

## GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE ENHANCEMENT GRANT COMPETITION

### Guidelines:

The text of your proposal should be no more than three (3) pages (in 12 point font with 1 inch margins)\*. Please answer all questions as thoroughly as possible within that limit. You may email Karen McDermott at [geoc@uconn.edu](mailto:geoc@uconn.edu) with any technical questions. For pedagogical questions, contact Manuela Wagner at [manuela.wagner@uconn.edu](mailto:manuela.wagner@uconn.edu).

1. Tom Deans, Professor of English; Scott Campbell, Associate Professor of English; Kyle Barron, PhD Candidate, English
2. [tom.deans@uconn.edu](mailto:tom.deans@uconn.edu), [scott.campbell@uconn.edu](mailto:scott.campbell@uconn.edu)
3. Is this a new course or a currently existing course? New
4. **ENGL 2xxxxW E: Writing, Rhetoric, and the Environment**
5. Describe your project and the work that will be done *during the grant period* on course content, course design, and/or teaching approach. Provide a clear statement of the *objectives* of the project in terms of student learning.

We're proposing *Writing, Rhetoric, and the Environment*, a 2000-level E and W course that joins environmental literacy to writing in dynamic and productive ways—both as a topic of study (how science and environmental issues get “written up” and communicated) and as a practice (how students might write about and with environmental topics and movements). The course we envision began as an effort to fill gaps in our own department's current E course offerings, which tend toward literary topics. But, in our discussions of what is possible, we developed a course that also draws on one of our department's strengths: its exploration, through rhetoric and writing studies, of cross-disciplinary topics and inquiries. We teach students that writing is itself ecological—situated within ever-changing fields of activity and subject to complex material forces that may not be readily apparent. With *Writing, Rhetoric, and the Environment*, we hope to foreground the rhetorical dimension of environmental discourse and feature writing as itself a component of environmental literacy. Another contributing factor to launching this course in the near future is that the English Department is currently conducting a tenure-track search for which one of the preferred qualifications is environmental rhetoric, which means this course should have an additional advocate starting in 2021-22.

*Writing, Rhetoric, and the Environment* is built around a kernel of readings, questions, theories, and approaches (described more fully below), but it is designed to be flexible and responsive to variations in campus or instructor. Our initial planning includes specific iterations for the Storrs and Hartford campuses, but it could be offered at any UConn campus.

This is an entirely new course, and the grant period will be about researching and developing the shared kernel and the variations made possible through application of that kernel to a range of topics and sites. For example, the Storrs iteration will focus on the rhetoric of science and its relevance to environmental questions, including connections to climate initiatives on campus and annual events such as the Teale Lecture. The Hartford iteration will explore urban ecology by engaging with local programs, such as the Hartford Climate Stewardship Initiative and UConn's Sustainable Global

Cities Initiative. Another iteration could be developed at Avery Point with a maritime focus (though developing that variation is outside the scope of this proposal).

Most of the grant will go toward summer funding for Kyle Barron, a doctoral student in English working under the supervision of Tom Deans and Scott Campbell. Kyle's research is at the nexus of writing studies and environmental studies, and he will review potential course texts, research similar course offerings at peer and aspirant universities, reach out to potential collaborators across UConn, and consult with CETL to develop the kernel/foundational course modules. Tom and Scott will meet weekly with Kyle to guide, consult, and collaborate. The research, course development, and syllabus/module construction will happen in May and June 2021; the CAR will be ready for the first C&C meetings of fall 2021; and we hope to get the course on the books by spring of 2022. Scott has committed to teaching the course as soon as it is available, and we will lobby the English Department to have Kyle teach it as part of his regular-year graduate assistantship. Tom, the new faculty hire in English, and selected PhD students with research specialties in writing and the environment will likely teach sections in 2022, 2023, and 2024.

Student learning objectives will be driven by the Environmental Literacy and Writing Competency twin pillars of the course. Students will:

- Engage in sustained discussions of how environmental questions are both scientific and social, with an emphasis on their social and rhetorical aspects. Students will reflect explicitly on how terms are defined, how evidence is framed, how appeals are made, how arguments are constructed, how beliefs are entrenched and changed, how narratives are shaped, how power works, how language is deployed, and how audiences respond to these various phenomena.
- Perform rhetorical analysis on a range of texts from academic disciplines, governmental agencies and NGOs, journalism, the arts, and social media. They will also trace how ideas travel across those domains and circulate in the public. They will articulate such analyses in discussions, informal writing, and formal papers/projects.
- Read a range of cultural, creative, and artistic representations of human-environment interactions as models for creating *their own* such representations in writing, broadly defined to include traditional print text and multimodal compositions.
- Examine case studies—historical and contemporary—of successful and unsuccessful environmental rhetoric.
- Make connections between local and global environmental issues, and render those connections in writing.
- Reflect on selected ethical issues and inequities attendant to environmental impacts, and especially how those are communicated to and register with (or fail to register with) publics
- Participate in iterative writing processes that include drafting, peer feedback, instructor feedback, revision and editing. In courses that adopt a service-learning component, this will be extended to include community partner consultation on projects and feedback on drafts.
- Assemble a portfolio of revised, editing writing that exceeds 15 manuscript pages. This will include reflecting on possible trajectories for further engagement with environmental questions and on directions for further development as a writer.

6. How do you intend to evaluate project objectives once the course, as proposed, is offered? Please identify intended *learning outcomes* and *assessment tools*.

Assessment of the first version of the course could be done as soon as summer 2022. Beyond the easy and obvious modes of assessment (enrollment numbers, SET ratings, student testimonials), we will review the student writing produced against the learning outcomes articulated above. For sections that include a community component, we will assess the public circulation and impact of service-learning projects by gathering feedback from community partners.

7. Describe how the course will fit into UConn's General Education curriculum. (The General Education guidelines can be found at: <http://geoc.uconn.edu/geoc-guidelines/>) How will the course serve the *broad goals of UConn's General Education program* (flexibility in thinking, foundations for learning at UConn and later in life, critical analytical skills, etc.)?

Both faculty PIs have deep commitments to general education and both have served on GEOC. This course will be accessible to students from a wide range of majors, including students at regional campuses. It speaks to an urgent social concern—environmental sustainability—by cultivating competencies of open-mindedness, dialogue, rigorous analysis, argument, attention to language, interdisciplinarity (especially recognition of the social, rhetorical and dimensions of environmental questions), creative making, and sustained writing.

8. For which *content areas (CA1-4)*, *competencies (W, Q)*, or *literacies (Environmental – E)* will the course be proposed and how will it address the *specific criteria* for courses in these content areas and/or competencies?

**E** This course will offer an introduction to the rhetoric of science as it applies to questions of environmental sustainability; it will meanwhile explore—by means of both published writing and student writing—a range of cultural, creative, and artistic representations of human-environment interactions. These modes will trigger reflection on public policies, social systems, and ethical dilemmas. Environmental questions are both scientific and social, and this course focuses on those social, rhetorical dimensions—that is, on how terms are defined, how evidence is framed, how appeals are made, how arguments are constructed, how power works through language, how beliefs are entrenched and changed, how narratives are shaped and received, and how audiences respond to these various phenomena.

**W** Central to the course will be an iterative process of composing, revising and editing. This will include cycles of peer and instructor feedback on formal writing assignments that total 15+ pages, as well as a portfolio system for final assessment. Writing assignments may include close readings, analyses of case studies, literature reviews, research papers, multimodal compositions, creative nonfiction, and public writing; some sections may include service-learning projects. (Ultimately, the CAR will narrow down those possibilities to a more focused set of assignments.) Regular informal, write-to-learn assignments will also be included. The writing elements will be integrated with the environmental literacy elements.

9. How will the course *add to and/or enhance existing course offerings*? If applicable, which of the areas targeted by this year's competition does it address? Does the course fill other important gaps? How does it compare to current offerings or pedagogy? What will be distinctive about the course?

The Communications department offers Science Communication at the 3000-level, which focuses on media, and not specifically on the environment. The English Department has 3 E courses (2 at the 3000-level), all with a literary orientation. By contrast, this course takes a rhetorical approach; it will consider how arguments play out in the public sphere and how persuasion happens (or fails to happen) through writing. The proposed course could be a nice bridge to those courses, but as a 2000-level W/E it can also stand alone as an offering accessible to students--including those at the regional campuses--earlier in their trajectories.

10. Will your course serve as a model to assist others in their efforts to improve the general education curriculum? If so, how?

Because the PIs are involved in First-Year Writing leadership and W course instruction across campus, this may be the only Gen Ed designed to follow up on the new Writing Across Technology First-Year Writing curriculum. It will be designed to build on the learning outcomes of that course but will still welcome students relatively early in their trajectories (advanced first-years, sophomores, maybe juniors), making it optimal for preparing students for more advanced, 3000-level+ W courses.

11. Is your proposal linked to any others being submitted in this competition? **No**

12. Has this course even been submitted for this grant in the past? Yes / **No** / Unsure

13. Has this course been funded *by this grant* in the past? Yes / **No** / Unsure

14. Has this course or will this course be funded *by any other* non-departmental source, e.g. CETL grant, non-university grants, etc.? Yes / **No** / Unsure

15. If you answered “Yes” to questions 13 or 14, please explain why the additional changes and funding are needed to further enhance this course.

16. Complete the **Budget Form**.

See attached document “Budget Deans Campbell Barron.doc”

17. Arrange for your *program director/department head* to email a statement of support verifying that s/he will provide resources for offering the course every, or every other, academic year for the duration of five years beginning 2021-2022, if the project is funded and completed. This statement should be emailed to GEOC@uconn.edu. (Please see statement template at the bottom of the budget worksheet form.)

Robert Hasenfratz, English Department Head, will send an email.

18. *For new course proposals*, include either a draft syllabus, a preliminary reading list, a list of possible assessments AND/OR a list of topics the course will cover. We understand that the syllabus or reading list may change significantly once work has begun on the course if it is funded, but including at least some specifics, however minimal, will help the selection committee envision the course more clearly.

As this grant is being sought to develop the course, we do not yet have a syllabus. Course texts may include *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America* (Herndl/Brown), an interdisciplinary collection that includes the voices of naturalists, economists, social scientists, and politicians in an exploration of how society constructs understandings of “environment” (something innately wild to be “found” vs. a construct of culture created using language) and how a better understanding of rhetoric might shepherd society towards resolving environmental crises; *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (Tsing), an anthropological text that explores the ways in which capitalist supply chain economics have an unsustainable human impact on the health of natural world; *What’s Nature Worth?: Narrative Expressions of Environmental Values* (Satterfield/Slovic), an edited collection of essays and interviews from some of the most influential environmentalist authors in recent memory (from Richard Shelton, to John Daniel, Stephen Trimble, Robert Michael Pyle, William Kittredge, Terry Tempest Williams and Alison Hawthorne Deming), a curation of powerful, emotionally persuasive texts arguing for the preservation of the natural world; and *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Nixon), a text that approaches environmental justice with a transnational perspective, illuminating rhetorical strategies that writer-activists deploy to increase visibility of capitalist despoliation of nature, which, the author argues, flies mostly under the radar of today’s activist movements. Engagement with and writing in response to such texts will build on writing practices established in UConn’s First-Year Writing courses. No other prior knowledge of rhetoric or rhetorical analysis will be necessary to take this course.

The Hartford iteration will include the core modules and texts but focus on urban ecology and, more specifically, the role that writing plays in advancing progress on ecological initiatives—documenting, communicating, and persuading. Students will connect their engagements with the course readings and central questions to local, specific environmental/ecological projects in and around Hartford, many of which are just a short walk from the campus. We would use the grant period to develop these relationships, but one example of a likely partner is the Hartford Climate Stewardship Initiative, an umbrella organization for a range of short- and long-term projects addressing issues with water, energy, food, landscape, transportation, and waste. UConn’s Sustainable Global Cities Initiative, which is located at the Hartford campus, can provide both research support and contacts for our local interactions (Scott is an SGCI faculty affiliate).

## 2020-2021 GENERAL EDUCATION ENHANCEMENT GRANT COMPETITION

Proposer’s Name (s) Tom Deans, Scott Campbell, Kyle Barron

Proposal Title Writing, Rhetoric, and the Environment/ENGL 2xxxxW E

Fiscal 2021	Amount budgeted	Fringe for Summer Salary **	Total
Summer salary or Spring Salary buyout*	\$3000 (Barron)	\$855	\$3855
	\$500 (Deans)	\$129	\$629
	\$500 (Campbell)	\$129	\$629
Supplies	\$500 (books)	None	500 (+\$28)
Travel		None	
Research (Faculty Account)		Usually none	

Other		Usually none	
Total			<b>\$5641</b>

\* Buyout: Funds can be used to pay an adjunct to teach a class normally taught by full-time faculty member during the Spring semester so that the faculty member can devote time to course development.

\*\* The 2021 Fiscal Year fringe rate for Special Payroll summer salary is currently **28.5%**. (See <http://budget.uconn.edu/fringe-benefit-rates/>). To calculate this amount, multiply your desired salary by .285 and then add the amounts. For example, if you wish to request all \$7500 as summer salary, your "Amount Budgeted" is \$5836.57 and your Fringe Amount is \$1663.42. ( $5836.57 \times .285 = 1663.42$  and  $5836.57 + 1663.42 = 7499.99$ )

**Justification:**

*Please explain how the expenditure of all funds will support this proposal (100-400 words). Please note that participants should explain how any expenses, especially travel, will benefit the COURSE, not necessarily the professional development of the proposer.*

What we need to make this course happen is dedicated time and a deadline. Our plan is to do course development in May and December, with doctoral candidate Kyle Barron taking the lead on research and Tom Deans and Scott Campbell providing oversight. Kyle will review potential course texts, research similar course offerings at peer and aspirant universities, reach out to potential collaborators across UConn, and consult with CETL to develop the kernel/foundational course modules. Tom and Scott will meet weekly with Kyle to guide, consult, and collaborate.

As for the book budget, we'll always ask publishers for free desk copies and use the \$500 only if needed. We can return whatever of that we don't use.

**Department Head's statement**

Please arrange for your department head to send a message to [GEOC@uconn.edu](mailto:GEOC@uconn.edu) containing the following statement:

*"I support the enhancement/development of this course. Upon completion of the project, I will make every effort for the course to be offered every, or every other, year at the typical class size for the duration of at least five years."*

Robert Hasenfratz, Department Head, will be sending an email.