Journalism and Society: Environmental Journalism in Australia

Class code  JOUR-UA 9503 or ENVST-UA 9503

Instructor Details  Fran Molloy  
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Please allow at least 24 hours for your instructor to respond to your emails.

Class Details  Journalism and Society: Environmental Journalism in Australia

Wednesday, 9:00 – 12:00pm  
Sep 2 to Dec 9, 2015  
Room 304  
NYU Sydney Academic Centre  

Prerequisites  None

Class Description  In this hybrid reading / writing class, we will explore environmental journalism from an Australian perspective. We will meet for a weekly in-class seminar, except for three weeks during the session set aside for field trips. Our field trips will give us the opportunity to experience environmental issues first-hand, meet people, gather story ideas and find local Australian context for our own writing.

Guest speakers will join us occasionally to further explore key issues. Our in-class seminars will briefly introduce key journalism concepts and techniques to those new to journalism and reinforce and further develop these skills for experienced journalism students. During each in-class seminar we will also discuss set readings, and explore the environment beat, reading stories that have been reported in Australia and around the world, with students having the opportunity to present stories to the class each week.

We will consider work that explores this journalistic tradition, its forms and its themes and the place it takes in the new media world. Drawing our inspiration from great writers, we will find our own stories, our own voices and learn to tell our own tales.

We will work on a class blog and each student will produce a news story which may be published on the blog, and a feature story for publication either on our blog or in an
Australian digital outlet.

Each seminar will involve three key activities. We will:

1. Survey the ‘environment beat’ across various media in Australia and abroad and
2. Explore an environmental theme and how it is represented in media, discussing the assigned readings
3. Work on techniques and processes to create our own work in this genre.

As a result of successfully completing this course, students can demonstrate:

- Informed engagement with the ‘environmental conversation’ in Australia and its placement in the global context.
- An understanding of how global environment issues translate into a local news story – and conversely, the global relevance of a local environment story.
- Analytical skills – through in-class and online discussion of current environmental stories and the processes and agendas that shape them.
- Research skills – through the development of their own story idea about an environmental topic, and in developing sources, pitching a story idea and critiquing a colleague’s story pitch to fit its intended audience.
- Experience in news-related blogging – from writing a blog post based on their own media seminar, to commenting and exploring ideas on another’s blog post, to writing a news story and potentially publishing it as a blog post.
- Practical application of journalism techniques, from writing a news story to exploring feature writing from research to pitch to interview, using observation and construction, from preparing a draft to editing a final version, and the translation of a story idea into a written article of a standard ready for publication, through their own writing and through peer editing of their colleagues’ work.

Assessment Components

1. Weekly Quiz: (30%)
   An online quiz requires feedback on each class and thoughtful assessment of assigned readings, via our NYU Classes Forum – ten in total.

2. Media monitoring Presentation + Blog: (20%)
   Monitor the environment news in Australia and internationally for one week. Present a ten-minute in-class seminar summarising around ten news items AND present a short (ten minute) analysis and discussion of one story, addressing some aspect of the decisions made in the story and how they influence the outcome. Submit a 300 word summary post to the class blog by FRIDAY 5PM of your presenting week.

3. News Story: (20%) 400 words
   Due FRIDAY 5PM Week 5 - Submit via NYU Classes. After editing, publish on class blog.

4. Feature Story + Academic Reflection: (30%), 800 words + 600 words:
Includes two story pitches in Weeks 8 and 9 (compulsory but not assessed), and one re-write. 20 marks are given for your original story (due FRIDAY 5PM Week 12) and 10 marks for your reflection following feedback (due FRIDAY 5PM Week 14).
* Assessment criteria and rubrics are provided in NYU Classes/Resources folder.

**Required Field Trips:**
1. Kurnell (Week 3 - 16 Sep - during class with an early start)
2. Sydney Institute of Marine Science (Week 8 – 28 Oct - during class, early start)
3. NSW Parliament (Week 10 - 11 Nov, during class, at this stage normal timeframe)

*Failure to submit or fulfil any required course component will result in failure of the class.*

**Assessment Expectations**

**Grade A:** Excellent performance showing a thorough knowledge and understanding of the topics of the course; all work includes clear, logical explanations, insight, and original thought and reasoning. Creative work is of a highly sophisticated standard.

**Grade B:** Good performance with general knowledge and understanding of the topics; all work includes general analysis and coherent explanations showing some independent reasoning, reading and research. Creative work is of a superior standard.

**Grade C:** Satisfactory performance with some broad explanation and reasoning; the work will typically demonstrate an understanding of the course on a basic level. Creative work is of an acceptable standard.

**Grade D:** Passable performance showing a general and superficial understanding of the course’s topics; work lacks satisfactory insight, analysis or reasoned explanations. Creative work is of a basic standard.

**Grade F:** Unsatisfactory performance in all assessed criteria. Creative work is weak, unfinished or unsubmitted.

**NYU Sydney uses the following scale of numerical equivalents to letter grades:**

- A = 94-100
- A- = 90-93
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 84-86
- B- = 80-83
- C+ = 77-79
- C = 74-76
- C- = 70-73
- D+ = 67-69
- D = 65-66
- F = below 65

**Submission of work should be submitted as a hard copy, or electronically?**
Work

Unless otherwise specified, all written work must be submitted as a hard copy. The majority of written assignments must also be submitted electronically via NYU Classes. All in-class presentations must be completed during class time.

Who may submit a student’s work?
Each student’s assigned work must be handed in personally by that student. The student may not nominate another person to act on his/her behalf.

When and where should the work be submitted?
The hard copy of any written work must be submitted to the instructor at the beginning of class on the date the work is due. If the assignment due date falls outside of class time, work must be submitted to the Staff Member on duty in Room 2.04 during prescribed Office Hours (11:30am-12:30pm and 2:30-3:30pm Mon-Thu), or by appointment with the Academic Programs Coordinator. Each submitted item of work received in Room 2.04 will be date and time stamped in the presence of the student. Work submitted in Room 2.04 will not be considered “received” unless formally stamped.

What is the Process for Late Submission of Work?
After the due date, work may only be submitted under the following conditions:

- Late work, even if an extension has been granted, must be submitted in person by appointment with the Academic Programs Coordinator. Each submitted item of work must be date and time stamped in order to be considered “received”.

- Work submitted after the submission time without an agreed extension receives a penalty of 2 points on the 100-point scale (for the assignment) for each day the work is late. Written work submitted beyond five weekdays after the submission date without an agreed extension receives a mark of zero, and the student is not entitled to feedback for that piece of work.

- Because failure to submit or fulfil any required course component will result in failure of the course, it is crucial for students to submit every assignment even when it will receive a mark of zero. Early departure from the program therefore places the student at risk of failing the course.

Plagiarism Policy

The academic standards of New York University apply to all coursework at NYU Sydney. NYU Sydney policies are in accordance with New York University’s plagiarism policy. The presentation of another person’s words, ideas, judgment, images or data as though they were your own, whether intentionally or unintentionally, constitutes an act of plagiarism.

Penalties for confirmed cases of plagiarism are severe and are dealt with by the Director, NYU Sydney, not your instructor. Your home school will be notified and you will be dealt with according to the standards of that school. The codes of conduct and academic standards for NYU’s various schools and colleges are outlined in the respective school’s academic resources.
**Attendance Policy**

Study abroad at Global Academic Centres is an academically intensive and immersive experience, in which students from a wide range of backgrounds exchange ideas in discussion-based seminars. Learning in such an environment depends on the active participation of all students. And since classes typically meet once or twice a week, even a single absence can cause a student to miss a significant portion of a course. To ensure the integrity of this academic experience, class attendance at the centres is mandatory, and unexcused absences will affect students’ semester grades. The class roster will be marked in the first five minutes of class and anyone who arrives after this time will be considered absent. Students are responsible for making up any work missed due to absence.

For courses that meet once a week, one unexcused absence will be penalized by a two percent deduction from the student’s final course grade. For courses that meet two or more times a week, the same penalty will apply to two unexcused absences. Repeated absences in a course may result in failure.

**Classroom Expectations**

This is a seminar subject and requires the active participation of all students. It also requires engaged discussion, including listening to and respecting other points of view. Your behaviour in class should respect your classmates’ desire to learn. It is important for you to focus your full attention on the class, for the entire class period.

- Arrive to class on time.
- Once in class, you are expected to stay until class ends. Leaving to make or take phone calls, meet with classmates, or go to an interview, is not acceptable behaviour.
- Phones, digital music players, and any other communications or sound devices are not to be used during class. That means no phone calls, no texting, no social media, no email, and no internet browsing at any time during class.
- Laptop computers and tablets are not to be used during class except in rare instances for specific class-related activity expressly approved by your instructor.
- The only material you should be reading in class is material assigned for that class. Reading anything else, such as newspapers or magazines, or doing work from another class, is not acceptable.
- Class may not be recorded in any fashion – audio, video, or otherwise – without permission in writing from the instructor.

**Religious Observance**

Students observing a religious holiday during regularly scheduled class time are entitled to miss class without any penalty to their grade. This is for the holiday only and does not include the days of travel that may come before and/or after the holiday. Students must notify their professor and the Assistant Director, Academic Programs in writing via email one week in advance before being absent for this purpose.

**Provisions to students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who believe that they may need accommodations in a class are encouraged to contact the Moses Centre for Students with Disabilities at (212) 998-4980 as soon as possible to better ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely
fashion. For more information, see Study Away and Disability.

**Required Texts**

There is no text. Required readings will be posted in NYU Classes for this course.

Several key documents will be available in NYU Classes which you will use as reference material for ethical and practice questions as well as queries about style – these will include the NYU Journalism Handbook and the Reportage Online Style Guide.

Each week, compulsory, extra and optional texts will be allocated and students are expected to complete all compulsory and extra readings before each class. The weekly quiz will be partly based on these assigned texts.

Sometimes full readings will be posted (usually in PDF format), in other instances links to online readings, video and audio will be supplied. Texts will be coded C (compulsory), E (extra – assigned to part of the class) and O (optional).

EXTRA readings will be divided into one of three Reading Groups – A, B and C. You will be allocated an ‘EXTRAS’ group at the beginning of semester.

In some weeks, an extra compulsory reading will be tagged C-JP (journalism practice). These JP readings will give background to short practice-based lectures that will take place in some of the seminars and will help you devise your two journalism assessment items. These will also be useful resources when you are preparing your news and feature stories.

Any updates to this syllabus will occur to the main document held in NYU Classes.

Where you have a syllabus query, check first with the master document in NYU Classes to be certain you have the latest version.

**Additional Required Equipment**

Students are encouraged to bring a laptop, tablet or smartphone with wifi internet access to class so that we can use it at the appropriate time. I will survey students in Week 1 to assess preferences. If students prefer not to bring equipment to class, we can use the computer lab where necessary.

**LIDS DOWN** applies during the class except where we use technology for research. Use of social media, text messaging and emails for non-class activities not permitted. Students who disregard these guidelines will be referred to the Director, who will determine the appropriate penalty. Classroom etiquette assumes that students will switch off cellphones and pay the live humans in your class respectful attention, using web access only at the times relevant to this seminar. Students are asked to always close all devices in the
presence of a guest speaker. Students who have a technology accommodation are asked to discuss with the lecturer.

Useful tools: A recording device for interviews (a smartphone recorder is fine); still camera and / or video camera (also ok to use smartphone tools); an account with Skype or Google Hangout for interviews. You may record telephone and personal interviews where interviewees permit.

The NYU Journalism Handbook for Students Ethics, Law and Good Practice will be provided in NYU classes. Students will find Powerpoint or similar presentation software (Prezi / Google slideshow) useful for leading their seminar.

### WEEKLY SCHEDULE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Environment Topic</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>02-Sep</td>
<td>Introduction to Environmental Journalism</td>
<td>Australian media landscape</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>09-Sep</td>
<td>Ideology, Power and Activism in a new media world</td>
<td>News values</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>16-Sep</td>
<td>FIELD TRIP 1: KURNELL - early start</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>23-Sep</td>
<td>Animal Habitat: Species extinction and adaption: Feral invaders / new ecosystems</td>
<td>Journalistic writing + Finding Sources</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>30-Sep</td>
<td>Human Habitat: Urban sprawl, cities, NIMBYS - and where humans live</td>
<td>Deadline writing / News Story due FRI</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>07-Oct</td>
<td>SEMESTER BREAK</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>14-Oct</td>
<td>Climate Change - The Big Issue</td>
<td>Researching a story and how to pitch</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>21-Oct</td>
<td>Humans and the Ocean: Sydney Harbour and the Great Barrier Reef</td>
<td>Interviewing skills / Pitch your Story</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>28-Oct</td>
<td>FIELD TRIP: SYD INSTITUTE MARINE SCIENCE</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>04-Nov</td>
<td>Energy + the mining debate</td>
<td>Writing up a draft / Pitch second story idea</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>11-Nov</td>
<td>FIELD TRIP: NSW PARLIAMENT</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>18-Nov</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Structuring a feature</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>25-Nov</td>
<td>Food Futures: permaculture, organic, GM</td>
<td>FEATURE STORY due FRI</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>02-Dec</td>
<td>Population and over-consumption</td>
<td>Story returned</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>09-Dec</td>
<td>Sixth Wave Solutions: Technology, Collaboration and Conservation</td>
<td>Submit story for publication + REFLECTION due 5pm today</td>
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Page 7 of 18
Week 1  Introduction to Environmental Journalism

Practice: Creating a Web Presence
An introductory lecture will kick us off. What is environmental journalism?
What’s the context for this class? The biggest environmental issue of our time is Climate Change, affecting every aspect of the environment. What environment stories make news? What don’t we hear about?
We will talk about the media you consume now – how do you get news? How do you get news about the environment? Are you well informed? We will look at how our media has changed – in a multi-faceted media landscape, what news gets heard most?

Writing exercise: Introduction
Students should prepare to introduce themselves and talk about their expectations of this subject, the background skills and knowledge they bring, what they can contribute and what they hope to gain. We will begin with a writing exercise to help us get to know each other. You’ll interview a classmate and write a short (one page) profile about that person, then present it to the class. You will post a polished version to NYU Classes this week – and get the chance to edit that bio before using it on our public blog.

Syllabus review:
We will take some time to reflect on the syllabus. Students will be allocated a Reading Team and a Presentation Week, for your environment news monitoring exercise. Environment news monitoring requires you to watch Australian and international media sources and identify the key stories for the week. You will select a news story for our in-class critique, where we will examine the writer’s techniques, discuss worthwhile and the flawed aspects of the work and gain tips for our own work.

Environment Media in Australia:
Today we will also explore some of the outlets for the publication of environmental journalism. You will each be given a mainstream news source to examine. Are there any stories specifically about the environment? What stories have an environment component? Does this news source have an agenda / position? We will discuss the environment media presentation you are required to deliver from Week 2. What tools can you use for this? How do you choose a story? What is environment news?

Class Blog:
Students will set up their internet presence for the class blog. Create a Wordpress login (or use an existing one) and ‘gravatar’ profile for your blog posts and comments. Each student will have the opportunity to participate in the administration and content for our class blog. Do you have photography, video, sound engineering or web design skills?

Questions for today’s class
- What are the ‘big issues’ in the environmental conversation in Australia?
- How do these issues translate to your own regional experience?
- How do we engage in a new media environment as cultural producers?
- How does our ease of production / technical engagement affect mainstream news media?
- How can literary journalism help us to think about the environment in Australia and the world?
Activities

• Interview your classmates and write a report on them
• Discuss assessment items and presentations / media monitoring
• Examine Environment news outlets
• Explore Blog (time permitting)

Before next class

• Post your interview profile on NYU Classes
• Set up your wordpress account on the OZoneNYU class blog - include your bio & a pic
• Complete assigned readings
• Complete the online quiz before 6pm, Tuesday 8 Sep – the evening before class

Week 2  Ideology & Environmental Journalism: Protagonists, Capitalists, Activists

Guest lecturer: John Atkins, Kurnell Environment Education Centre

Practice: News Values

READINGS:

COMPULSORY – [20 pages / 5 articles]

• Ridley, Matt (2013) Apocalypse Not Wired Magazine August 2012 [6 pages]
• Homes, David (2014) From the Reef to the RET: the politicisation of environmental science in Australia The Conversation 19 Aug 2014 [4 pages]

• JOURNALISM PRACTICE

EXTRA READINGS:

Your extra compulsory reading will be in NYU Classes / RESOURCES in the READINGS / WEEK 2 folder
Select the reading with the prefix E-Group A (or B or C):

SEMINAR READING:

Each in-class week, students will deliver a media monitoring presentation and post a relevant article on NYU Classes the previous day. Their discussion will include a critique of the selected article.

CLASS:
Today establishes the regular rhythm of our usual in-class sessions. [lids down]
At the beginning of class, we will go through roll-call and the planned activities.
We will then spend the first 45 minutes or the environment topic beginning with a short lecture and discussion of the readings.
Today, we place environmental journalism in an ideological context. Increasingly, it has been ideology, not science, that dictates how a story about the environment is presented, what gets reported – and how.

Discussion:
Students should prepare to discuss today’s topic – some Questions for Consideration will be posed. You will have the chance to introduce the Extra reading that you have been allocated.

Break
A short stretch break will let our student presenters prepare for their session.

Media monitoring:
Student presenters will deliver the Media Monitoring presentation.

JOURNALISM PRACTICE
Lecture: What is News? We will look at the techniques, conventions and processes used by traditional news media to turn a wealth of information into ‘hard news’. We will consider the history of these processes and the consequences of their use. We will compare hard news to different functions and styles of journalism (eg editorial / opinion writing) and look how environment stories fit into this structure.

ACTIVITIES:
- Write a blog post – Live activity (time permitting)
- Prepare for Guest speaker

GUEST SPEAKER: John Atkins, Kamay National Park guide
While listening to John’s presentation, if questions come up, write them down. You will have opportunities to ask him these and other questions during next week’s field trip.

Before next week: Kurnell Field Trip:
Remember - this is a journalism field trip. You will receive information about the trip before we leave and are encouraged to do your own research on the news stories that apply to the Botany Bay / Kamay area.

Before next class: WEEK 4
Presenters for next class [Note: WEEK 4] – please speak to me and keep in touch as you prepare.
Prepare: You have two weeks to complete the lesson / assigned readings for Week 4
Check NYU Classes on Tuesday afternoon of Week 4 for articles posted by presenters

Week 3 Field Trip: KURNELL

Required field trip/excursion: Kurnell Peninsula – Dress for a hike
Students will be picked up by bus from UrbanEST – gather in reception by 7:40 am for a 7:45 am departure
Students who don’t have a class at midday, have the option to stay at Cronulla Beach and explore the area, catching the train back later.

Page 10 of 18
Week 4  Animal Habitats: Species extinction and Adaption: Feral Invaders and new ecosystems

Guest lecturer: Kate Smolski, CEO, Nature Conservation Council of NSW

Practice: Finding Sources, asking questions

READINGS:
COMPULSORY, Extra and Optional readings will be posted in NYU Classes.
Please ensure you complete the weekly quiz by the Tuesday before class, 10pm.

Topic Seminar:
We are facing one of the planets’ most profound extinctions, with the rapid loss of species due to human activity estimated at 1,000 to 10,000 times the ‘natural extinction rate.’ As climate change worsens, this figure is likely to rise.
Australian kids grow up with environmental education in schools. Trips to National Parks, gardens and museums highlight the problems of feral species. Despite this, feral pests have decimated native flora and fauna and Australia has lost more mammals to extinction than any other country, with much of it through habitat degradation from introduced species.

Today we look at species extinction, the introduction of feral plants and feral animals to Australia and the devastation they have caused to native species.

Is accelerated adaption at work? Are weeds and cane toads demonstrating survival of the fittest in a new, harsh world?

Questions for discussion:
1. What challenges are faced by an island continent? How do Australia’s issues with invasive species differ from the US?
2. Feral invaders contribute greatly to local species extinction; but are exotic invaders just proving Darwin right? Are they better adapted – and so deserve to win?
3. Is a feral invader OK if we can eat it?
4. Who should control feral pests? Are farmers part of the problem – or part of the solution?

Journalism Practice Lecture: Writing like a journalist
This is a practical session, where we explore the process of writing a news story and get ready to write a story of our own, after our field trip to Kurnell and our guest speaker, Kate Smolski.
We will look at the structure of news. Your first assignment is a news story which will follow the traditional ‘pyramid’ format, where you put your key ‘news values’ at the top of the story and include the 5Ws and H.
We will look at the traditional writing style used by journalists – active, direct language, and a concise summary of ‘facts’; this is different to the academic writing most of you are familiar with.

ACTIVITIES
• Identifying the news lead (lids down)
• Tools – an overview of tools and techniques for writing a news story (lids up)
Practical exercise: Research, interview, write: time permitting - you will write a news story in your team

We will have a live expert source as guest speaker – feel free to practice some interview questions on her.

GUEST SPEAKER: [lids down] Kate Smolski, CEO, Nature Conservation Council of NSW

Originally from Boston, Kate Smolski holds a Bachelor of Science in Wildlife Biology from the University of Rhode Island and has lived in Sydney since 2012. She was previously the NCC Campaigns Director and now heads this NGO which is the state’s peak environment body.

Her experience includes policy officer, campaigner and community organiser for environmental organisations such as the US Climate Action Network, Greenpeace USA and the Sierra Club. The NCC was established 60 years ago as a “united voice for nature” – representing over 120 member groups, mostly local and specific environment organisations.

Their priorities are campaigns to protect forests and oceans, control land clearing, and protect communities from unchecked coal and gas development. The NCC also runs Sustainable Living Programs (community education) and Healthy Ecosystems Programs (working with landholders to protect wildlife habitat.) Kate can be quoted in your news story and is a great source for current local environment issues.

Week 5 CITIES Human Habitat: Urban sprawl, cities, NIMBYS - and where humans live

Practice: Writing News

READINGS:
COMPULSORY, Extra and Optional readings will be posted in NYU Classes.
Please ensure you complete the weekly quiz by the Tuesday before class, 6pm.

Topic Seminar:
Today we look at competing arguments about cities. The environmental conversation around cities is changing. Per capita, on a number of measures, city living causes less environmental harm than housing in suburbs or in the countryside. But cities have their problems – such as ‘urban heat islands,’ concentrated pollution and the impact of megacities. Should humans have a ‘right’ to choose where we live?
We explore urban sprawl, megacities – and the claims of those who object to development in cities. Are local anti-development groups a critical part of community protection? Or do they represent a form of ‘environmental racism’ that pushes development into areas where residents have less political clout?

Discussion:
Students should prepare to discuss today’s topic – some Questions for Consideration will be posed.
You will have the chance to introduce the Extra reading that you have been allocated.

Journalism Practice Lecture: Researching Things
This session is all about finding sources – publications, experts – and potential interviewees.
Journalism Practice: News story – final workshop
**ACTIVITIES**

- Research Activity: Two activities will look at using Google and other sources
- News Story Workshop and Review – final questions, issues
- Film: Cane Toads: An Unnatural History (Time permitting, we will watch part of this in class)

**FALL BREAK: OCTOBER 5-9**

- DON'T FORGET TO COMPLETE YOUR NEXT QUIZ BY TUESDAY OCT 13
- GOING AWAY? TRAVELLING AROUND SYDNEY?
  Remember to look out for story ideas for your main FEATURE ARTICLE – story pitches start Week 7

**Week 6 **Climate Change – The Big Issue

**Guest Speaker**: Blair Palese, CEO of 350.org Australia.

**JOURNALISM PRACTICE:**

News v Feature writing – understanding the differences
Research and pitching a story idea

**READINGS:**

COMPULSORY, Extra and Optional readings will be posted in NYU Classes.
Please ensure you complete the weekly quiz by the Tuesday before class, 6pm.

**Topic Seminar:**

Anthropogenic global warming – an increase in the mean surface temperature of the earth caused by human activity – is commonly called Climate Change. It’s the game-changer, the biggest environmental issue our planet has faced. Over the last century, the mean surface temperature of Earth increased by around 0.8 °C.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) fifth major report, in 2013, stated this century, global surface temperature will rise between 2 and 6 degrees Celsius (about 5 to 11 F). International talks continue – the latest in NYC last year – and the big focus is on Paris from November 30 this year - 2015, when the replacement agreement for the Kyoto Protocol needs to be locked in. National leaders will influence decisions at this time – particularly Obama, still in power in the US, and Chinese President Xi Jinping & Premier Li Keqiang following historic announcements. Ultra-conservative leaders such as Putin, Abbott and Stephen Harper in Canada are hostile to strong targets and will be influential. European leaders including conservative UK PM David Cameron

The debate about whether climate change is caused by humans barely rates a mention among serious credible scientists; scientific consensus supports the theory that the cause is increased ‘greenhouse gas’ concentration produced by burning fossil fuels, deforestation and other polluting activities. But the debate rages with many political conservatives arguing the crisis has been exaggerated to threaten the economic status quo and destabilise industry. The media plays a strong role in furthering this debate.

Today we discuss the way reporting deals with climate change, the actions in place to deal with it (still mainly the Kyoto Protocol, extended at the last minute in talks in Qatar at the end of 2012) – and the role
the media plays in the wimpy responses from national governments.

**Journalism Practice:** Pitching a story
- Finding a story idea – developing your first (of two) story pitch by Week 7

**ACTIVITIES**

**GUEST SPEAKER:** [lids down] – Blair Palese, CEO of 350.org Australia.

350 was founded in the US in 2008 by author Bill McKibben as a global grassroots movement to raise awareness about climate change and cut CO2 emissions. Based on NASA scientist James Hansen’s paper arguing 350 parts-per-million (ppm) of CO2 in the atmosphere is a safe upper limit.

It’s now 401.3 ppm (July 2015 – see co2now.org)

Blair is an NYU graduate, holding a Bachelor’s degree in Science, Journalism and Politics, and has nearly 30 years of experience working on climate change and environmental issues in the US, UK and Australia.

She’s on the board of Greenpeace Australia, was the Comms manager for Antarctic Ocean Alliance, Chair of the Green Building Council and editor-in-chief of leading environment magazine Green Pages. She will talk about the Climate Change Divestment campaign – one of the most successful global movements the environment sector has ever seen.

**Week 7**

**Humans and the Ocean: Sydney Harbour and the Great Barrier Reef**

**Journalism Practice:** Interviewing skills

**PITCH WORKSHOP** – you will pitch your first feature story idea today

**Topic Seminar**

Global population distribution has become skewed towards coastal living, and by 1998, more than half of all humans lived and worked in a coastal strip just 200 km wide, and two-thirds (4 billion) lived within 400 km of a coast. But all this human activity has driven rapid change throughout the planet’s oceans and coasts.

Marine environments are threatened by ocean warming, ocean acidification, rising sea levels, unsustainable fishing, pollution and coastal development.

Over half of the world’s coral reefs are seriously threatened or destroyed, seagrass meadows and mangroves have significantly reduced in size. Enormous collections of human litter are accumulating in at least three ocean gyres, slowly poisoning marine creatures.

We are seeing summer melting of permafrost – areas of our planet that have remained frozen for millennia – and our polar ice caps have become less stable. Extreme weather events are becoming more common and millions more people have been affected.

**Questions for discussion:**
1. What challenges face our marine environment? How do these affect humans?
2. What can be done about sea level rise?
3. Some of the worst damage from Hurricane Sandy was caused by a storm surge; with a base sea level rise of 20cm over the last century, can we afford more coastal development? Whose houses will get saved by fortressing? Would you buy a house on the beach at North Cronulla?
4. Has our throwaway society turned landfill into seafill?
5. What chance is there for coral reefs?
6. Is ocean heat misunderstood? How significant is this phenomenon? What are the long-term impacts of a heating ocean?

Discussion:
Students should prepare to discuss today’s topic – some Questions for Consideration will be posed. You will have the chance to introduce the Extra reading that you have been allocated.

Journalism Practice Lecture: News v Features and Finding a story

ACTIVITIES
- Pitching exercise
- Prepare for Field Trip

Week 8 Field Trip: Sydney Institute of Marine Science

Required field trip/excursion: Sydney Institute of Marine Science – Dress for a hike
Students must get to Circular Quay by 8:30 am for a 8:45 am departure. We travel by ferry and return by bus. Students who don’t have a class at midday, have the option to stay at Chowder Bay and explore the area, or go to Taronga Zoo, catching the ferry or public bus back later.

Week 9 Energy

Journalism Practice: Drafting your story + STORY PITCH Part 2
Topic: Energy

READINGS: COMPULSORY, Extra and Optional readings will be posted in NYU Classes. Complete the weekly quiz by 6pm Tuesday before class.

Topic Seminar:
Today we look at energy. Burning fossil fuels contributes hugely to climate change. Coal is particularly bad. Mining provides jobs and raw materials for many items we now consider essential – but it is the cause of massive deforestation, pollution, carbon dioxide emissions, and other greenhouse gas emissions like methane.

Paul Cleary says Australian governments are addicted to the taxes they derive from mining revenue and held to ransom by the fossil fuel lobby; environmental legislation pays lip-service and is poorly enforced.
Let’s talk about digs; who benefits, who misses out – and what it does to the planet. Wind: why is there so much opposition? Solar energy: why hasn’t it taken off?

Questions for discussion:
1. Is Australia addicted to mining revenue? Does the World Bank have a coal problem?
2. Are powerful mining / polluting interests losing control of the debate? Or are governments guilty of tick-a-box environmental protection that achieves little?
3. What might happen if Gina Rinehart got control of Fairfax?
4. How legitimate is activism against coal mining? Should shareholders be protected – or is it their choice to invest in high risk ventures that attract opposition – so they should bear the cost?
5. What is Beyond Zero Emissions? What will a low-energy future look like?

Journalism Practice Lecture:
Tools and Tips for story construction and development
Writing a draft

ACTIVITIES
- SECOND STORY PITCH
- Using the Transcribe Tool; Developing a draft

Week 10  Field Trip: NSW Parliament

Required field trip/excursion:  NSW Parliament – Dress respectfully
We will meet in class at the usual time, walking up through the city to NSW Parliament House where we will be hosted by Greens parliamentarian Jeremy Buckingham MLC (equivalent of a State Senator). We’ll enter the House via a security screen (like airport) – you may be searched at this time. We may have the chance to sit in on proceedings in the Senate public gallery. Headwear must be removed, mobiles turned off and bags may not be taken into the Chamber.

Week 11  Water, Constructed wetlands and remediation

Topic: Water + STRUCTURING A FEATURE
Story Workshop

READINGS:
COMPULSORY, Extra and Optional readings will be posted in NYU Classes.
Please ensure you complete the weekly quiz by the Tuesday before class, 6pm.

Topic Seminar:
Today we look at water security – and some innovative solutions, which we’ll get the chance to investigate up close next week on our field trip. Water security is a global issue, and is starkly apparent here in Australia, the world’s driest inhabited continent, with a wildly varied climate that regularly veers between drought and flood. Population growth, mass landclearing, overgrazing and pollution threaten our water supplies further, and a huge portion of Australia’s fresh water is sourced from one major water system (the Great Artesian Basin) – a system under grave threat from mining operations. Some inland towns in Australia are now investigating constructed wetlands to filter and clean ‘grey’ water so that waste water can be reused. Let’s talk about water; who uses it, who wastes it, who is missing out – and what the future of fresh water will be. Why do we empty fresh rainwater, stormwater and sewerage into the sea? Where else could it go? Are we losing a vital source of nutrients?
Questions for discussion:
1. Would you drink recycled water?
2. Who uses more water – farmers, miners or city dwellers?
3. How much water is used to produce an average meal? What happens when water gets scarce?
4. What will a low-water future look like?
Journalism Practice Lecture: Constructing a Feature – how to tie it all together

Guest speaker: Journalist – to be confirmed

Week 12  Food Futures: permaculture, organic, GM

Journalism Practice: Workshop
Topic Seminar:
Any society is only three square meals away from revolution, argued Dumas. (Monbiot suggests we’re four hot meals away from anarchy.) Crabbe is not the first, nor will he be the last, to predict mass starvation. But history shows us that in times of great turmoil, famine happens. China’s Great Famine, fifty years ago, killed 45 million people; around 1.5 million starved to death in the Siege of Leningrad in World War II, while the 1983 famine in Ethiopia killed around 400,000 people. A push towards biofuels will only exacerbate the problem of galloping climate change, rocketing fuel costs, mass soil erosion and water shortages. Despite being able to hold the entire works of Shakespeare in the palm of our hand and talk to someone at the North Pole in seconds, we have forgotten how to feed ourselves. Anyone who has read Cormac McCarthy’s eco-apocalyptic horror 'The Road' will cringe at the thought of how our societies will weather a 6 degree rise in temperature.

Why is food security discussed so little in our media? Have we become dangerously complacent? Do you know how to grow tomatoes? How much space would it take to provide your family’s food needs?

Questions for discussion:
1. Is permaculture promoting exotic invaders? Can we make a new kind of forest?
2. Are we on the brink of starvation? Is Crabbe’s ‘Coming Famine’ an argument against city living?
3. What is food? What do you eat – and where does it come from? Is locally grown food inefficient?
Journalism Practice Lecture: Final workshop – stories due THIS FRIDAY 5pm

Week 13  Population and consumerism: the human challenge to our environment

Practice: Writing News

READINGS:
COMPULSORY, Extra and Optional readings will be posted in NYU Classes.
Please ensure you complete the weekly quiz by the Tuesday before class, 6pm.

Topic Seminar:
In 2011 (or 2012, depending on who you ask) the world’s population reached 7 billion. That’s a staggering number of people – and many predict that we will reach 9 billion within three decades. There’s no doubt the
world’s population is growing; but it is growing slower, and is declining in rich countries. But rich countries are the ones that consume and throw away ever increasing amounts of stuff. There’s strong evidence to back the argument that increasing wealth leads to reduced family sizes. But as a country or a family’s wealth grows – so does their consumption. Will falling population have any impact on the environment? Or will rising wealth equate to more and more consumption, making the planet suffer more? Our core reading, by Arundhati Roy, looks at the issues of overconsumption in India, while others address the issues of population in Australia and beyond.

**Journalism Practice Lecture:**
Your final assessable item is due next week – your academic reflection. We will discuss this task in class.

**Week 14 Sixth Wave Solutions: Technology, Collaboration and Conservation – and Environmental Journalism**

Readings:
COMPULSORY, Extra and Optional readings will be posted in NYU Classes.
Please ensure you complete the weekly quiz by the Tuesday before class, 6pm.

**Topic Seminar:**
Moody and Nogrady say that we are entering a ‘Sixth Wave’ of innovation as resources get scarce. What solutions are there for the crises we face? Can technology even begin to address the environmental issues we have created? Will the Anthropocene be the death of us? Our core reading looks at some of the ways we will find solutions to environmental cries. We will reflect on the role that journalism plays in this future, and where it needs to go next.

**Your Instructor**

Fran Molloy holds a BA from the University of Sydney, a GCert Communication from Charles Sturt University, a Masters in Journalism from the University of Technology, Sydney, and photography qualifications from Hammersmith College, UK. She has taught media studies, cultural studies, history and online, feature and news journalism since 2001 at UTS, UNSW, Southern Cross University and the NSW Writers Centre and has taught Environmental Journalism at NYU Sydney since the campus opened in Fall 2012.

Beyond NYU, Fran has worked as a freelance journalist for nearly two decades, writing for outlets including the ABC Online, BBC, Business Review Weekly, Green Lifestyle Magazine, South China Morning Post, Sydney Morning Herald, and many others. She’s previously worked as staff journalist, producer and researcher for various newspapers, radio and TV outlets and spent several years as Manager of the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism (ACIJ) where she helped establish the online publication of Reportage in 2000.

Fran also contributes to various industry panels and conferences and has judged journalism awards including the Walkley Award for Freelance Journalism.