Environmental Storytelling

DMD 3998 Sec 006: Variable Topics (3 credits)	NRE 4695 Sec 001: Special Topics (3 credits)

Class Meeting
Fridays 10:10am – 1:10pm - Bishop Center 006

Instructors

Digital Media & Design	Natural Resources & the Environment
Anna Lindemann	Laura Cisneros
Bishop 237	Young 230
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Guest Lecturers
Cary Chadwick, David Dickson, Heather Elliott-Famularo

Prerequisites
2nd-year students or higher; instructor consent

Recommended Preparation
One of the courses listed below:

DMD 3998.006	NRE 4695.001
DMD 2200 Motion Design & Animation 1	NRE 1000 Environmental Science
DMD 2210 Film & Video Editing 1	EVST 1000E Intro to Enviro Studies
DMD 1070 Intro to Web Design	GEOG 1010 New Digital Worlds of GIScience
	GEOG 1302 GIS Modeling of Environmental Change
	GEOG 2500 Intro. to Geographic Information Systems
	Enviro. Literacy Gen Ed Requirement

Course Description
Students in this course will experience a unique approach to environmental communication. Framed in culturally-sustaining approaches and focusing on environmental issues relevant to Connecticut communities, this course will introduce students to participatory research and environmental storytelling using digital media and geospatial technology. The course brings together faculty, students, and guest lecturers with a diverse range of expertise and interest in environmental science, arts, geospatial technology, filmmaking, science education, and digital media. In this way, the class design embraces the idea that the class experience will be enriched by the diverse cultural and disciplinary backgrounds of all participants.

Through hands-on activities, demos, lectures, and discussions, students will develop skills in research and data collection, effective visual storytelling, video, animation, and online mapping. Throughout the semester, students collaborate on a team project that assesses environmental assets and hazards/concerns, explores possible solutions, and uses multimedia storytelling to envision an environmental future. The project will culminate with an interactive multimedia product created through ArcGIS StoryMaps.

Students in this course will be part of a larger network of environmental action within UConn's Natural Resources Conservation Academy (NRCA) and directly contribute to workshops for high school student-teacher teams in the Eco-Digital Storytellers (EDS) program. EDS is funded by a National Science Foundation *Innovative Technology Experiences for Students and Teachers* grant.

Post-Course Paid Internship Opportunity
Students who complete this course will have the opportunity to apply for 5-month paid environmental education internship positions as EDS mentors. Under the support and guidance of multidisciplinary faculty, EDS mentors will have the unique opportunity to mentor a subset of EDS high school participants as they carry out community environmental storytelling projects during the spring 2025 semester. This position will provide undergraduate students with experience in leadership, authentic community engagement, environmental education, mentorship, and professional development in environmental science, technology, arts, and storytelling/science communication, in addition to soft skills that are critical for workforce success such as teamwork, communication, and building relationships.

Course Format
Throughout this course, students will engage in class discussions and critiques and will be active in bringing knowledge, opinions, questions, and skills to individual assignments and team projects. Students will become familiar with a wide variety of storytelling, digital media, and geospatial technology resources through lectures, demos, curated playlists, and hands-on activities. As some of the coursework will be collaborative, students will need to demonstrate a willingness to compromise, and will be expected to treat their fellow team members with patience and respect. Students will complete both peer and self-evaluations as part of their Environmental Storytelling team project. These evaluations will count towards the final assessment of the project work. While a number of class sessions are dedicated to project work time (as noted in the class schedule), students must also be prepared to meet with their teammates outside of scheduled class times. All team members must be active throughout project development and must be present for meetings outside of class sessions, even if they feel that their portion of the project is complete.

Course Goals

Students will be able to:
- Engage in collaborative community environmental action
- Identify and research socio-environmental justice topics relevant to their community
- Use geospatial technology to visualize and share data
- Create digital media for effective and imaginative environmental storytelling
- Explore the use of mapping, animation, and documentary video in the context of environmental storytelling
- Speak and write articulately about their own work, work of peers, and professional works related to the themes explored in class
- Support high school student-teacher teams during Eco-Digital Storytelling workshops

Course Assessments

Assessment Type (2,000 Total Points)	Percent
Environmental Storytelling Team Project (1,000 points total) • Individual Concept Pitch (100 pts) • Team Project Preproduction Part 1 (150 pts) • Team Project Preproduction Part 2 (150 pts) • Team Project Draft #1(200 pts) • Team Project Draft #2 (200 pts) • Team Project Final (200 pts) *Note: Assessment for each team project benchmark includes peer and self-evaluations*	50%
Skills Checks & Analyses (800 points total) • HW1: Community Assets Skills Check (140 pts) & StoryMaps Analysis (48 pts) • HW2: Socio-Environmental Skills Check (140 pts) & Environmental Justice Analysis (48 pts) • HW3: Mapping Skills Check (140 pts) • HW4: Animation OR Video Skills Check (140 pts) & Environmental Storytelling Using Animation and Video Analysis (48 pts) • HW5: StoryMap Planning Analysis (48 pts) • HW6: Instructional & Mentorship Approaches Analysis (48 pts)	40%
Active Participation (200 points total) • Preparation for, and active contribution to, Eco-Digital Storytellers program workshops for high school students • Considerate, professional, and active engagement in class discussions, activities, and peer critiques	10%

Course Grading

Grade	Letter Grade	GPA	Explanation
94-100	A	4.0	Excellent
90-93	A-	3.7	
87-89	B+	3.3	Very good
84-86	B	3.0	Good
80-83	B-	2.7	
77-79	C+	2.3	
74-76	C	2.0	Average
70-73	C-	1.7	Fair
67-69	D+	1.3	Poor
64-66	D	1.0	
60-63	D-	0.7	Merely passing
<60	F	0.0	Failure
–	N	0.0	No grade

Late Work Policy

As we will be working collaboratively, late work is especially discouraged since it will impact not only your own success, but the success of others within and outside of our class. All assignments are due at the time indicated on the syllabus and in the assignment instructions. It is your responsibility to complete and submit assignments in accordance with the due date and submission details.

Late individual assignments received within **24 hours of the due date and time will automatically receive a 15% absolute deduction** (i.e., highest score possible = 85%, equivalent to a drop of one full letter grade). **Unless prior permission is received from the instructor as a result of university-approved extenuating circumstances, assignments will not be accepted more than 24 hours after the assigned deadline.** Students (or groups) have up to 2 weeks after a particular assignment is handed back to ask questions about the grade. We reserve the right to change due dates as needed to accommodate issues that might arise. Changes will be communicated in class, via email, or announced on HuskyCT.

Course Materials

Online Resources
- [HuskyCT](#) - course announcements, playlists, assignments, and grades are posted here
- [Shared Class One Drive](#) - you will be granted access to create content and upload media here for both individual and team projects

Required Equipment
- To be successful in this course, you will need a personal computer and access to the [Adobe Creative Cloud Suite](#). A student subscription costs $55 for the fall semester (or you can purchase a full year for $136).
  - Your computer should be up to date with the [recommended specs listed on the DMD website](#).
  - If you do not own a computer with adequate specs or cannot afford the student subscription, the following options exist:
    - Adobe Creative Cloud Suite is available at the Homer Babbidge Library computer lab
    - If you are a Digital Media Design, Fine Arts, or Journalism student, you can access the software in these areas' computer labs.
    - You can borrow a laptop from the [DMD Imagination Station](#) for use in this course only (i.e., not for personal use or use in other courses)
- While not required, we recommend that you have a dedicated external hard drive for this course; 2TB, SSD (Solid State Drive), 1050 Mb/s minimum.
  - Note: An external hard drive is included when you borrow a course-specific laptop from the Imagination Station. However, all data will be removed at the end of the semester so you may want to use your own personal hard drive.

Academic Integrity

You are responsible for ensuring that original work is correctly attributed. You must give clear and complete attributions for the work of others in your own productions as well as in any written work. Plagiarism (either digital or written) will not be tolerated and may result in failure of the course or expulsion. Please refer to the [Student Code](#).

Academic Accommodations

UConn is committed to protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and assuring that the learning environment is accessible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please let the instructors know immediately so that we can discuss options. Students who require accommodations should contact the Center for Students with Disabilities (CSD), Wilbur Cross Room 204, (860) 486-2020 or https://csd.uconn.edu/.

Absences

If you must be absent from class sessions, please email Anna, Laura, and your team project collaborators. Unless absolutely impossible, send notice prior to your absence. Providing adequate notice is professional etiquette and a demonstration of active participation. It is your responsibility to contact the instructors for class materials you may have missed and to discuss a plan for making up your missed class time and work. Please note, however, that being absent from class does not change the submission deadline for an assignment unless prior arrangements have been made. Please stay home if you are feeling ill and go home if you start to feel ill during class.

To receive an excused absence you must email Anna and Laura (anna.lindemann@uconn.edu; laura.cisneros@uconn.edu). Excused absences may include religious holidays, illnesses, family emergencies, or participation in scholarly presentations, performing arts, and intercollegiate sports, when the participation is at the request of, or coordinated by, a university official.

Health Resources

Good mental and physical health are integral to personal and professional growth and academic success. If you may benefit from speaking with a mental health professional, you can find support and resources through the Student Health and Wellness-Mental Health (SHaW-MH) office. You can visit the office in Storrs in the Hilda May Williams building or contact the office at (860) 486-4700, or visit https://studenthealth.uconn.edu/ for services or questions. If life circumstances are affecting your ability to focus on courses and your UConn experience, you can email the Dean of Students at dos@uconn.edu to request support.

University Policies

Students in this course are held to standards and policies of the University of Connecticut. Make sure you are familiar with: http://provost.uconn.edu/syllabi-references
- Credit Hour
- People with Disabilities, Policy Statement
- Discrimination, Harassment and Related Interpersonal Violence, Policy Against
- The Student Code
- Academic, Scholarly, and Professional Integrity and Misconduct (ASPIM) Policy
- Academic Misconduct Procedures for Instructors

Course Schedule & Assignments

coming soon…