WRTG 3020 The Rhetoric of Sustainability  
Fall Semester, 2012  
Catherine Lasswell, Instructor  
M/W Sect. 33 3-4:15 EDUC 138  
M/W Sect. 44 4:30-5:45 CLUB 4  

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“Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -- over and over announcing your place in the family of things.”  --Mary Oliver  

OVERVIEW OF COURSE  
In this course we will read and write about many current environmental topics as we cultivate our awareness of writing as engaged environmental action. We will investigate various issues of sustainability facing today’s world -- climate change, energy use, industrialized food production-- and examine the ways these issues are discussed rhetorically. We will read a variety of environmental genres by influential environmental writers such as Bill McKibben, Barbara Kingsolver, Michael Pollen, John Muir, Alan Weisman, and E. O. Wilson whose essays will be studied for their rhetorical effectiveness. We will study scholarly research pertaining to sustainability and incorporate research into a persuasive essay to effect a positive change. At times we will “go local” as we write to effect environmental change in Boulder County and the Front Range through studying and writing about local initiatives. Throughout the course, we will seek ways to de-politicize environmental writing in order to reach wider audiences and to carve out spaces of shared values and common ground.  

Service-Learning Component  
Service-learning is the practice of interfacing academic work with hands-on community work, which results in deepened understanding of course material and concepts. The service-learning in this course will give you hands-on experience working in the environment which will allow you to gather data and understand land-based issues in otherwise unavailable ways. This course will require you to work with a local, non-profit organization that promotes environmental sustainability: Transition Colorado, Boulder Farmers’ Market, Growing Gardens, Community Cycles, or Wildlife Restoration. The eight hours of service with this organization will serve as the basis for a major writing project which you will present to an audience working in local sustainability. By helping to advance the goals of a non-profit, you will be contributing to the current global search for sustainable solutions, and be expanding your own intellectual, social, political, and personal engagement with environmental issues. You will also write about this service experience through Critical Reflections using state-of-the-art pedagogies devised by national researcher Patty Clayton. This writing will improve your ability to analyze, engage in meaningful research, and utilize rhetoric thoughtfully and effectively.
inside and outside the classroom. The course service-learning work will add value to your degree by giving you an employment advantage due to the valuable experiences and real-world skills you will acquire.

REQUIRED TEXTS

- Writer’s Help (free online resource) Go to writer’shelp.com
- Handouts using theoretical perspectives from Rosenwasser and Stephen’s Writing Analytically; revision strategies developed from the Harvard Writing Project
- Articles and worksheets posted on Desire2Learn—on environmental issues as well as writing skills
- Rhetorical Websites: writing@CSU (http://writing.colostate.edu/index.cfm); Silva Rhetoricae (http://rhetoric/byu.edu/); Purdue OWL (https://owl.english/purdue.edu/)

OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS

Ecological Identity (5%)
This initial assignment will ask you to identify, describe, and examine what experiences have connected you in tangible or conceptual ways to the natural world (or kept you at a distance from it.)
Writing Portfolio/Blog (25%)  
The Writing Portfolio/Blog will serve as relatively “low stakes” writing that will provide scaffolding for formal assignments as well as allow you to rehearse a range of rhetorical and mechanical applications/strategies. The WP/Blog will consist of various short writings, responses to the readings, and analyses of your environmental service-learning work. At times, you will be expected to write formal 3rd person accounts responding to readings; other times you’ll compose 1st person writing analyzing your growth of understanding of the course material. You’ll also include analytical and/or reflective accounts of your service-learning experiences in relation to specific readings or research performed. The majority of the WP assignments will ask you to respond to prompts based upon the course readings. Bring all WP/Blog writing to class. Begin with putting your writing in a folder in hard copy; from there we’ll move toward the class blog partway through the term.

Rhetorical Analysis (20%)  
A Rhetorical Analysis will develop your expositional skills within a scholarly context. Written in a scholarly tone and format, this essay will compare two persuasive environmental works, explaining how and why differing strategies employed in contrasting works effectively reach different audiences. While no outside research will be necessary, you will be expected to demonstrate understanding of pertinent course texts and lecture material. This essay will be assessed in relation to general fluency and mechanical ability as well as adherence to academic formats and audience awareness. The writing and rhetoric terminology presented in the first seven weeks of the course will be used in this essay.

Persuasive Project (20%)  
The Persuasive Project will expand upon the expositional skills acquired in the Rhetorical Analysis. This essay will ask you to choose a sustainability-based writing project within a scholarly discursive context. You will need to demonstrate advanced comprehension of your environmental topic or issue, communicative fluency and control, research skills, and the ability to synthesize data from a range of media. This project may also require you to argue or refute a particular position with a sophisticated degree of argumentation. You will use the rhetorical conventions in your discipline, perhaps choosing to write a grant proposal for an extended project with a faculty member in your major.

Service-Learning Project (20%)  
Working with a partner or small group, you will create an original Service Learning Project based on your experiences gained through your environmental service-learning at the local level. This project will advocate for the non-profit organization by advancing their goals. Your project may strive to inspire others, nurture an existing project, or otherwise contribute in a tangible way to the organization’s environmental mission. This project could take the form of publicity materials, a video, a presentation, or a website which you direct to a specific audience.
Evaluation and Calculation of Grades:

- Ecological Identity: 5%
- Writing Portfolio/Blog: 20%
- Rhetorical Analysis: 20%
- Persuasive Project: 20%
- Participation, Preparedness, and Peer Critiques: 10%
- Writer's Help Exercises: 5%
- Service-Learning Project and documented hours: 20%

Workshop Format
This course will be taught as a workshop in which student writing serves as a major part of the course “text.” Student writing will be discussed through critical dialogue in small groups and through whole class discussion. Everyone will work closely to move each person’s ideas to greater originality, depth, logic, and clarity.

On the days we workshop, you will be expected to contribute constructive comments to your classmates’ drafts. Writers need more than praise. Writers deserve an attentive and discerning audience, one that is ready to help improve their writing and thinking. High quality participation in workshops involves identifying weaknesses in the writing and offering ways to remedy them. The writers, in turn, will receive peer feedback and decide how to incorporate it into their revisions. All students are responsible for reading the assigned student essays in advance of workshops. As with all workshops, your responsibility is to arrive with hard copies of the drafts, (sometimes downloaded from D2L), fully prepared to comment on the work of your colleagues and to share in their inquiry.

All final essays need to go through a drafting process with some peer or instructor review. I will not accept final essays that have not been reviewed on a regular basis over the course of the assignment. I cannot accept first-draft final papers.

Preparedness
Mastering the course material in this class will depend on your preparedness. Readings and writings are required for each class session, serving as the basis for the class discussion and activities. Preparedness means always bringing the articles, books, handouts, and writings needed for that day. Sometimes we will concentrate on a piece for multiple days along with the handouts used with them.

Attendance
In writing courses, attendance is essential. Please arrive on time and attend every class. If you miss a class, you are responsible for obtaining materials missed on that day from one of your classmates. Please do not email me to ask me “what did I miss?” Since we only have 29 days of class, each class is important. You are allowed THREE absences to use in any way you choose. I do not excuse absences except in the most extreme circumstances. For each class session missed over THREE, your overall grade will drop one fraction such as A- to a B+. If you have six or more absences, you will have missed out on substantial course material that your final course grade will be no higher than a “C.” Seven or more absences will result in an “F” – NO EXCEPTIONS. If you arrive more than
10 minutes late or have to leave more than 10 minutes early, this will be counted as ½ an absence. Failure to be prepared for class may also be counted as an absence.

**Grading Criteria for Writing**
A  Excellent in form and content, insightful, clear, eloquent style, no mechanical errors
B  Good, interesting writing with some minor flaws, but no major ones
C  Adequate, reasonably competent; a mixture of strengths and weaknesses
D  Poor in content, lacking careful thought, in form or mechanics, generally slipshod
F  Incoherent, seriously flawed or difficult to understand, or not turned in when due

**Grading Criteria for Participation**
A  Always prepared for class; participates without being called upon; criticism of other student essays shows insight, close reading; comments clear, succinct, and helpful.
B  Generally prepared for class; occasionally participates without being called on; criticism of other student papers shows mastery of the course goals; comments generally clear and helpful.
C  Adequately prepared for class; only participates when called on; mastery of the course goals generally evident, but criticism of other student papers, although somewhat helpful, demonstrates a less than thorough reading of the paper.
D  Preparation is less than adequate; never participates unless called on; criticism of other student papers demonstrates a casual reading, at best; comments demonstrate a failure to master the course goals.
F  Disruptive in class (texting, talking, continual tardiness), unprepared when called on, unable or unwilling to participate in class discussions.

**Format of Final Papers**
All peer-reviewed drafts and final drafts must be typewritten and double spaced with 1-inch margins and 12-point font.

**Late Assignments and Drafts**
All assignments must be turned in at the time they are due at the class they are due, or in some cases, in my mailbox at the PWR. **Please do not email any submissions unless you've been given permission to do so.** Final drafts turned in one day late (24 hr. period) will drop a full letter grade; no work will be accepted more than one class day late. Missed work CANNOT be made up. If you are going to be absent from a class when an assignment is due, you must submit the assignments (in hard copy) prior to class in order to receive credit for the assignment.

**Cell phones and computers**
Once class begins, you need to turn off your cellphones and put them out of sight. Texting is not allowed under any circumstances. **If your cell phone is in your lap or visible in your bag, I will assume you are communicating, sending, or reading messages.** If you need to check the time, wear a watch. If you need to input your classmates’ emails or mark something on your calendar—do so after class. The bottom line is if you text or use your phone during class time, you will be marked absent. Laptops are not needed except on rare occasions. Transcribe your notes onto a computer
outside of class. Students who text in class can expect letters written by me recommending them for employment, graduate school, or future prospects will mention inappropriate texting in class.

Classroom Conduct
Our classroom environment will use a discussion format in which you put forth your perspective on issues discussed. For this to be productive, we must treat one another with the highest respect. This means avoiding making disparaging remarks and instead valuing all honest contributions. I reserve the right, if necessary for behavioral reasons, to request a student to leave the room. Inappropriate, lewd, and/or aggressive behavior will not be tolerated.

Writing Center
All students are invited to bring their writing to the Writing Center in Norlin Library for feedback and advice. Bring any writing from any discipline at any stage of the writing process. Fifty-minute consultations with experienced writing consultants are available by appointment at no charge. Because the Writing Center is very popular, make reservations at least one week in advance. Reservations can be made through the Writing Center website or in person. Here are several benefits of going to the Writing Center:

- Improve your planning, logic, and organization
- Refine your clarity, style, citation, and grammar
- Prevent procrastination and writing anxiety

Find more information at: http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html

Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) Criteria

This 3000-level writing seminar satisfies upper-division core requirements in the College of Arts & Sciences because it extends student rhetorical knowledge and writing skills by engaging theoretical perspectives and addressing specialized disciplinary communities. This upper-division seminar is part of the state-wide “Guaranteed Transfer” pathway of courses. Thus, this course meets the goals of an Advanced Writing course (GT-CO3) through the following:

Rhetorical Knowledge: The course takes a rhetorical perspective on academic research, reading, and writing activities that target real-life audiences in relevant academic disciplines or in the civic sphere. We will draw from Green, a collection of environmental texts, mainly persuasive in nature, to develop rhetorical knowledge. Students will synthesize data from these texts in order to effectively communicate and substantiate ideas. Specific rhetorical concepts will be reinforced through various handouts adapted from Rosenwasser and Stephen’s Writing Analytically. To help students write in their academic genres, we will also refer to the substantive materials on three nationally recognized web sites: The Purdue University OWL (on-line writing lab), the Colorado State Writing Center, and the Silva Rhetoricae website.

Writing Process: The course provides multiple opportunities for students to understand audience-centered writing by focusing on peer review of work in progress. Through this approach, students will discover the importance of revision as an academic discursive activity. The revision strategies of experienced writers will be studied through handouts developed from Nancy Sommers’ Harvard
Writing Project, a pedagogy that emphasizes revision as shaping and refining one’s arguments and addressing one’s audience more fully. As students write, they will integrate various technologies (e.g., Internet search engines, electronic discipline-specific databases, RefWorks, PowerPoint) into their persuasive essay or grant proposal project, and to develop advanced information literacy skills pertinent to their research area. Students will learn advanced information literacy skills needed for their grant (such as use of government databases for demographic data).

**Critical Thinking:** Critical thinking skills will be developed through the readings, writings, and discussions of environmental writing. Students will examine complex issues from multiple points of view as well as differentiate thoughtful responses to environmental issues from casual reactions, and criticism from critique. Students will write about their service-learning work using the critical thinking pedagogy of Benjamin Bloom’s *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* to deepen their level of thinking, a pedagogy applied to service-learning courses developed by nationally-acclaimed researcher Patty Clayton in her book, *Learning Through Critical Reflection*.

**Writing Conventions:** The documents students write for this course will call upon the key genres of academic communication (rhetorical analysis, persuasion, visual and oral rhetoric) in the field of sustainability as well as studying peer reviewed research and grant proposals, an increasingly important genre in academia. In the process, students will learn about genre conventions appropriate to their disciplinary focus and/or to their academic or civic audience. Students will also learn how to draw on specialized vocabularies in ways that still make their work accessible to secondary audiences as well as how to employ textual features and document design (e.g., bold-face heading sections) as persuasive tools.

**Effective application:** Directing discourse to real-world audiences will be central to the course. The readings in *Green* will model writing directed to specific demographics of readers of environmental writing. The strategies of ethos, logos, and pathos will be uncovered in these readings and applied in students’ persuasive essays and service-learning projects. As such, students will gain familiarity with writing in a disciplinary or specialized rhetorical situation, even as they make their work accessible to secondary audiences in other related fields.

**Writing Center**
All students are invited to bring their writing to the Writing Center in Norlin Library for feedback and advice. Bring any writing from any discipline at any stage of the writing process. Fifty-minute consultations with experienced writing consultants are available by appointment at no charge. Because the Writing Center is very popular, please plan to make reservations at least a week in advance. Reservations can be made through the Writing Center website or in person.

- Improve your planning, logic, and organization
- Refine your clarity, style, citation, and grammar
- Prevent procrastination and writing anxiety

Find more information at:  [http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html](http://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writingcenter.html)
Here are various University-wide policies you need to know about:

**Honor Code:** Turning in work that is not your own or any other form of scholastic dishonesty will result in a major course penalty. If any part of a paper up to two sentences is plagiarized, you will receive an F on the paper with no possibility for a rewrite. If any more than two sentences are plagiarized, you will fail the course and the incident will be reported to the Honors Council. All students of the CU-Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html) and at [http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/](http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode/)

**Religious Observances:** The University and your professors respect students’ need for religious observations. Please notify me at least one week in advance if you will be absent due to religious observances. These missed classes will not be counted as absences. I will make every effort to accommodate your absence including giving make-up exams or extra credit work for in-class assignments missed. [See policy details at](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html)

**Student Conduct Code:** Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters list the legal names of students, but I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. See policies at [http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html](http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html) and at [http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code](http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code)

**Discrimination and harassment:** The University of Colorado Boulder is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. CU does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities. CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or veteran status. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at [http://www.colorado.edu/odh](http://www.colorado.edu/odh)

**Disabilities:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit to your professor a letter from Disability Services in a timely manner (for exam accommodations provide your letter at least one week prior to the exam) so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at dsinfo@colorado.edu.
If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Medical Conditions: Injuries, Surgeries, and Illnesses guidelines under Quick Links at Disability Services website and discuss your needs with your professor.

Day-by-Day Course Readings and Due Dates

(All assigned readings have a written component to complete and bring to class on the day of the discussion. Additional details on each class’s assignments are available on CU-Learn. This schedule is tentative and may be changed.)

Week ONE
M Aug 27
Introduction to course

W Aug. 29
Readings:
“For the Love of Life” (Green)
“Called Home” by Barbara Kingsolver (Desire2Learn)
Claims/Assertions Handout

WEEK TWO
W Sept. 5
Readings:
“The Fish” by Elizabeth Bishop (D2L)
“American Forests” (Green)
“For the Love of Life” (Green)
“Called Home” by Barbara Kingsolver (D2L)
Showing vs. Telling Handout

WEEK THREE
M Sept. 10
Readings:
Eaarth by Bill McKibben (1-46)
“The Ultimate Roller Coaster” by Richard Heinberg (D2L)
Rhetorical Strategies Handout
Bring draft of Ecological Identity to hand in for comments

W Sept. 12
Readings:
“The Peace of Wild Things” by Wendell Berry (D2L)
Eaarth by Bill McKibben (1-46)
“Rob Hopkins: Transition to the World Without Oil” (TED talk)
http://www.ted.com/talks/rob_hopkins_transition_to_a_world_without_oil.html
Rhetorical Strategies Handout
Writing Portfolio I DUE Mon. Sept. 17 including Ecological Identity. All writing assignments for Week 1-3 readings must be included.

**WEEK FOUR**
M Sept. 17
Readings:
- *Eaarth* by Bill McKibben (47-101)
- “As the World Burns” (Green)
  Quotations Worksheet

W Sept. 19
Readings:
- “What’s Wrong with What We Eat: Mark Bittman” (TED Talk D2L)
  http://blog.ted.com/2008/05/15/mark_bittman/
  Fallacies Worksheet

**WEEK FIVE**
M Sept. 24
Readings:
- *Eaarth* by Bill McKibben (102-150)
  Three articles by Michael Brownlee of Transition Colorado:
  - “Thinking Like a Foodshed”
    http://localfoodshift.org/site/page?view=thinking_like_a_foodshed.thinking_like_a_foodshed
  - “Our Food Predicament”
    http://localfoodshift.org/site/page?view=thinking_like_a_foodshed.our_food_predicament
  - “From Commodity Export Agriculture to Local Food Production”
  Fallacies Worksheet

W Sept. 26
Readings:
- *Eaarth* by Bill McKibben (151-end)

If you have not conducted research within CU’s databases, I highly recommend that you take this online tutorial before class. See especially Part 1 (keywords) and Part 2 (Find books, articles, newspaper articles): Go to http://ucblibraries.colorado.edu/pwr/public_tutorial/home.htm

**WEEK SIX**
M Oct. 1
Readings:
- *Eaarth* by Bill McKibben (151-end)
- Quiz on *Food Inc.*
- Thesis/Evidence Handout
Bring thesis statement for Rhetorical Analysis

W Oct. 3
Workshop RA Thesis Statements and Introductions
Introduction Handout

Writing Portfolio II due in class on Mon Oct 8. Include all posted writing assignments for Week 4-6 readings.

WEEK SEVEN
M Oct. 8
Workshop Body Paragraphs

W Oct. 10
Workshop Complete Essays
Rhetorical Analysis due in class on Mon. Oct. 15

WEEK EIGHT
M Oct. 15
Readings:
Service-Learning writing—Critical Reflections (D2L)

W Oct. 17
Readings:
Media articles on environmental topic (D2L)
UROP Proposals (D2L)
Research Question Handout

WEEK NINE
M Oct. 22
Readings:
“Climate and Energy” (Green)

W Oct. 24
Readings:

WEEK TEN
M Oct. 29
Readings:
“Radical Homemakers” (Green)
“Green Chic” (Green)

W Oct. 31
Workshop Thesis Statements

WEEK ELEVEN
M Nov. 5
Workshop Introductions

W Nov. 7
Workshop Body Paragraphs

WEEK TWELVE
M Nov. 12
Dave Underwood Presentation about technology

W Nov. 14
Workshop Complete Drafts
Persuasive Project due no later than Fri. Nov 16 in my PWR mailbox.

WEEK THIRTEEN
THANKSGIVING BREAK

WEEK FOURTEEN
M Nov. 26
Group Work on SL Projects

W Nov. 28
Group Work on SL Projects

WEEK FIFTEEN
M Dec. 3
Group Work on SL Projects

Writing Portfolio III due in class. All writing assignments for Weeks 8-15 readings must be included including Critical Reflections on Service-Learning.

W Dec. 5
Service-Learning Project Presentations
Readings:
   “Earth Without People” (Green)

WEEK SIXTEEN
M Dec. 10
Service-Learning Project Presentations

W Dec. 12 --Final Reflections on course