend after Thanksgiving so that you can enjoy the holiday and have time to complete your final draft by the last day of the semester.

**EJ Assignment 8: #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 graphics, 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 address all edits and answer all questions from my edits on your first draft. An “A” story is ready for publication. **Due the last day of UF classes: Wednesday Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> @ 6 p.m.**



## DETAILED EJ CLASSTIME AGENDA & WEEKLY READINGS

**Week 1, Monday Aug 28<sup>th</sup> INTROS & HISTORY:** Intros to the course, story assignments, field trip, and each other, including mutual interests in the environment and the place(s) most important to you. Intro 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 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 also devote some time to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century environmental writers who changed the U.S. and Florida’s environmental ethos and helped give rise to modern environmental protection. They include 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.

Finally, we’ll introduce a class theme exploring the history of the industry that was also at work on disinformation and denial.

**PREPARE:** 1) Read this #EJUF syllabus in full. 2) “Marjorie Stoneman Douglas, ‘Voice of the River,’” by Tim Collie, the *Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel*, 1998 (on Canvas); 3) [Silent Spring Part I](#), Carson’s first excerpt in *The New Yorker*, published in the June 16<sup>th</sup> 1962 issue. 4) Listen to the ZERO podcast episode “[Inside the industry that made climate denial work.](#)” Akshat Rathi interviews Amy Westervelt, a climate reporter and the creator of the popular podcast “Drilled.”

NO CLASS FOR THE LABOR DAY HOLIDAY, MONDAY SEPT 4<sup>TH</sup>

**Week 2, Mon Sept 11<sup>th</sup> CLIMATE CHANGE, THE STORY OF OUR TIME:** Reporting on the climate crisis is an “all-hands-on-deck affair,” as CNN climate correspondent John Sutter points out, a story for all beats. 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. Local climate journalism can (but not always) be some of the most powerful.

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

**PREPARE:** Find these on Canvas in PDF form, by our guest speaker:

[‘On borrowed time.’ Why coastal Florida keeps rebuilding after storms like Hurricane Ian](#)  
[Miami-Dade failed to buy flooded homes. Now, high-risk sites open to more development](#)  
[Miami planned to end natural gas hookups to help cut emissions. Then TECO asked them not to](#)  
[Climate change could make freak events like Fort Lauderdale’s rain bomb more common](#)  
[Can oysters help save Biscayne Bay? A new restoration effort aims to find out](#)

[“A common talking point about climate change gets it all wrong,”](#) by Kate Yoder, GRIST, 4/21/23.

**START** [“The Mad Men of Big Oil,”](#) Season 3 of the narrative climate journalism podcast DRILLED by investigative journalist Amy Westervelt. We’ll discuss the podcast during week 5, so give yourself time to listen to these 9 episodes.

**Week 3, Mon Sept 18<sup>th</sup> 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 emerging environment/climate 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 speakers:** #EJUF alumnus Dr. Hannah Brown and Becca Burton, co-founders, The Marjorie. @hannah\_o\_brown @dabeccaburton

**PREPARE:** 1) Read all parts of [“Island Impermanent,”](#) an investigation into the loss of cultural heritage at Egmont Key, which has lost half its land mass due to sea rise and storms in the nonprofit environmental journalism platform [The Marjorie](#).

2) [Miami us Used to Heat, but Not Like This,](#)” By Amy Green, Inside Climate News, Aug. 1<sup>st</sup> 2023.

**Week 4 Mon Sept 25<sup>th</sup> 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 Oct. 6<sup>th</sup>, 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 speakers:** CJC Librarian April Hines on tapping UF's online science/research databases. @UFCJCLibrarian. (In person, 10 a.m.) Ainissa Ramirez, author, *THE ALCHEMY OF US*. (By Zoom, 11:30 a.m.) @ainissaramirez

**PREPARE:** 1) Read *National Geographic* story by Cynthia on barnacles and the search for missing Malaysian Air flight 370. (Publishing Aug. 23<sup>rd</sup>; we will go step-by-step through the process.)

2) Read Chapters 1, "Interact," and 4, "Capture," in *The Alchemy of Us* by Ainissa Ramirez. (Available in digital format via UF libraries; be sure to be logged on to VPN.)

3) Check out: [The 500 Women Scientists' GAGE Resources page](#) to 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 27<sup>th</sup> 2021.

**Week 5 Mon Oct. 2<sup>nd</sup> 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? Is that "climate solution" adding emissions? Asking the questions and the follow-up questions... reporting with sophistication and fairness ... and recognizing greenwashing vs. effective corporate social responsibility/sustainability programs. Should help brainstorm your greenwashing analysis due 10/20.

**PREPARE:** 1) FINISH "[The Mad Men of Big Oil](#)," Season 3 of the narrative climate journalism podcast DRILLED by investigative journalist Amy Westervelt.

2) "[AI Can Spread Climate Misinformation 'Much Cheaper and Faster,' Study Warns](#)," by Kristoffer Tighe, *Inside Climate News*, March 31<sup>st</sup> 2023.

3) "[Climate solutions do exist. These 6 experts detail what they look like](#)." By Julia Simon, NPR, March 5<sup>th</sup> 2023.

Guest speaker: We'll talk about the Mad Men, greenwashing/disinformation during class, then we will have lunch (courtesy of UF's Science Journalist in Residence program) from 11:30 to 12:30 with Drew Harwell, technology reporter, *The Washington Post*, UF's fall SJR. @drewharwell

**Week 6, Mon Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>, PREPARE, PLAN, PITCH:** With the pitch and outline for your final environmental story due in a few weeks, we'll the first half of class brainstorming your dream stories and talking about whether you'd like to tackle a team project or individual work. Please bring your story ideas to workshop with the class and brainstorm reporting suggestions and strategies. Then, once you have a great idea, how do you pitch it to a top outlet that will pay you and bring you the most eyes on your work?

**PREPARE:** 1) Bring the story ideas you've been thinking about for your final project. 2) 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/>.

**I'd like to hear your favorite pitches from this database. What did you think worked well?**

**11:30 Move to Weimer 3032 to screen part of Ken Burns' new documentary, *The American Buffalo*. Lunch courtesy of #EJUF.**

**Week 7, Mon Oct 16<sup>th</sup>, ENVIRONMENTAL FILMMAKING:** Shorts & documentaries, serious or hilarious, well-told 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 Corral, producer of several environmental documentaries including "The Fellowship of the Springs." @ojcorral

**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 8, Mon Oct 23<sup>rd</sup>, 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 Gabby Salazar

**PREPARE:** 1) View our guest speaker's portfolios at [gabbysalazar.com](http://gabbysalazar.com) and develop questions for Gabby.  
 2) "How America's most endangered cat could help save Florida," story by Douglas Main, photographs by Carlton Ward Jr., *National Geographic*, March 9<sup>th</sup> 2021.  
 3) "Protecting the Florida Wildlife Corridor," by Jennifer Reed, *Gulfshore Life*, March 31<sup>st</sup> 2022.  
 4) Familiarize yourself with [floridawildlifecorridor.org](http://floridawildlifecorridor.org), including "About the Corridor," and "Inspired by a Bear."  
 5) View: Witness: Defining Conservation Photography (17 minutes).  
 6) "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.)

**10:45 to 12:30: BRING A BAG LUNCH IF YOU'D LIKE! WE'LL MOVE TO WEIMER 3032 TO WATCH THE DOCUMENTARY *PATH OF THE PANTHER*.**

**Week 9, Sun Oct. 29<sup>th</sup> and Mon Oct 30<sup>th</sup> #EJUF Field Trip to the Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge**

**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) Drew Lanham, "9 Rules for the Black Birdwatcher," *Orion Magazine*, Oct. 2013. 4) "What Our Beech Tree Teaches Us About the Possibility of the Future," by Elizabeth Rush, *the New York Times*, Aug. 4<sup>th</sup> 2023.



**Week 10, Mon Nov 6<sup>th</sup> 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 new 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) ["The World's Northernmost Town is Changing Dramatically,"](#) *Scientific American*, finalist, international reporting in the Livingston Award for Young Journalists.

**Week 11, Mon Nov 13<sup>th</sup> DATA REPORTING & VISUALIZATION 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. **We'll also talk about helping audiences visualize climate change.**

**PREPARE:** 1) Watch [this 5-minute video](#) and then use the [En-ROADS simulator](#) to devise the best feasible scenario you can come up to reduce the aggregate temperature increase by 2100 from 3.6° C to 2.0° C. Then use the "share your scenario" button to email your scenario to me and to yourself. Be prepared to talk about your choices in class.

- 2) Check out Climate Central's "Surging Seas" interactive risk finder. <https://sealevel.climatecentral.org>
- 3) For our discussion on using data for stories, the project "**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. **We will read only two parts, so that we can discuss them more deeply: 1) The main story: "[Poison in the Air](#)" and 2) "[The Dirty Secret of America's Clean Dishes](#)."**

**Week 12 Mon Nov 20<sup>st</sup> 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) “This is Environmental Racism,” By Darryl Fears and Brady Dennis, *The Washington Post*, April 6<sup>th</sup> 2021.
- 2) Letter from SouthWest Organizing Project to the president of the National Wildlife Federation, March 16<sup>th</sup> 1990: <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/swop.pdf>;
- 3) Energy Burden, Part I, Energy comes at a much greater cost for Gainesville’s poor: <https://www.wuft.org/news/energy-burden/>
- 4) Energy Burden Part II, the Power of Irma: [www.wuft.org/news/energy-burden/the-storm/](http://www.wuft.org/news/energy-burden/the-storm/)

**Week 13 Mon Nov 27<sup>th</sup> 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?

Guest speaker: James Eli Shiffer, topics team leader for climate and the environment, **The Minneapolis Star-Tribune**.

- 1) VANISHING NORTH (Book/handout from *The Minneapolis Star-Tribune*). Everyone should read Chapter 10, “The list of the lost,” then choose one of the species stories to read and prepare a question for our guest speaker. There will be some overlap but I want to make sure we get each species covered, so drop your chapter where I’ve noted in the Discussion section of Canvas. 2) Q&A with author and shark biologist David Shiffman, *Mongabay*, June 2022. 3) “Sharks, Lies and Videotape: Scientists Document Many Problems with Shark Week, Marine Biologists Biggest Stage,” Allegheny College, July 2021. 4) “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. 5) “Modern Zoos Are Not Worth the Moral Cost,” Opinion piece by Emma Marris, *The New York Times*, June 11<sup>th</sup> 2021.

**Week 14 & last day of class, Mon Dec 5<sup>th</sup> 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 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021. 3) [“Do You Have to be an Optimist to Work Toward a Better World?”](#) by Charlie Brinkhurst-Cuff, the *New York Times*.



### 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 a 19-year-old and 21-year-old and lives with her husband just north of campus in the Florida Park neighborhood, where she 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](mailto: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 early in semester w/ the Disability Resource Center (352-392- 8565, [www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/](http://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.

**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, as well as ethics for using Chat GPT and other AI programs. The programs can be useful for brainstorming headlines and simplifying scientific language—but you may not turn stories or parts of stories generated by AI. We will talk about the evolving generative landscape through the semester, including the increasing of AI in climate disinformation campaigns.

**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 lectures or slides from mine; 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 or plastic cups. 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/>