

**Interdisciplinary Major: Developmental Communication,
Environmental Education and Media**
(Environmental Studies, Communication and Media Studies, Child Development)

Your first and last name

Class of XXXX

SIN: XXXXXXXXXX

Address

Phone number

Email (can be personal one and/or Tufts)

Advisors

First & Last Name

Email

Phone number

First & Last Name

Email

Phone number

First & Last Name

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Phone number

As an issue of increasing significance, relevance, and public awareness, the health of the environment is a topic that is global in magnitude. People of all ages and nationalities continually confront a diverse range of environmental crises such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, fossil fuel sovereignty, and most seriously, global climate change. The breadth of environmentally related issues permeates into nearly every aspect of our culture, from economics and policy, to development and marketing. Yet, despite the ubiquity of the environment in our lives, understanding and explaining its complexities is a challenge in and of itself.

In our technologically driven society, our knowledge and awareness of the environment most often stems from media. Whether it is through active participation with media or simple exposure to the many screens in our lives, the rapid and unending deluge of environmental messages and imagery undeniably influences our own actions as both citizens and consumers. However, through its role serving the desires of advertisers, media portrays an incomplete and frequently manipulated depiction of nature and the environment. And perhaps of even greater importance is the substandard quality and accountability of current environmental information. As one can imagine, this two-fold inaccuracy translates into varying levels of public misunderstanding. Ultimately, private interests undercut the urgency of any important, scientifically validated environmental issues, further stunting desperately needed environmental progress.

Environment in media is rarely so overt as, say, a commercial promoting conservation sponsored by the Sierra Club. More commonly are the dozens, if not hundreds, of companies and corporations that employ environmental sentiments and images to hawk their products. And even if media or advertising does not explicitly mention "greenness", a range of subtle yet deliberate human-nature relationships is emphasized. Teen and adult audiences may possess some critical thinking ability to parse through the clever marketing. But we know that other, more vulnerable, audiences are also targeted by the media. Children are particularly impressionable when it comes to the images and information that are conveyed. Television shows, commercials, toys, and technology all intertwine to shape a child's view of their personal environment, especially with constantly newer, more interactive media platforms. It serves to follow then that the ways in which the environment is portrayed in these various forms also might affect a child's values and observations and ultimately, perhaps, his or her attitudes and behaviors toward environmental issues. Yet little research has documented this.

Media's formative power can clearly be used to deceive if misguided, but I believe it also offers an engaging avenue for children to become interested and active in the natural environment. There is significant research showing that media can have many kinds of educational and pro-social effects on children at different developmental stages. However, there have been relatively few children's television shows, websites, or apps that have focused on environmental education. My interdisciplinary major, which will combine communication and media with environmental studies and child development, allows exciting and invaluable opportunities for me to narrow this gap in the research and practice. Yes, environmental issues are multifaceted and nuanced. But crafting the ability to simplify these complex subjects into a captivating form has the potential to instill a genuine appreciation of the natural world in the next generation.

In its essence, studying environmental communication and media for children is interdisciplinary. Analyzing and understanding how we as a society communicate about the environment, and how these messages are directed towards kids integrates topics from Child Development, Communication and Media Studies (CMS), and Environmental Studies. However,

the specific combination of these majors and minors I hope to study is not one I can pursue given the conventional disciplinary approach. While the Environmental Studies program offers a communications track, the depth and versatility of the CMS program cannot be adequately matched because Environmental Studies is only offered as a second major. Additionally, media-related courses that address how children process media and environmental messages, and the methods behind it, are only offered through the Child Development major. Developing my own interdisciplinary major-Developmental Communication, Environmental Education and Media-is therefore the ideal and logical synthesis of my passions.

To accomplish this course of study, I plan on establishing a foundation of child development theory to accompany my growing foundation of environmental courses. For instance, understanding how children are influenced by different educational approaches will provide me with insight on successful methods of how to best encourage environmental involvement and excitement. Simultaneously investigating how media influence audiences and shape our culture will further lay the fundamental communication groundwork, not to mention anchor subsequent and more specialized courses such as *Children and Mass Media* and *Understanding Children through Film*. Additionally, a course on the art of screenwriting, as well as other applicable environmental courses, will continue to build upon the environmental knowledge and communication skills I am developing.

Ultimately, I foresee this unique intersection of disciplines culminating with a Senior Honors Thesis/Capstone project where I will develop an original, environmentally educational children's television show. The skills I obtain through my coursework will be complimented by my extracurricular involvement in Tufts' Traveling Treasure Trunk—a theatre troupe that performs original plays for kids in Boston-area elementary schools. For example, this past semester a play I co-wrote about a toucan that paints the fall leaves their warm colors was accepted into the Trunk repertoire. The creation of a unique plot and cast of characters, as well as the process of refining the play's language into a comprehensible and entertaining script, provides invaluable experience that I know will help me develop my own environmentally educational show.

The option to pursue an interdisciplinary major that combines my passion for the environment, communication and media, and working with children is my ideal education. Harmonizing these fields into a unified discipline has the indisputable potential to create significant change in how young audiences view the natural world, and I am excited to pursue this opportunity.

Courses Taken that Apply to the Major

- ENV 196: Environment, Communication, and Cultures
- ENV 025: Environment and Technology
- ENG/ENV 160: Environmental Justice and World Literature
- ENY 007: Environmental Biology
- BIO 093: Independent Research Project

Courses to be Taken

Fall 2013 (Abroad, Tufts-in-Alcala)

- Audiovisual Narrative Techniques
- Fundamentals of Social Psychology
- Theatre Workshop: The Performing Body
- Social Pedagogy

Spring 2014

- CD 001: Intro to Child Development
- ENV 008: Principles of Economics with Environmental Applications
- SOC 40: Media and Society
- CD 167: Children and Mass Media

Fall 2014

- CIS 0095/0195: Interdisciplinary (Honors) Studies Thesis
- DR 77: Screenwriting I
- SOC 185: Mass Media Studies
- ENV 091: Environmental Preservation and Improvement
- CD 143: Seminar in Children and Media

Spring 2015

- CIS 0095/0195: Interdisciplinary (Honors) Studies Thesis
- CD 007: Children and Educational Processes
- EXP 50: Media Literacy
- CD 159: Understanding Children Through Film

Alternative Courses

- EXP 058: Social Marketing
- DR 187: Teaching Through Drama and Improvisation
- CD 173: Curriculum for Young Children: Math, Science and Technology
- EXP 53: Producing Films for Social Change
- EXP 54: New Media Practices

Texts Consulted and to be Consulted

- Bers, M. (2007). *Blocks to Robots: learning with technology in the Early Childhood Classroom*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Bodrova, E. and Deborah J. Leong (2006). *Tools of the Mind: The Vygotskian Approach to Early Childhood Education*. New Jersey: Pearson.
- Buell, L. (1996). *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Corbett, J. (2006). *Communicating Nature: How We Create and Understand Environmental Messages*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.
- Cox, R. (2009). *Environmental Communication and the Public Sphere, second edition*. Chapel Hill, NC: UNC Press.
- Croteau, D.R., and William D. Hoynes. (2005). *The Business of Media: Corporate Media and the Public Interest*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forks Press.
- Field, S. (2005). *Screenwriting: The Foundations of Screenwriting*. New York: Bantam Dell.
- Hubbard, G. and Anthony P. O'Brien (2012). *Economics*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall.
- Jurin, R., Rousch, D., and K.J. Danter. (2010). *Environmental Communication: Skills and Principles for Natural Resource Managers, Scientists and Engineers*. New York: Springer.
- Lightfoot, C., Cole, M., and Sheila R. Cole. (2012). *The Development of Children*. New York: Worth Publishers.
- MacKinnon, R. (2012). *Consent of the Networked: The Worldwide Struggle For Internet Freedom*. New York: Basic Books.
- McKibben, B. (2011). *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*. New York: St. Martin's.
- McKibben, B. (1993). *The Age of Missing Information*. New York: Plume.
- McPhee, J. (1990). *The Control of Nature*. New York: Harper-Collins.
- Olson, R. (2009). *Don't be Such a Scientist*. Washington, D.C.: Island Press.
- Roopnarine, J. (2012). *Approaches to Early Childhood Education*. New Jersey: Pearson.

- Schunk, D.H. (2011). *Learning Theories: An Educational Perspective*. Boston, MA: Pearson.
- Severin , W.J., and James W. Tankard. (2000). *Communication Theories: Origins, Methods and Uses in the Mass Media* . New Jersey: Pearson.
- Shirky, C. (2011). *Cognitive Surplus: How Technology Makes Consumers into Collaborators*. New York: The Penguin Press.
- Strasburger, V.C., Wilson , B., and Amy Jordan . (2008) *Children, Adolescents, and the Media*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Walker, R. (2010). *Buying In: What We Buy and Who We Are*. New York: Random House.
- Wolf ,M. (2008). *Proust and the Squid: The Story and Science of the Reading Brain*. New York: Harper.
- Wyss, B. (2007). *Covering the Environment: How Journalists Work the Green Beat* . New York: Routledge.