

**DEPARTMENT OF RENEWABLE RESOURCES  
UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA**

**Renewable Resources 467/567**

**Environmental Interpretation and Science Communication  
Syllabus**

<b>Instructor</b>	John Acorn Email Address: jacorn@ualberta.ca Office Hours: by appointment, remotely
<b>Term</b>	Winter 2021
<b>Classes</b>	Wednesday            2:00 to 4:50 pm            Online
<b>Credits</b>	*3.0

**Course Description**

From the Calendar: “An overview of theories and methods of communication, as applied to environmental topics and general audiences. Includes discussion of environmental interpretation, science communication, audio-visual communication, and media skills.”

**Course Pre-Requisites and Co-Requisites**

There are no pre- or co-requisites for this course.

**Course Format**

The course will be offered online. Before each class, materials will be provided for students to watch/listen to, or read. During class time, we will focus on discussions and then, later in the term, presentations by the students. The goal is to have the combination of asynchronous and synchronous material add up to 150-70 minutes per week, although additional effort on the students' part will naturally result in a better learning experience.

**Student Learning Outcomes and Competencies**

Upon successful completion of this course students will:

- be able to articulate the principles of scientific communication,
- be capable of recognizing and diagnosing effective and ineffective examples of science communication,
- be familiar with basic techniques for the design and delivery of signs, exhibits, and in-person presentations,
- possess the basic skills for dealing with the media, and
- demonstrate increased confidence with respect to communications and public speaking.

**References and Readings**

There is no required textbook for this course, but additional readings, or links to these readings, will be posted online. It will be made clear which are optional and which are mandatory. Some will be optional for those in REN R 467 (the undergraduate course), and mandatory for those in REN R 567 (the simultaneously-taught graduate course).

### **eClass Website**

Materials will be posted on eClass, in the usual fashion. Signing on to eClass requires your U of A user name and password, and eClass can be accessed from the University main page.

### **Course Requirements, Marking, and Grading**

To pass the course, you must complete the presentation and the final exam. Missed final examinations require formal appeal through the ALES Faculty Office.

Marking in a subject of this sort is unavoidably subjective, but I try my best to take a holistic approach to the task, to be fair, and to provide feedback. Letter grades will be assigned using a combination of the marking and grading guidelines for the university, plus natural breaks in the distribution of marks for the class. I make a sincere attempt to be fair. Since each class is different, and since exams and assignments change from year to year, I cannot tell you in advance what percent mark each letter grade corresponds with.

<b>Item</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Participation	30%
Final Presentation	40%
Final Exam (TBA)	30%

There is no midterm exam, but I am basing a significant percentage of your mark on participation. This will consist of 1) regular attendance for synchronous class sessions, 2) regular engagement in class discussions, and 3) if you prefer, sending your comments on the discussion topics to me directly via email. I will keep track of both the number of times you participate in the discussion, and the "quality" of your comments, by which I mean indications that you are thinking actively about the subject matter. Feel free to ask questions about things you do not understand, however, since doing so will not diminish your participation mark. Reviewing the asynchronous materials before class, however, is expected.

For the presentation, you will have your choice of a series of signs, a video, an illustrated talk ("slide talk" or "Powerpoint,") for a general audience, a prop talk/demonstration, a poster or infographic, a podcast, a musical performance or recording, a short book mock-up (e.g., a childrens book or multi-page pamphlet), or the plans for an exhibit. Other ideas can also be proposed.

Presentation of the projects should not exceed 20 minutes in length, including a minimum of five minutes for questions and comments from the class. For some projects, a shorter duration might be appropriate.

For the presentations, you can work alone, or in a small group (up to three students, all of whom get the same mark). If you choose to work in a group, each group will consist of only undergraduate or graduate students, not mixed. Please let me know what your plans are before the end of Reading Week, as well as which of the five final lecture periods you would prefer for scheduling your presentation (March 17, 24, 31, April 7, 14).

You will be marked on the overall quality of your assignment, which I will assess using the six principles that will be presented in the first half of the course, as well as my accumulated experience in this field. Your assessment will also include how you respond to questions after the presentation.

The final exam is scheduled for 9:00 am, Tuesday, April 27.

I realize that this marking system does not give you much in the way of feedback until the very end of the course. However, I will post interim participation marks.

### **Plagiarism and Cheating**

The University of Alberta is committed to the highest standards of academic integrity and honesty. Students are expected to be familiar with these standards regarding academic honesty and to uphold the policies of the University in this respect. Students are particularly urged to familiarize themselves with the provisions of the Code of Student Behaviour and avoid any behaviour that could potentially result in suspicions of cheating, plagiarism, misrepresentation of facts and/or participation in an offence. Academic dishonesty is a serious offence and can result in suspension or expulsion from the University.

#### Code of Student Behaviour

All students at the University of Alberta are subject to the Code of Student Behaviour, as outlined at: [University Governance > Code of Student Behaviour](#). Please familiarize yourself with it and ensure that you do not participate in any inappropriate behavior as defined by the Code. Key components of the code include the following statements.

30.3.2(1) No Student shall submit the words, ideas, images or data of another person as the Student's own in any academic writing, essay, thesis, project, assignment, presentation or poster in a course or program of study.

30.3.2(2)c. No Student shall represent another's substantial editorial or compositional assistance on an assignment as the Student's own work."

Students should speak with the course instructor about any questions or concerns about the code.

Students should be particularly aware of the code as it pertains to internet and library research, use of previous class notes, reclamation plans of former students and interviews or discussions with others."

### **Professionalism and Classroom Rules of Engagement**

Students are expected to attend all classes, arrive on time, and avoid disruptive behaviors (including unnecessary trips outside the room, cell phone use, laptops used for purposes other than the class, and so on). I will try to make the classes interesting, and in return I expect you to give me your attention. Remember, you are not anonymous—I can see each and every one of you, clearly, throughout the entire class. Please behave in a responsible fashion. I should add that in the past this has rarely been a problem.

Audio or video recording, digital or otherwise, of lectures, labs, seminars or any other teaching environment by students is allowed only with the prior written consent of the instructor or as a part of an approved accommodation plan. Student or instructor content, digital or otherwise, created and/or used within the context of the course is to be used solely for personal study, and is not to be used or distributed for any other purpose without prior written consent from the content author(s)."

### **COPYRIGHT STATEMENT**

*All original course materials prepared by the instructor are considered to be the intellectual property of the instructor (unless otherwise noted), and are protected by law under Canada's Copyright Act. "Course materials" include slides, presentations, handouts, lecture notes, recorded lectures, and any other materials distributed or made available to students by the course instructor. Permission is given for individual students to use these materials for their own study purposes in this course. Students must not publish, post on a public Internet site, sell, rent, or otherwise distribute any course materials without the instructor's express permission.*

### **Access to Past (or Representative) Evaluative Material**

Sample questions from past exams will be made available to the class.

### **Electronic Devices:**

This course does not involve calculations, so the use of electronic devices is not restricted in class.

### **Weekly Schedule of Topics:**

Week 1	Outline, Introductions, Tilden's Principles	
Week 2	Principle 1 (substance), definitions	Signs & Design
Week 3	Principle 2 (style)	Photos

Week 4	Principle 3 (attention)	Slide Talks
Week 5	Principle 4 (mode)	Video
(Reading Week)		
Week 6	Principle 5 (following along vs. effort)	Demonstrations & Walks
Week 7	Principle 6 (self-assembling knowledge)	Exhibits & Writing
Week 8	Media Interviews	Work sessions
Week 9	7 Presentations	
Week 10	7 Presentations	
Week 11	7 Presentations	
Week 12	7 Presentations	
Week 13	7 Presentations	

“Policy about course outlines can be found in Course Requirements, Evaluation Procedures and Grading of the University Calendar.”