



Environmental Journalism with Cynthia Barnett Fall 2024

JOU 4314/Grads MMC 6936
Mondays 9:35 a.m. to 12:35 p.m.
Weimer Hall 2056

Cynthia's contact & office hours

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Office Hours for Students: Walk-in @ 3063: Mondays 2-4 and Wednesdays 3-4.

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 people 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; politics; disinformation; zealous stakeholders; and what can (incorrectly) seem like hopeless causes make environment/climate among the most challenging specialties in our craft.

Environmental Journalism, the course: This course will introduce you to Environment/Climate Journalism; 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; reporting on solutions not spin; 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.



EJUF COURSE READINGS & PARTICIPATION

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. 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 12 classes together due to all the Monday holidays, I expected you to attend.**

OVERNIGHT FIELD TRIP TO SEAHORSE KEY! Sat Nov. 2nd and Sun Nov. 3rd. (Week 10 class; no Weimer class Mon Nov. 4th.) 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. Saturday morning Nov. 2nd, we'll drive an hour west by car, then motor another mile into the Gulf of Mexico by boat, to the Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge, a chain of undeveloped barrier islands. We'll share a potluck dinner and spend the night in an old lighthouse on Seahorse Key. Thanks to #EJUF donors, there is no fee, but please plan to contribute a dish and drive carpool if you're able. More details and directions in class and by email. **Please request time off work now!**



EJUF COURSE GRADES

- Attendance & Engagement in EJ class: **100**
- Assignment 1: EJ presentations: **100** (due Fri 9/13 @ 8 p.m.)
- Assignment 2: Climate Change story: **100** (due Fri 9/27 @ 8 p.m.)
- Assignment 3: Disinformation/Greenwashing analysis: **100** (due Fri 10/11 @ 8 p.m.)
- Assignment 4: Animal story: **100** (Due Fri 10/25 @ 8 p.m.)
- Assignment 5: Nature Writing assignment: **100** (due Sun 11/3 in person)
- Assignment 6: Pitch and Outline, #EJUF final story: **100** (due Fri 11/8 @ 8 p.m.)
- Assignment 7: First draft, #EJUF final story: **100** (due Fri 11/22 @ 8 p.m.)
- Assignment 8: Final draft, #EJUF final story: **200** (Due Weds 12/4 @ 8 p.m.)

Total points possible: 1,000

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

Assignment 1: ENVIRONMENTAL JOURNALISM ANALYSIS & 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-22nd-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: Climate disinformation; covering GMOs; the problem of doomsday climate reporting; sexism in science writing; etc.

Due Friday Sept. 13th @ 8 p.m.: Undergrads, turn in text on Canvas w/ link to story, 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. 16th; we'll schedule over the next few weeks.**

Assignment 2: CLIMATE CHANGE STORY: A climate change story spanning any beat, from agriculture to real estate to sports to weather. Think about our guest speaker Alex Harris and how she localizes 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- to 800-word written story; a data-viz story; or 2-3 minute audio or video story. **Due Friday Sept. 27th @ 8 p.m.**

Assignment 3: 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.)

Due Friday Oct. 11th @ 8 p.m. Please include link to press release, ad, or etc., and **be prepared to present informally over the next few weeks.** No slides necessary but be prepared to show the campaign you are analyzing to the class.

Assignment 4: ANIMAL STORY: A news story based around animals and/or an animal issue. You may choose to report on wildlife, farm animals, marine or aquatic life, a microscopic myxozoan or a behemoth whale—even pets. Remember to avoid cliches or overly anthropomorphizing animals; include context and underlying causes of human/animal interactions; and other advice from class and guest speakers. Include some inherent wonder in the animal you're writing about—and a photograph! A 500- to 800-word written story; a data-viz story; or 2-3 minute audio or video story.
Due Friday 10/25 @ 6 p.m.

Assignment 5: NATURE WRITING EXERCISE. Deets on Seahorse Key. **Hand it in to me Sun 11/3** before we leave the islands to return to Gainesville.

Assignment 6: PITCH AND OUTLINE, #EJUF FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL STORY: A reported, 500-word story pitch (plan) for your major Environmental Journalism story that will be due in two parts: A first draft before you leave for Thanksgiving and a final draft on the last day of the semester. This is essentially the vision for your story—the angle; the data on which the story is based; the sources you'll interview (5 at minimum); peer-reviewed research papers that deepen context (2 at minimum); any places you'll visit and describe; the structure you envision; and ideas for visuals and other assets. **Due Friday 11/8 @ 8 p.m.**

EJ Assignment 7: FIRST DRAFT, MULTIMEDIA CLIMATE or ENVIRONMENT STORY: Your final story should be a written narrative of roughly 1,000 words unless we agreed on a video story, NPR-style audio story, interactive graphic, or other form. It should include at least two additional multimedia elements—photos; audio or video clips; data visualizations; a timeline or other elements to draw people in. Please note that first draft does not mean rough draft. You'll be graded on your effort to make this draft as strong and complete as possible. **Due Friday 11/22 @ 8 p.m.** I will return edits early Thanksgiving week with the hope that you can both enjoy the holiday and have time to complete your final, fact-checked multimedia package by the last day of the semester.

EJ Assignment 8: FINAL DRAFT, MULTIMEDIA CLIMATE OR ENVIRONMENT STORY: Again: roughly 1,000 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 multimedia 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 12/4 @ 8 p.m.**



EJUF COURSE AGENDA & WEEKLY READINGS

Week 1, Monday Aug 26th 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 20th 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) **Read** “Marjory Stoneman Douglas, ‘Voice of the River,’” by Tim Collie, the *Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel*, 1998 (on Canvas).
- 3) **Read** [Silent Spring Part I](#), Carson’s first excerpt in *The New Yorker*, published in the June 16th 1962 issue.

NO CLASS FOR THE LABOR DAY HOLIDAY Monday Sept 2nd

During our off week, please:

- 1) **Finish** presentations.
- 2) **Listen** to the ZERO podcast episode “[Inside the industry that made climate denial work.](#)” Akshat Rathi interviews Amy Westervelt, an investigative climate reporter and creator of the popular podcast “Drilled.”
- 3) **Start** “[The Mad Men of Big Oil](#),” Season 3 of the narrative climate journalism podcast DRILLED by investigative climate journalist Amy Westervelt. We’ll discuss the podcast Week 6, so give yourself time to listen to these 9 episodes.

Week 2, Mon Sept 9th 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 (Zoom): #EJUF alumnus Alex Harris, climate change reporter, *The Miami Herald*, @harrisalex

PREPARE: Read these stories by our guest speaker (all on Canvas).

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

Week 3, Mon Sept 16th CONSERVATION PHOTOGRAPHY & FILM: 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 these dynamic visual form and how they differ from traditional nature or landscape photography; the key role of imagery in environmental storytelling; and strategies for photography and films that help audiences understand environmental issues and their personal connection.

Guest speaker (in person): Conservation photographer and filmmaker Gabby Salazar

PREPARE: 1) View our guest speaker’s short film, [Outnumbered in Africa](#): One Woman’s Remarkable Journey to Protect Lions, and Gabby’s photographic portfolio at [gabbysalazar.com](#). Develop questions for Gabby.

- 2) Watch the film, [The Path of the Panther](#). (Streams on Hulu; we can do a movie night if you’d like.)
- 3) Read and view, [Use Your Photography to Support and Advance Conservation, by Morgan Heim](#) in *Audubon magazine*.
- 4) Read and view, [Plight of the Platypus](#) story by April Reese with photographs by Douglas Gimesy, *bioGraphic*.

Week 4 Mon Sept 23th DATA, VISUALIZATION & GRAPHICAL STORYTELLING

Environmental databases offer important 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](#); Environmental Justice with the [EPA’s EJScreen](#); and countless others. But it takes time, skill and statistical understanding to analyze data and turn it into thoughtful storytelling.

Week 4 will introduce some of the public databases used by environment reporters and show how reporters have used other publicly available data to tell extraordinary stories like Grist's [Misplaced Trust](#). In the second half of class, #EJUF alumnus Joan Meiners will join us for a lecture on data; scientific accuracy; communicating risk; and understanding statistics. Avoid common pitfalls such as falling for shady statistics or overhyping preliminary research!

Guest speaker (Zoom): [Dr. Joan Meiners, Climate News and Storytelling Reporter, *The Arizona Republic*](#), @beecycles

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 Earth's 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) Read "[As Arizona builds to solve a housing crisis, will its homes withstand future heat extremes?](#)" by Joan Meiners, *The Arizona Republic*, part of Joan's 2023 series on Arizona's intersecting heat and housing crisis.
- 3) "Phoenix failed to address climate pollutant at city-owned site," *The Arizona Republic*.
- 4) Read/view "[In Harm's Way](#)," a longform comic by Susie Cagle/the Marshall Project and Grist, October 2023.
- 5) Read/check out the interactive database in "[Misplaced Trust](#)," Grist.

Week 5, Mon Sept 30th 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](#).

Week 6 Mon Oct 7th GREENWASHING, MISINFORMATION & CONSPIRACIES: Is that new housing development really green? Is phosphate feeding the world or depleting the Earth? Are 15-minute cities a conspiracy to trap us all in an open-air prisons? Environment/climate journalists

must ask the questions and the follow-up questions... report with sophistication and fairness ... recognize greenwashing vs. effective corporate social responsibility/sustainability programs ... and take care not to amplify misinfo and conspiracies.

PREPARE: 1) **Watch** the documentary film *Merchants of Doubt*, directed by Robert Kenner. The film is available free online via the UF Library's catalogue. (So long as you are logged in to the VPN.) Watch this fantastic movie with a friend/classmate if you can. (93 minutes).

- 2) **Finish** "[The Mad Men of Big Oil](#)," Season 3 of the narrative climate journalism podcast DRILLED by investigative journalist Amy Westervelt. (9 episodes)
- 3) **Read or listen to** "[People working on climate solutions are facing a big obstacle: conspiracy theories](#)," NPR All Things Considered, fall 2023 NPR Climate Week.
- 4) **Read** "[Climate change is not your fault, but that doesn't mean you're off the hook](#)," by Joan Meiners, *the Arizona Republic*.
- 5) **Be ready to share** your greenwashing/misinformation findings in class.

Week 7 Mon Oct. 14th ANIMAL WEEK IN #EJUF! Earth is losing species 100s to 1,000s 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 anthromorphizing animals? What are some ways to report on the biodiversity crisis, and make the peril facing Florida's frosted flatwoods salamander as vital as for our charismatic Florida panther?

Guest speaker (on Zoom): VOX environmental correspondent [Benji Jones](#). @benjisjones

PREPARE:

- 1) "[Florida has become a zoo. A literal zoo](#)," by Benji Jones, Vox.
- 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 11th 2021.

Week 8, Mon Oct. 21st, PREPARE, PLAN, PITCH: With the pitch and outline for your big environmental story due Nov. 8th, we'll spend time in class brainstorming your dream stories and making our decision about whether to tackle a team project or individual work. Please bring your story ideas to workshop with the class and brainstorm reporting suggestions and strategies. 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) 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/>. **Please bring a favorite pitch from this database. What did you think worked well?**
- 2) Bring the story ideas you've been considering for your final project.

Week 9 Mon Oct 28th 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. First half of class, you'll learn how to find compelling stories in science and tell them with flair, from one of the best—distinguished science writer Dr. Ainissa Ramirez. You'll get 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. After the break, CJC's own April Hines joins us to help you find the peer-reviewed scientific research required for your final story pitch due Nov. 8th.

Guest speakers: @ 9:45 Dr. Ainissa Ramirez, distinguished science writer and author, *The Alchemy of Us* (via Zoom) @ainissaramirez

@ 11 a.m. April Hines, CJC Librarian, on tapping UF's online science/research databases. (In person) @UFCJCLibrarian

PREPARE:

- 1) 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.)
- 2) Check out: [The 500 Women Scientists' GAGE Resources page](#) to help put you in touch with more women scientists, and scientists from underrepresented backgrounds.
- 3) "[How to Find Scientist Sources and Plan Interviews](#)," by Abdullahi Tsanni, The Open Notebook, April 2021.

Week 10 Sat Nov. 2nd and Sun Nov. 3rd #EJUF Field Trip to the Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge. (Field trip details in class and via email. No Monday Weimer Hall class on Nov. 4th.)

PREPARE:

- 1) "The Cedar Keys," by John Muir. (On Canvas)
- 2) [Excerpt, "Rising: Dispatches from the New American Shore,"](#) by Elizabeth Rush.
- 3) "[Why Write Beautifully About Climate Crisis?](#)" by Martyn Smith, Edge Effects.

NO CLASS FOR THE VETERANS DAY HOLIDAY Mon Nov. 11TH

Week 11 Mon Nov. 18th 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 U.S. 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, governments and Environmental Journalism alike all lagged in inclusion, cultural sensitivity and work on vulnerable communities.

Guest speaker (in person): 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 6th 2021.
- 2) Letter from SouthWest Organizing Project to the president of the National Wildlife Federation, March 16th 1990: <http://www.ejnet.org/ej/swop.pdf>.
- 3) Energy Burden, Part I, Energy comes at a much greater cost for Gainesville’s poor, by EJUF class, <https://www.wuft.org/news/energy-burden/>
- 4) Energy Burden Part II, the Power of Irma, by Joan Meiners, www.wuft.org/news/energy-burden/the-storm/

NO CLASS FOR THE THANKSGIVING DAY HOLIDAY Mon Nov. 25th

Week 12 & last day of class, Mon Dec 2nd International Environment Reporting + so after taking this class, are you thinking about a career in Environment/Climate reporting?

An 8-billion population, resource extraction and global trade and travel connects us all to life, water, air 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 Africa. Climate change, species extinction, water strife, and all major environmental issues are at once local and global. The global story offers great opportunities for journalists and also requires sensitivity and overcoming assumptions. We’ll also spend time on travel grants available for international environment, climate and health journalism—and how to pursue a career as an environment/climate reporter.

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 beautiful 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.



COURSE POLICIES

Safety and security: Your safety and security are paramount and supersede the value of any content our class might produce. If you are interviewing or photographing a subject of our reporting in a private setting – such as the person’s home or private office or isolated setting – please inform me before you leave. We may conduct a quick background check on your source and establish a security plan so that we know where you will be, when you would expect to be finished and when you will contact me to let me know you’re back. I also want to know if you head out in the wake of a hurricane or other disaster. I may suggest that a classmate or instructor accompany you.

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 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/) 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. These 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 lecturers 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.

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.

Classroom Diversity & Inclusion: The College of Journalism and Communications is committed to an intellectual community enriched and enhanced by diversity in a number of realms, 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.

Storytelling Sources 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/>



YOUR TEACHER

Cynthia Barnett is Environmental Journalist in Residence and Director of Climate and Environment Reporting Initiatives in the 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: Seabells 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 college-age son and daughter and lives with her husband just north of campus in the Florida Park neighborhood, where she likes to do walk-and-talk office hours.