



**COMMUNICATION 540:
RHETORIC OF SCIENCE
Winter 2011
5 credits
SLN: 12153**

Professor: Leah Ceccarelli, Associate Professor, Department of Communication

Class Meetings: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3:30p – 5:20p, 321 Communications Building

Course Description: This graduate seminar will explore the interdisciplinary field of scholarship known as the “rhetoric of science.”

Questions for discussion will include: How do scientists use language, situation, culture, and prior tradition to reach intersubjective agreement about their discoveries and theories? In what ways are the argumentative standards applied by scientists in their fields of expertise different from those applied by arguers in public or private settings? How do scientists communicate with the public? What does public discourse about science betray about our attitudes toward science? What happens when there is a controversy involving science or technology in the public sphere and scientific expertise is unable to resolve doubt and warrant deliberative action?

We will read a number of critical works in the field, to see how rhetorical scholars have added to our collective knowledge of the communicative practices of scientists. We will discuss some of the larger theoretical and practical issues that arise from the rhetorical interpretation of science. And over the course of the quarter, each student will write a paper that engages in the rhetorical criticism of significant text of or about science.

No background in rhetoric or in science is necessary to take this course. Questions about the course should be directed to Leah Ceccarelli at cecc@uw.edu.

