



**Course Title: Media Studies & Environment - SOC 400/COMM 452/SUST 400
(4 credits)**

Since this is a 400-level course, it is primarily intended for students who have already taken at least one course in COMM, SOC, or SUST.

This syllabus is informational in nature and is not an express or implied contract. It is subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances, as a result of any circumstance outside the University's control, or as other needs arise. If, in the University's sole discretion, public health conditions or any other matter affecting the health, safety, upkeep, or well-being of our campus community or operations requires the University to move to remote teaching, alternative assignments may be provided so that the learning objectives for the course, as determined by the faculty and the University, can still be met. The University does not guarantee specific in-person, on-campus classes, activities, opportunities, or services or any other particular format, timing, or location of education, classes, activities, or services.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course introduces students to the critical study of media in relation to the environment. It offers conceptual and analytical tools to explore the role media play both as infrastructures embedded in ecological systems and as forms of representation that shape our perceptions of environmental issues—especially in the context of the climate crisis.

Grounded in recent developments in media theory, environmental humanities, and political ecology, the course frames media simultaneously as *media of* and *media about* the environment. It begins with an introductory section that interrogates the meanings of “media” and “environment,” and how they might be productively thought together.

The course is then divided into three main parts:

1. Media of the Environment:

This section focuses on the material and infrastructural dimensions of media systems. Topics include resource extraction, global supply chains, electronic waste, and the environmental and social costs of digital technologies. Students will examine the planetary scale of media infrastructures and their ecological entanglements.

2. Media about the Environment I:

This section explores how media shape our understanding of the environment and our affective, political, and epistemological relationship to it. Through the study of digital technologies—such as satellite imaging, data visualization, and environmental sensors—we will assess how media can both problematize and enhance our perception of ecological change.

3. Media about the Environment II:

The final section analyzes how the environment and climate crisis are represented across different media forms. Drawing from films, advertisements, activist campaigns, and artistic projects, students will critically assess how climate imaginaries are constructed and circulated, and how these representations influence public discourse and environmental consciousness.

Through weekly readings, discussions, and media analysis, the course equips students with a foundational understanding of key concepts in media studies while encouraging critical engagement with the environmental dimensions of contemporary media cultures.

COURSE OBJECTIVES / LEARNING OUTCOMES

At the end of the course, the student will be able to:

- Define and critically discuss the key concepts of media and environment from a media studies and environmental humanities perspective.
- Analyze the material and infrastructural dimensions of media technologies, including their environmental and social implications.
- Identify and explain how different media forms contribute to shaping public perception and understanding of environmental issues, including the climate crisis.
- Critically evaluate media representations of the environment across various formats (e.g., film, advertising, journalism, artistic and activist media).
- Understand and apply theoretical approaches to the study of media in ecological contexts, including concepts such as media ecology, environmental mediation, and media materiality.
- Engage with interdisciplinary scholarship on media and the environment, drawing connections between theory, media artifacts, and environmental issues.
- Develop and articulate informed, critical perspectives on the role of media in contemporary ecological thought and imaginaries.
- Conduct independent research and media analysis using appropriate academic sources and critical frameworks.

FORMAT

- Students will engage in small group work and discussions.

REFERENCE TEXTS

Antonio López, Adrian Ivakhin, Stephen Rust, Miriam Tola, Alenda Y. Chang and Kiu-wai Chu (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Ecomedia Studies* (2023) + other materials provided by the instructor as detailed in the schedule of topic.

EXAMS and ASSIGNMENTS

- Final Exam: 30% (a mix of MCQ and open-ended questions)
- Research paper: 30%

- In-class Presentation: 20%
- Class attendance: 10%
- Participation: 10%

Instead of a mid-term exam, students will be asked to work in small groups and prepare a short in-class presentation on one of the weekly topics covered in the course. Each group will be assigned a week and will open the class with a 15–20 minutes presentation based on the material provided by the instructor. These presentations are meant to introduce the theme of the week, highlight key concepts and readings, and spark discussion for the rest of the session. They are also an opportunity for students to engage more actively with the course material, develop collaborative skills, and experiment with different ways of communicating complex ideas.

As a final assignment for this course, students will be asked to write a research paper (minimum 10 pages) that explores in depth a specific topic related to one of the three main areas discussed during the semester. Each student will choose in conversation with the instructor and develop a paper that draws on the materials discussed in class while also incorporating further sources found through independent research. This process will be supported actively by the instructor throughout the course.

The paper should engage critically with the chosen topic, making clear connections to the theoretical and analytical tools developed during the semester. Examples of possible topics include:

- The environmental and social implications of the supply chain of a particular media device (e.g. a smartphone, a data server, or a streaming platform);
- The use of a specific technology (such as satellite imagery, drone footage, or environmental sensors) to monitor or represent the environment in a given context;
- The analysis of a film, documentary, advertisement, or social media post that deals with environmental themes, and how it contributes to shaping public understanding of the climate crisis.

The paper should be well-structured and clearly written, with a clear argument and proper referencing. Students are free to choose any citation style (APA, MLA, Chicago, etc.), as long as they are consistent throughout. A bibliography is required, and at least one academic article published in a peer-reviewed journal must be used. Internet sources are acceptable, but should be treated critically and cited appropriately.

This paper is an opportunity for students to explore an issue they care about, develop their critical thinking skills, and apply the concepts learned in class to a topic that speaks to the intersections between media and environment today.

Please note: the topic of each student’s final paper must be different from the topic of the group presentation in which they participated. This ensures that students explore more than one area of the course in depth.

GRADING SCALE

A 95%-100%

A-	90%-94%
B+	87%-89%
B	83%-86%
B-	80%-82%
C+	77%-79%
C	73%-76%
C-	70%-72%
D+	67%-69%
D	63%-66%
D-	60%-62%
F	< 60%

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS

Unit 1 – Introduction:

What Is the Environment? From Environment to Media

Readings:

- Paul Robbins, *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction* (2nd. ed.), Chapter 1, pp. 9–24
- Sverker Sörlin and Paul Warde, “Making the Environment Historical,” in *Nature’s End: History and the Environment* (2009), pp. 1–22
- Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, Chapter 2
- Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Chapter 2, pp. 30–57

Unit 2 – Introduction:

What Is Media? From Media to Environment

Readings:

- Brian L. Ott and Robert L. Mack, “Introducing Critical Media Studies,” in *Critical Media Studies: An Introduction*, pp. 1–15
- Sarah Kember and Joanna Zylinska, *Life after New Media: Mediation as a Vital Process*, Introduction (xii–xx) and Chapter 1, pp. 1–28
- Sean Cubitt, *Finite Media: Environmental Implications of Digital Technologies*, Introduction, pp. 1–12

Unit 3:

Media and Environment: From Media to Ecomedia Studies

Readings:

- Antonio López, Adrian Ivakhin, Stephen Rust, Miriam Tola, Alenda Y. Chang and Kiu-wai Chu (eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Ecomedia Studies* (2023):

- o Introduction, pp. 1–5
- o Chapter 1, pp. 19–34
- o Chapter 3, pp. 43–50
- Meryl Shriver-Rice and Hunter Vaughan, “What is Environmental Media Studies?,” *Journal of Environmental Media*, 1(1), 2020, pp. 3–13

Section I – Media of the Environment: The Materiality of Media

Unit 4:

Matter and Energy

Readings:

- Jussi Parikka, *A Geology of Media*, Chapter 1, pp. 1–28
- Sean Cubitt, *Finite Media*, Chapter 1, pp. 13–62

Unit 5: Is the Digital Immaterial? Mapping the Infrastructures of Digital Technologies

Readings:

- Kate Crawford, *Atlas of AI*, Chapter 1, pp. 23–51
- Nicole Starosielski et al., Chapter 10 in *Routledge Handbook of Ecomedia Studies*, pp. 111–118
- Benedetta Brevini and Daisy Doctor, Chapter 17 in *Routledge Handbook of Ecomedia Studies*, pp. 171–178
- Richard Maxwell and Toby Miller, Chapter 23 in *Routledge Handbook of Ecomedia Studies*, pp. 220–228

Unit 6:

What Happens to Our Devices? E-Waste and Global Inequalities

Readings:

- Abalansa, S. et al. (2021), “Electronic Waste: An Environmental Problem Exported to Developing Countries—The Good, the Bad and the Ugly,” *Sustainability*, 13(18)
- Mehita Iqani, Chapter 16 in *Routledge Handbook of Ecomedia Studies*, pp. 160–168
- Thomas De Loughry (2022), “Incendiary Devices: Imagining E-Waste Frontiers and Africa’s Digital Futures,” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, 24(1)
- **Video project:** François Knoetze, *Core Dump* (2019–2022)

Unit 7:

The Materiality of Digital Labour

Readings:

- Tiziana Terranova, “Free Labour: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy,” *Social Text*, 18(2), pp. 33–58
- Cajetan Iheka, *African Ecomedia*, Chapter 2, pp. 64–107

Section II: Media about the Environment 1 – Media Shaping the Environment and Its Perception

Unit 8:

How Do We Perceive the Climate Crisis through Media?

Readings:

- Jennifer Gabrys, *Program Earth: Environmental Sensing Technology and the Making of a Computational Planet*, Introduction, pp. 1–25
- Jennifer Gabrys, Chapter 12 in *Routledge Handbook of Ecomedia Studies*, pp. 129–137

Unit 9:

Is Perception Neutral? How Media Technologies Shape Our Understanding of Climate Change

Readings:

- Nicholas Mirzoeff, “Visualizing the Anthropocene,” *Public Culture*, 26(2), 2014
- T.J. Demos, *Against the Anthropocene: Visual Culture and Environment Today*, Chapter 1, pp. 4–22

Unit 10:

Satellite Images: Technologies of Extraction and Tools of Counter-Visuality

Readings:

- Jussi Parikka, *Operational Images: From the Visual to the Invisual*, Introduction, pp. 1–30
- Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look*, Introduction, pp. 1–33
- Bonelli, C. and Dorador, C. (2021), “Endangered Salares: Micro-Disasters in Northern Chile,” *Tapuya: Latin American Science, Technology and Society*, 4(1)
- **Art project:** Marcela Magno, *Land [2] Lithium* (2022)

Section III: Media about the Environment 2 – Representing the Environment and the Climate Crisis

Unit11:

How Is the Climate Crisis Represented in the Mass Media? From Advertisements to Blockbuster Films

Readings:

- Yves Citton, Chapter 31 in *Routledge Handbook of Ecomedia Studies*

Media examples:

Don't Look Up, Melancholia, others TBA

Unit 12: Documentaries and Art Projects

Readings:

- Macarena Gómez-Barris, *The Extractive Zone: Social Ecologies and Decolonial Perspectives*, Introduction, pp. 1–17
- **Art Project:** Unknown Fields Division, selected projects

Unit 13: Film Discussion: *Neptune Frost* by Anisia Uzeyman and Saul Williams

Readings:

- Cajetan Iheka, *African Ecomedia*, Chapter 5, pp. 186–220 and Epilogue, pp. 221–230

CLASS POLICY

Attendance

You are allowed **ONE** unexcused absence. Documentation for any other absence **MUST** be produced and **APPROVED** by your faculty. For absences due to illness, please provide the faculty with a doctor's note upon returning to class as well as inform them and/or the Office the first day of illness.

Participation grants the student one point for each lesson they attend. Unjustified absences result in 0 points. Participation in **field-trips**, if any, awards 2 points, while non-participation results in a loss of 2 points.

Both by school policy and Italian law attendance at all classes is required of all students. (Yes, your student visa is dependent on perfect attendance.) Even so, I will reward students (round a borderline grade up) for perfect or very good attendance, but I am also forced by school policy to penalize students who accrue more than two unexcused absences, so please do your very best to be here and engaged when you are here. Students are expected to arrive at class on time, having completed the readings and written assignments due that day (see schedule below), in order to receive a passing (C or better) grade.

Late submissions

Assignments not submitted by the due date will receive a penalty of 10% for the first 24 hours, 20% for a 48-hour delay. No submissions will be accepted more than 3 days after the deadline, unless arrangements have been made with the instructor (for extensions under exceptional circumstances, apply to the course instructor).

Personal Technology

Please turn cell phones off during class. You can use laptops to take notes, however social networking, e-mailing, surfing the Internet, playing games, etc. are forbidden during class. Any student caught using their laptop/cell phones inappropriately during class will be asked to turn them off. Repeated violations of this rule after the first warning will result in the student being marked absent for the day and permanently losing their laptop privileges. Please be respectful and limit your use of personal electronic devices during class to academic purposes.

Contesting a grade

If students wish to contest a grade, they must make an appointment to do so in person. The student should contact the instructor with any concerns within **ONE** week of receiving the grade. The student must also demonstrate that they have read the comments accompanying the grade by presenting a brief written statement specifying why the grade does not reflect the quality of the work. It is at the discretion of the instructor to decide whether the work and the student's request

warrant any increase or decrease in the grade. Students should retain a copy of all submitted assignments and feedback (in case of loss) and should also retain all of their marked assignments.

Recommended behavior:

- Class begins promptly at the beginning of the class period. It is advisable that you be in your seat and ready to start participating in class at that time.
- Always bring the required supplies and be ready to be actively engaged in the learning process. This communicates preparedness and interest.
- Turn your cell phone off or to vibrate mode before the start of class;
- It is fine to bring a drink or a snack to class, as long as it is not distracting. In conjunction with this, please pick up your trash when you leave the room.
- Your professor expects your full attention for the entire class period. If you know that you'll need to leave before the class is over, try to sit as close to the door as possible so as not to disrupt others. Similarly, if you arrive in class late, just slip in as quietly as possible and take the first available seat you come to.
- Do not sleep in class! Laying your head on the desk or sleeping in class is rude, and it is distracting to others. Turn in assignments on time.
- When you have a question or comment, please raise your hand first as a courtesy to your classmates and the professor. Remember, your questions are NOT an imposition – they are welcome. So, ask questions! You'll learn more, it makes the class more interesting, and you are helping others learn as well.
- If an emergency arises that requires an absence from a session, it is your responsibility to get the notes and all other information that was covered in class from a colleague you trust.

Secular and religious holidays:

Sant'Anna Institute recognizes that there are several secular and religious holidays - not included in the Italian calendar - that affect large numbers of its community members. In consideration of their significance for many students, no examinations may be given and no assigned work may be required on these days. Students who observe these holidays will be given an opportunity to make up missed work in both laboratories and lecture courses. If an examination is given on the first class day after one of these holidays, it must not cover material introduced in class on that holiday. Students who wish to observe such holidays must inform their instructors within the first two weeks of each semester of their intent to observe the holiday even when the exact date of the holiday will not be known until later so that alternative arrangements convenient to both students and faculty can be made at the earliest opportunity.

Students who make such arrangements will not be required to attend classes or take examinations on the designated days, and faculty must provide reasonable opportunities for such students to make up missed work and examinations. For this reason it is desirable that faculty inform students of all examination dates at the start of each semester.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

“Members of the Jacksonville University community are expected to foster and uphold the highest standards of honesty and integrity, which are foundations for the intellectual endeavors we engage in.

To underscore the importance of truth, honesty, and accountability, students and instructors should adhere to the following standard:

“On my honor as a student of Jacksonville University, I promise to uphold the values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility in all my dealings with faculty, staff, and students.”

Academic misconduct occurs when a student engages in an action that is deceitful, fraudulent, or dishonest regarding any type of academic assignment that is intended to or results in an unfair academic advantage. In this context, the term “assignment” refers to any type of graded or ungraded work that is submitted for evaluation for any course. Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to cheating, collusion, falsification, misrepresentation, unauthorized collaboration on assignments, copying another student’s work, using or providing unauthorized notes or materials, turning in work not produced by the individual, attempting to get credit for a single instance of work submitted for more than one course, and plagiarism. Furthermore, providing deceitful, fraudulent, or dishonest information during discussions of an academic matter with faculty are also examples of academic misconduct.” (Jacksonville University Academic Integrity [Policy](#)).

Throughout this course we will be reading and reporting about the work of others. All information that is not original to the student must be appropriately attributed in both presentations and written work. All students are expected to do their own work and give appropriate credit for all sources used in the process of preparing papers, presentations, and homework assignments. Group assignments will be graded based on the product of the work, although some adjustment may be made for participation. [If you have a question about whether or not collaboration is allowed, or how to cite a reference, please ask. It is always better to check than to be accused of an unintended violation of the academic honesty policy]. Violations of the academic honesty policy will be dealt with in accordance to university policies

Course Level Penalties: A first offense may result in a failing grade for the assignment. Second offenses may result in failure in the course. Significantly egregious violations may result in expulsion from the university. When in doubt give credit for all information that did not come directly out of your head!

DISABILITY STATEMENT

Students with a documented disability requesting classroom accommodations or modifications, either permanent or temporary, resulting from the disability are encouraged to inform the faculty in the first week of the program.