COMS 315 Communication and Social Change  
Sustainability Emphasis

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Office Hours:  
Monday / Wednesday: 12:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.  
Tuesday / Thursday: 10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.  
Or by appointment

Readings and Required Materials for Class  
All course readings are available on D2L  
A notebook, writing utensil, and an open, engaged mind

Course Description  
COMS 315 – Communication and Social Change will explore the role of communication as it pertains to how persons initiate, enact, and experience social change. Specifically, we will look at social change as an imaginative and creative process accomplished through dialogue between diverse persons. Throughout the semester, we’ll discuss communication as a dialogic practice and it’s critical role in foster social change through exploring social practices that contribute to sustainable living. Moreover, adopting sustainable living practices require us to evaluate critically the individual and collective relationships we have with our physical, social, and economic environments to answer the questions “Are my/our practices sustainable in that they allow us to live in harmony with our physical and social environments ?” and if not, “What needs to be done to achieve a sustainable lifestyle/society?” Exploring communication as an agent of change within the context of sustainable living practices will allow us to achieve the three goals of this course: (1) foster your ability to be critical consumers of information, (2) communicate innovatively, strategically, and effectively, and (3) to develop ethical communication practices.

Attendance / Participation Policy & Statement on Inclusivity  
You are allowed one free day throughout the semester for your own personal use. I recommend that you use this free day for a legitimate emergencies. Any absence beyond this one day will decrease your grade by 5%. Should you find yourself missing a day, you should know that my pedagogical style is a mixture of formal lecture and classroom discussion – I use PowerPoint very infrequently. As such, it is your responsibility to get the notes from someone (someone you trust).

Finally, it is important for you to know that your physical body in my classroom is not how I understand participation. I expect to see you engaged in the discussion through either taking notes or outward participation. Excessive withdrawal and distraction from our learning environment will result in a conversation before lowering points.
University Inclusivity Statement
The UWRF promotes safe, inclusive and effective learning environments that protect the rights and support the interests of both students and faculty. For additional information regarding our inclusivity expectations, academic accommodations, academic conduct expectations and processes, and other syllabi information, please consult: http://go.uwrf.edu/Syllabi

Email Communication and D2L
I will use e-mail to alert you to any and important changes to the flow of our course which will be sent you via the D2L website. As such, it is your responsibility to be checking your student e-mail (or whatever account to which you forward your e-mail). Best practices for e-mail include checking your email sporadically throughout the day, or at the very least, once in the morning, around noon, and in the evening.

Should you have any questions about course policy or due dates, I encourage you to check D2L where you will find information on assignments that are due, readings that are due and the readings themselves, the schedule, course policies/expectations, grades, and any other information that I deem necessary for class. Should you e-mail me with a questions that is answered by the syllabus, chances you are will not receive a response from me. Be your own advocate when it comes to information in this class. Show me where I am unclear when you bring me a question, and I will be more than happy to help you.

A NOTE ON ETIQUETTE:
When sending me an e-mail, I will not reply if it fails to carry an expected element of decorum. Your e-mails should always have a (1) a greeting, (2) clear and well-written inquiries / statements, and (3) a closing with your name. Also, please allot me a 48 hour time frame to respond to any e-mail requests. If you do not hear from me in 48 hours, send another e-mail.

Technology
As a member of this learning community, each student has a responsibility and obligation to other students who are members of the community. When cell phones, laptops, and other electronic devices are used during formal lecture periods of class they can be a distraction, and as such, must be stowed away while I am speaking. Sanctions for the violation of this policy will result in embarrassment, ridicule, or subjection to starving wolves.

There are occasions where I will allow technology usage. The Internet, after all, is a valuable source of information – we would be remiss if we did not invoke it on occasion. As such, I do encourage you to bring laptops to class for when class periods will be devoted to group work. However, usage is only allowed for on task

Special Needs Accommodation
I am happy to accommodate any special needs you may have throughout the class. If you have need for accommodation I encourage you to contact the Office of Ability Services at 425-0740 or visit the office at 129 Hagestad Hall. Although I try to accommodate students whenever possible, I require written documentation from Ability Services for ongoing accommodations. This is for my protection, as well as for your benefit.
GRADING

Assignment / Point Break Down

Daily Quizzes 10%
Letters to Editor & Elected Officials 30%
Ethical Reflection 30%
Group Project 30%

Total 100%

Notes on Grading
SUBMITTING WORK: All written assignments must be typed in 12-point, Times New Roman font with 1” margins. Also, lengthy headings are not necessary. Your name and the name of the assignment typed as part of the header on your Microsoft Word document will be all that is required. If you do not know what a “header” is in Microsoft Word, look it up. E-mail all assignments to me.

Regarding Feedback
When I give you feedback, I expect that you incorporate my suggestions into your work. Failure to do so will result in significantly lower grades. Please ask me if you are unclear as to what I am asking of you in your work. I am more than willing to meet with and respond to students who actively seek feedback on their work.

Grading Scale
100 – 94% = A; 93 – 90 % = A-; 89 – 87 % = B+; 86 – 84% = B; 83 – 80% = B-; 79 – 77% = C+; 76 – 74% = C; 73 – 70% = C-; 69 - 67% = D+; 66-64% = D; 63 – 60% = D; 59% or less = F

Late Work and Incomplete Grade Policy
Here’s the deal, late work happens, and I will accept it. After all, deadlines pass in real life on a constant basis and sometimes they get pushed back. However, this is not to diminish nor discourage you from turning in work on time. People who are able to get their work done in responsible and quality manner are the folks who come to be perceived as trustworthy, and trustworthiness is a significant aspect. By enrolling in this course, you accept the established deadlines of these assignments. Those who meet the deadline have zero penalty and are eligible for A grades. Any assignment accepted after the deadline are subject to a 5% deduction. This 5% deduction accumulates as follows:

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<td>13 – 24</td>
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<td>48+</td>
<td>30%</td>
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As a side note, malfunctioning printers, busy libraries, spilt beverages on your computer, pets hungry for paper, and so forth are not valid excuses for late work – plan and print ahead. We all have 24 hours within our day so use your time well.

I do not give incomplete grades except in medical emergencies or other extraordinary circumstances. And I mean EXTRAORDINARY.

Academic Misconduct
Academic misconduct is something I take seriously. Any student who is caught using another person’s work (student, scholar, or otherwise), using fabricated information, forges/falsifies documents, intentionally impedes or damages the academic work of others, makes false representation of a student’s academic performance, or assists other students in carrying out these aforementioned acts will face disciplinary action ranging from having to redo an assignment to an outright failure of this course and potential suspension from the university.

For more information see chapter 14 of the Student Rights and Responsibilities guide [http://www.uwrf.edu/StudentRightsAndResponsibilities/StudentConduct/Chapter14.cfm](http://www.uwrf.edu/StudentRightsAndResponsibilities/StudentConduct/Chapter14.cfm)

Extra Credit
Extra credit is reserved for any impromptu learning that I deem worthy of extra credit or other spontaneous moments of magic. In other words, I know an act of extra credit when I see it.

Final Grades
I do not round my final grades no matter the circumstance. Take advantage of each opportunity to be impressive. I will not respond to e-mails at the end of the semester that as if anything more can be done to give your grade a shot in the arm.

**COMS 315 – COMMUNICATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE ASSIGNMENTS**

The assessment goals of COMS 315 – Communication and Social Change are to measure your:

(1) Ability to be Critical Consumers of Media
(2) Ability to be Innovative, Effective, and Strategic Communicators
(3) Ability to be Ethical Communicators

I will assess these goals in this class through a variety of measures that include both group and individual components. Each of which are described below. However, there is another agenda that will unfold in this classroom. Specifically, it is my hope that through this course that you will come to see yourself as an individual that may play an influential role when it comes to instigating necessary change within your own communities. The assignments for this course will give you practical skills that you may utilize to become an active citizens within your own community. Moreover, in accomplishing these tasks, you will develop you capacities to articulate yourself in an effective manner and to work as a part of a team – valuable skills in any professional setting.
Weekly Quizzes  
(10% of your Grade)

I believe that the material that I am assign has meaning, and it is my wish for you to engage it with an open mind. However, it is also the case that I am dreadfully aware that when it comes to the classroom as whole, little reading will happen if there is not a measure of accountability put into place.

As such, we will begin each class period with a quiz on the material required for a particular class period. The number of questions on each quiz will range between 5 – 10 questions. You will have 10 minutes to complete the quiz at the beginning of each class. These 10 minutes at the start of class are the only time that you will be able to take the quiz. Should you arrive late, you will be at a disadvantage. Should you miss a quiz, you will not have an opportunity to make up the quiz. HOWEVER should you anticipate missing class, you may take a quiz PRIOR TO class.

These quizzes will take the form of short-answer questions, and I will let you know in the on-line lectures what questions to anticipate having to address for the quiz.

--These quizzes will help you build your ability to be a critical consumer of media.

Letters to the Editor, State Elected Official, and National Elected Official  
(30% of your Grade)

A significant hope for this course is that you will grow to understand yourself as an agentic citizen within your community. A part of enacting social change within the context of democracy is participating in public conversations and influencing your elected officials. Regarding a social issue of your choosing, you are required to compose three letters.

--These assignments will boost your capacity to be critical consumers of media.  
--These assignment will boost your capacity to be innovative, effective, and strategic communicators.

Letter to the Editor

In one page, single-spaced, you are to write a letter to the editor that takes a compelling stand on a social issue facing your community. By compelling, I mean you will construct an argument using sound evidence to argue a position publicly. You will be required to mail this letter to a newspaper of your choosing. Envelopes and postage will be provided. We will mail these out collectively as a class.

Letter to State and National Elected Official

Again, in one-page, single-spaced, you are to write a letter to both a state-level elected official and a national-level elected official. (Each letter must be one page, single-spaced). These letters may not be concerning the same topic. The letter to
the state-level elected official must persuade your elected official to take action on a social need facing your community. The letter to the national-level elected official must persuade this individual to take action on a social issue that you feel threatens our country. I would like an electronic copy of each of these letters as you send them, as well as the confirmation page that is sent to your e-mail account upon submission. For each of these letters, I would also like the reply that you receive from both officials in response to your statements.

I will begin accepting letters on October 6th. The final date to hand in both your letter and the response from your candidate is December 1st.

**Ethical Reflection**  
*(30% of your Grade)*

The final exam for this class is a two-part deal with an individual and a group component. The purpose of this assignment is for you to reflect upon the material that we explored throughout the course. Questions you will have to answer are what is your understanding of how we may come together to envision social relationships that contribute to sustainable living with an emphasis on the social dimension of sustainability? What steps will you take to live in a socially sustainable fashion?

In composing this ethical reflection, you must cite no less than ten of the readings we engaged during our time together. This reflection should be in the ballpark of 6-8 pages.

More details will come as the semester unfolds, and we continue to learn about these ideas together.

---This assignment will help develop your ability to think about the ethical contours of communication.
**Understanding Social Change**

**September 8th**

Introduction to Course
Creativity and Social Change: Imagining Sustainable Practice

*Readings/Websites:*
- Animating Democracy – What is Social Change?
- Barron, Montuori, & Barron (1997) – Creators on Creating
- Sustainability Simply Put
- Sustainability Advantage

**September 15th**

Social Dimensions of Sustainability

*Readings*
- Oldenburg (1999) – *The Great Good Place*
  - Chapter 1 – The Problem of Place in America
- Robert Putnam (2000) – *Bowling Alone*
  - Chapter 1 – Social Change in America
  - Chapter 6 – Informal Social Connections
- Hitchcock and Willard – Confused About Social Sustainability?

**September 22nd**

Doing Social Change

*Readings*
- Rogers (1995) – *Diffusion of Innovations* (Chapter 1)
- Block (2009) – *Community: The Structure of Belonging*
  - Chapter 9 -- The Small Group as Unit of Transformation
  - Chapter 10 -- Questions are More Transforming Than Answers
- Berger (2014) – Index of Questions

*Assignments Due*

**Topic Statement Due for Group Project**

**September 29th**

Agentic Citizenship

*Readings*
- Block (2009) – *Community: The Structure of Belonging*
  - Chapter 6: What It Means to be a Citizen
  - Chapter 8: Leadership is Convening

*Assignments*

**Literature Review Progress Report (end of class)**
October 6th
Building Sustainable Communities

Guest Speaker
Paul Shepard – Director of Student Life

Readings
Block (2009) – *Community: The Structure of Belonging*
  Chapter 1 – Insights into Transformation
  Chapter 2 – Shifting the Context for Community
  Chapter 5 – Taking Back Our Projections

Assignments
I will start accepting letters to State/National Elected Officials

Lit Review Progress Report Due End of Class

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October 13th
Building Sustainable Communities Continued.

Readings
Block (2009) – *Community: The Structure of Belonging*
  Chapter 3 – The Stuck Community
  Chapter 4 – The Restorative Community
  Chapter 7 – The Transforming Community

Oldenburg (1999) – *The Great Good Place*
  Chapter 2 – The Character of Third Places
  Chapter 4 – The Greater Good

Assignments
First draft of our Letter to the Editor due

Lit Review Progress Report Due End of Class

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October 20th
The Conviction and Consequences of Change

Readings
Martin Luther King – Letter from a Birmingham Jail
  “A Call for Unity” – Statement by Eight Alabama Clergymen

Donohue & Levitt (2001) – Impact of Legalized Abortion

Assignments
Lit Review Progress Report Due End of Class
October 27th
Journalism/Fiction as Motivator of Social Change

Readings
Excerpts from Upton Sinclair (1906) – “The Jungle”
Maisel (1946) – Bedlam 1946: Most U.S. Mental Hospitals are a Shame and a Disgrace
Excerpts from Rachel Carson (1962) – “Silent Spring”

Global Dialogues.org

Assignments
Complete draft of literature review due
Mail Out Letters to the Editors

November 3rd
Health & Sustainable Community

Readings
Oldenburg (1999) – The Great Good Place
Chapter 3 – The Personal Benefits
Putnam (2000) – Bowling Alone
Chapter 20 – Health and Happiness
Phalen (2013) – Rita Gillick

Assignments
Press Release Due at End of Class

November 10th
Music and Social Change

Readings

Listenings
Crosby, Nash, Stills, & Young – Ohio
John Foggarty – Fortunate Son

Viewings
Rage Against the Machine – Democratic National Convention Protest Concert

November 17th
TBD

Assignments
Campaign Product 1 Due End of Class

November 24th
Informal Final Project Meetings, Be Present in Class but there will be no new material covered.

Assignments
Campaign Product 2 Due End of Class
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<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>December 1st</td>
<td>Recap Major Themes // In-Class Work Day</td>
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<td>Assignments</td>
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<td>Last Day to Submit Letters to State and Federal Officials</td>
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<td>December 8th</td>
<td>Project Presentations</td>
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<td><em>Assignments:</em></td>
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<td>Final Group Portfolio Due</td>
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<td>Individual Evaluations due Thursday, Dec. 11&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;, by Midnight.</td>
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<td>December 15&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt;, 2014</td>
<td>Final Reflection Papers due via e-mail by 8:00 p.m.</td>
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<td>Have a good break.</td>
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