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Review: Communicating Nature: How We Create and Understand Environmental Messages, by Julia Corbett. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2006. 350 pp

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that when electronic devices have made such memorization obsolete, we can learn from the Babylonians and later the Greeks—that “it cannot hurt to make mathematics more interesting.”

—Douglas Fisher
University of South Carolina, Columbia

Reference

Miller, G. A. (1956). The magical number seven, plus or minus two. *Psychological Review*, 63, 81-97.

Communicating Nature: How We Create and Understand Environmental Messages, by Julia Corbett. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2006. 350 pp.

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If you are looking for an undergraduate textbook for an environmental communication course, one that challenges students to examine their own values, to critique American society’s values and behaviors, and to consider how mass communication theory and related scholarship can inform our understanding of how messages about the environment might affect us, you have found one in this text. Corbett skillfully demonstrates how theory—not only mass communication theory but theory from a variety of allied fields, ranging from rhetoric to sociology—will help us in this quest.

In truth, I am more anthropocentric than the perspective advocated by this book. I like zoos for the public education opportunities they provide; my major worries about global warming concern its implications for human society; and while I know that a great deal of “green” advertising is self-serving corporate self-promotion, I would rather that corporate communication strategies make use of “green” values than ignore them. Missing from this text is development of the concept of environmental economics, which from a communications perspective suggests we could be telling both corporations and consumers more about how “green” actions are in their own economic interests.

I would also want to supplement this text with a little bit more hands-on advice, as well as a more complete explication of some of the theoretical material. How do the various theories incorporated in the discussions here

actually translate into action designed to produce new perceptions and behavior change? And where exactly do each of the theories and concepts presented here fit within the giant jigsaw puzzle that is academic scholarship in our field?

But no one book can cover everything. In an era in which we all recognize the necessity of “pushing theory” to the undergraduate level—as well as demonstrating its immediate relevance to practice—if I have a future opportunity to teach a course in this area, I will be quite likely to choose this volume as its text.

—Susanna Hornig Priest
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