

IDS 2935: Final project

Communicating about Rain Forests & Their Conservation

PROJECT OVERVIEW:

The Final Project for this course is to review, synthesize, and communicate the things we have learned this semester in ways that to audiences outside of our classroom. Ample research has shown that visual media can have the significant impact on how effectively a message is communicated - appropriate, strategic, and creative visuals can inspire the audience, lend clarity to a message, and, in general, say things that words alone cannot.

For this project, use the concepts you've learned in this course to effectively apply visuals to a business-related message. Below, you will find just a few examples of how visuals can be utilized to communicate a message in the business setting. Feel free to choose one of these examples, or select one that is not listed.

Increasing awareness about issues for which there is the first step towards mobilizing social change. We will put aside whether or not there is indeed an "information deficit" So the awareness campaigns also need to point towards specific actions people can take to actually advance rain forest conservation.

Your assignment is to develop materials to communicate information about rain forests with either (a) UF undergraduates or (b) members of your family.

- **Value:** 200 Points
- **Due:** 6 December 2022
- **Submission:** Via Canvas

The Complete Assignment requires submission of the following three sections:

1. Part 1: A complete 'Message Box' (40 pts)
2. Part 2: A Message Communication Tool (120 pts)
3. Part 3: A brief reflection on the process and product (40 pts)

PART 1: Message Box

There are many ways to effectively organize the scientific information we want to communicate to non-scientists. One of these is the 'Message Box' (Figure 1), which was developed by the organization [COMPASS](#) to help sort and distill information about a topic in a way that resonates with your target audience. The Message Box is often used by scientists talking about their own research when communicating with decision makers; you will be using it to map out how to communicate about complex issues related to rain forests and their conservation to your target audience.

1. Review the [Message Box Workbook](#); it includes blank templates you can use to construct your message box prior to the interview.
2. Pick one of the following topics we learned about in class this semester:
 - Historical narratives about rain forests and rain forest people
 - Rain forests in pop culture

- Patterns of rain forest diversity
- The major drivers of deforestation for rain forests around the world
- The impacts of palm oil on tropical forests
- Climate change and tropical forests
- Actions we can take to advance rain forest conservation
- Tropical rain forests in our daily lives
- A topic of your choosing (please get approval from me first)

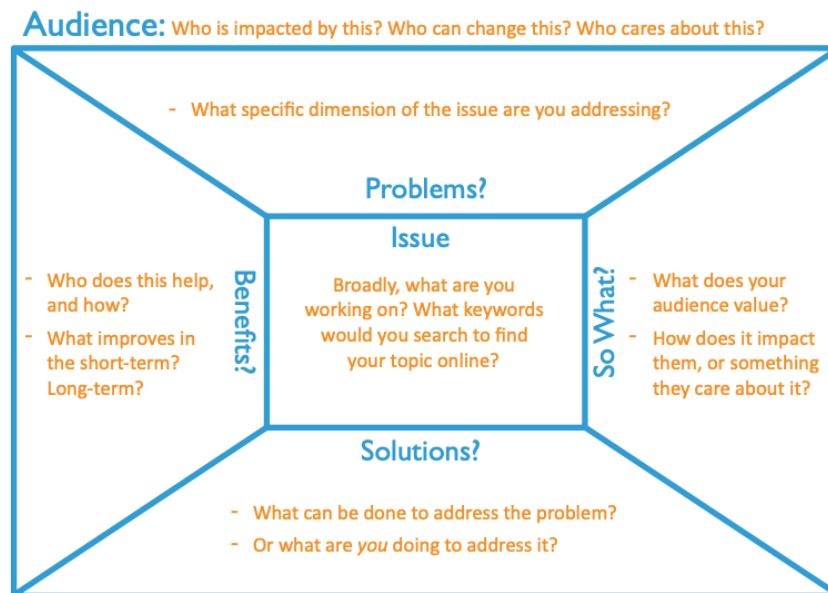


Figure 1: The COMPASS Message Box.

3. Fill out a message box for the topic. Be sure to fill out each of the 5 sections:

- **Audience:** (a) undergraduate students at UF or (b) members of your family
- **Issue:** Identify and describe the overarching issue or topic that you are addressing. This should be in very broad terms - the big picture - and formulated as a short, concise, and clear phrase.
- **Problem:** What is the specific topic or conservation issue that you are addressing?
- **So What?:** Why should your audience care about the issue? (2-4 reasons)
- **Solution:** Outline the options for solving the problem or addressing the consequences of the issue you are discussing. Can your audience do anything to help? Remind yourself of why you are communicating this issue/problem to this audience.
- **Benefit:** What good things will result from implementing the solution(s)? While it is important to address 'Global' benefits, *be sure to emphasize the local and direct benefits to your specific audience in ways that will resonate to them.*

PART 2: Communicating your message

The Message Box was originally developed as a tool for scientists that were going to be meeting with policy makers or being interviewed by the news media, and it has proven to be a very effective means of identifying and simplifying the information one is seeking to convey. However,

a [recent survey](#) found that very few university students (< 20%) actively seek out news from traditional news sources such as CNN or the New York Times. Instead, most university students (~60%) said they got their news by bumping into it on social media platforms. This is part of a broader trend in the US, in which [U.S. adults under 30 now trust information from social media almost as much as from national news outlets](#).

1. **Option 1:** Prepare platform-specific social media materials that communicate the information in your Message Box. For example you could:
 - Record TikTok videos (30-60 seconds) in different styles (explainer, street interview, day-in-the-life of a rain forest animal, whatever)¹.
 - Make fake dating site profiles for tropical plants seeking animals to pollinate or disperse them [you can make fake ones and download the images with [this site](#)] to share on Twitter. Be sure to include information about the biology, ecological importance, and threats faced by these species.
 - Prepare a “(Celebrity) as _____” twitter thread (e.g., [Example 1](#), [Example 2](#), [Example 3](#)) with a group of endangered, unusual, charismatic, or weird rain forest plant or animal species as the _____. Include biological information about the species and their conservation status, photo credits, and links to research / conservation efforts. etc.
 - Record a series of Instagram Stories or animated YouTube video.

You are not required to post your videos, nor do you have to appear in them (though you may if you wish to). Regardless of your communication format, be sure to use photos that are in the public domain or that have been licensed under the creative commons. ([Unsplash](#) is a great source of photos you can use for free with no attribution required).

¹ If you choose this option, you might find this [post on TikTok trends](#) useful... though let's be honest, how cool can something be if there is an article telling you how cool it is? There are also free [templates](#) you can use to help you prepare your videos.

2. **Option 2: Make a Rain Forest Infographic:** Alternatively, you could prepare an Infographic Poster for to explain to your focal audience the issue in your Message Box.

What is an Infographic? It is a “visual representation of information or data”. Put another way, it is an easy-to-understand overview of a topic using a collection of images, data visualizations (e.g., bar graphs, symbols of different sizes), and minimal text. Infographics make information easy to understand and are visually appealing. I really like the one on how prevalent palm oil is in our daily lives (Figure 2).

To get started, here is an overview on [Different Types of infographics and how to make them](#) (see also Figure 3). This site includes links to sites where you can make them for free with templates, but the easiest thing might be to make it with PowerPoint. [This short video](#) will walk you through how to find and import graphics into PowerPoint; step-by-step directions on making an infographic in powerpoint can be found [here](#). Just remember: an infographic should be *focused* (one single message; emphasize its significance to you), *graphic* (graphics and images tell the story, fewer than 800 words), and *ordered* (the sequence should be obvious; simple flow paths and cues should guide the reader).

3. Option 3: Propose your own Communication Tool

Don't like either of the options above? No problem! Propose a different way to creatively communicate about rain forests and their conservation. Below are some possibilities I came up with after a morning consuming far too much RFA-certified coffee and chocolate; you're welcome to tackle one of them or propose something else. ***If you do want to propose your own project, you need to discuss it with me first so we can define the expectations and a grading rubric. The deadline to do that is November 22nd, 2022.***

- write a song about your topic and record yourself (or a friend) performing it. Or maybe rewrite the lyrics of [these cheesy 1980's love songs](#) to be about rain forests and record those.
- create artwork (any medium: digital, ceramics, painting, woodcuts, comics)
- [Make a twitter bot](#) that posts deforestation data (it may not be up long, but hey - it will be cool while it lasts).
- make a [map showing the flow of resources](#) from the tropics to UF
- Make five-minute Video Recaps of individual course sessions
- record an episode of your podcast in which you interview rain forest plants or animals (inspired by [Everything is Alive](#))
- Compile a list of Rain Forest Fails in Advertising, Marketing, or Popular Culture (with explanations of why they are incorrect)
- Come up with new question's for next year's class *Jeopardy*
- organize a fundraiser in support of rain forest conservation
- Play and Review video games about rain forests in light of your chosen topic: [try the free demo of Empires of the Undergrowth](#), If you want to play [Green Hell](#) I have a code for you to download it for free).
- Create memes to highlight your selected issues, with an emphasis on awareness of the local relevance of rain forests and actions students can take to advance their conservation.
- Create Amazon product pages for things they use every day that are driving deforestation (you can find the template [here](#))
- Use the Netflix Series template to Imagine a documentary series about a UF student on a quest to learn about rain forests. Maybe the documentary follows them as they learn about how prevalent rain forests are in their daily life, about the diversity of rain forests (e.g., ecological, cultural), about the vital role of rain forests in the global climate cycle, and about the myriad threats to rain forests. Describe the documentary and each episode using this Netflix Series Template. Be sure to think about the final episodes - does the student give up and accept dystopian future without jungles, or do they decide to take bold individual and collective action to advance rain forest conservation? Or maybe a series about a dystopia future *without* rainforests... (you can see some examples of how others have used these templates [here](#))/
- No idea is too weird.

PART 3 (40 points): Reflection

Once you have completed the project, take time to reflect critically on the following:

1. what you learned from this project about the challenge of communicating about tropical rain forests to audiences that may not know much about them;
2. any new skills, knowledge, or information you gained this semester (both things we covered in class and any you learned through your own activities and experiences);
3. What actions you might take going forward that will advance rain forest conservation

Summarize your reflection in a 400-500 words essay.

Rubrics:

Part 1: Message Box (40 pts)

Criteria	Emerging (0-12 pts)	Proficient (13-26 pts)	Mastery (27-40 pts)
Issue	The Big Picture Issue is of minimal importance	The Big Picture Issue is Important but not clearly articulated	The Big Picture Issue is Important and clearly articulated
Problem and Relevance (So What?)	The specific problem is of minimal importance (globally, locally) and the relevance to the selected audience is unclear	The specific problem is of globally importance but local relevance is unclear	The specific problem is of globally importance and the local relevance is clearly articulated
Solution and Benefit	The solutions and/or benefits are poorly articulated	The solutions and/or benefits are stated for a general audience but not targeted to the specific audience.	The potential solutions and significance/benefit are clearly and concisely identified in a way that is relevant to the target audience.
Language and Writing	The writing is grammatically incorrect or hard to read.	The language is correct but full of jargon that is difficult for the audience to read.	The writing is clear, geared to the appropriate audience, and concise.
Overall	The Message Box was not well-geared to the audience or the content was limited.	The contents of the Message Box were generally accurate but not compelling for the focal audience.	A specific audience was chosen, and the 5 components of the Message Box were geared to that audience. The information provided was accurate and clearly stated.

Part 2: Communication Tool (120 pts)

Option A

Criteria	Emerging (1-40 pt)	Proficient (41-80 pts)	Mastery (81-120 pts)
Issue	The Big Picture Issue is of minimal importance	The Big Picture Issue is Important but not clearly articulated	The Big Picture Issue is Important and clearly articulated
Problem and Relevance (So What?)	The specific problem is of minimal importance (globally, locally) and the relevance to the selected audience is unclear	The specific problem is of globally importance but local relevance is unclear	The specific problem is of globally importance and the local relevance is clearly articulated
Solution and Benefit	The solutions and/or benefits are poorly articulated	The solutions and/or benefits are stated for a general audience but not targeted to the specific audience.	The potential solutions and significance/benefit are clearly and concisely identified in a way that is relevant to the target audience.
Language and Writing	The writing is grammatically incorrect or hard to read.	The language is correct but full of jargon that is difficult for the audience to read.	The writing is clear, geared to the appropriate audience, and concise.
Overall	The Message Box was not well-geared to the audience or the content was limited.	The contents of the Message Box were generally accurate but not compelling for the focal audience.	A specific audience was chosen, and the 5 components of the Message Box were geared to that audience. The information provided was accurate and clearly stated.
social media materials	minimal effort and creativity,. Don't take advantage of the platform	platform specific content that with some additional effort could engage or even captivate audiences	content is creative, engaging, and likely to attract attention to the issues discussed.

Option B

Criteria	Emerging (1-40 pt)	Proficient (41-80 pts)	Mastery (81-120 pts)
Issue	The Big Picture Issue is of minimal importance	The Big Picture Issue is Important but not clearly articulated	The Big Picture Issue is Important and clearly articulated
Problem and Relevance (So What?)	The specific problem is of minimal importance (globally, locally) and the relevance to the selected audience is unclear	The specific problem is of globally importance but local relevance is unclear	The specific problem is of globally importance and the local relevance is clearly articulated
Solution and Benefit	The solutions and/or benefits are poorly articulated	The solutions and/or benefits are stated for a general audience but not targeted to the specific audience.	The potential solutions and significance/benefit are clearly and concisely identified in a way that is relevant to the target audience.
Language and Writing	The writing is grammatically incorrect or hard to read.	The language is correct but full of jargon that is difficult for the audience to read.	The writing is clear, geared to the appropriate audience, and concise.
Overall	The Message Box was not well-geared to the audience or the content was limited.	The contents of the Message Box were generally accurate but not compelling for the focal audience.	A specific audience was chosen, and the 5 components of the Message Box were geared to that audience. The information provided was accurate and clearly stated.
infographics	Topic and/or main ideas are absent or very unclear; Very little detail is provided for the main ideas and understanding is limited; Fewer than 2 accurate facts are displayed; Graphics do not relate to the topic; Color, shape, size, and arrangement are distracting or misleading; Is distractingly messy, unattractive, or very poorly designed.	Topic and main ideas are clear; Detail is added to support each main idea with minimal clutter. 3 accurate facts are displayed; Most graphics represent the information appropriately; Color, shape, size, and arrangement are eye catching and contribute some meaning; Is attractive in terms of design, layout and neatness.	The topic and messages of the infographic are clear and easily understood; Intended to inform or convince the viewer; Details (including labels) support the main idea without distracting with clutter; At least 4 accurate facts/concepts are displayed in the infographic; The graphics used represent information appropriately; Color, shape, size, and arrangement of graphics contribute meaning to the overall message; The design/layout is neat, clear, and visually appealing.

Part 3: Reflection (40 pts)

Criteria	Habitual Action/ Non-Reflection (1-10)	Understanding (11-20)	Reflection (21-30)	Critical Reflection (31-40)
Reflection on Existing Knowledge C	Automatic/superficial responses with little conscious/deliberate thought or reference to existing knowledge; responses are offered without attempting to understand them	Makes use of existing knowledge without an attempt to evaluate/appraise knowledge; demonstrates understanding but does not relate to other experiences or personal reaction	Active and careful consideration of existing knowledge and articulates new understanding of knowledge as a result of experience	Critically reviews existing knowledge, questions assumptions, and articulates new perspectives as a result of experience
Connection to Academic Concepts	Connections are not drawn between experience and class content (concepts/theories) or literature	Connects experience with class content (concepts/theories) but remains superficial or abstract	Demonstrates clear connections between experience and class content (concepts/theories) ; evidence of application of theory	Demonstrates superior connection between experience and class content (concepts/theories) and literature; evidence of application of theory and reconstruction of perspective
Evidence of Development	No evidence of insights about self or particular issue/concept/ problem as a result of experience	Limited/superficial insight about self or particular issue/concept/ problem as a result of experience	Articulates new understanding/insights about self or particular issue/concept/ problem as a result of experience	Articulates transformation of their perspective of themselves or about a particular issue/concept/ problem as a result of experience

Sample Infographics

A Day in Your Life with Palm Oil

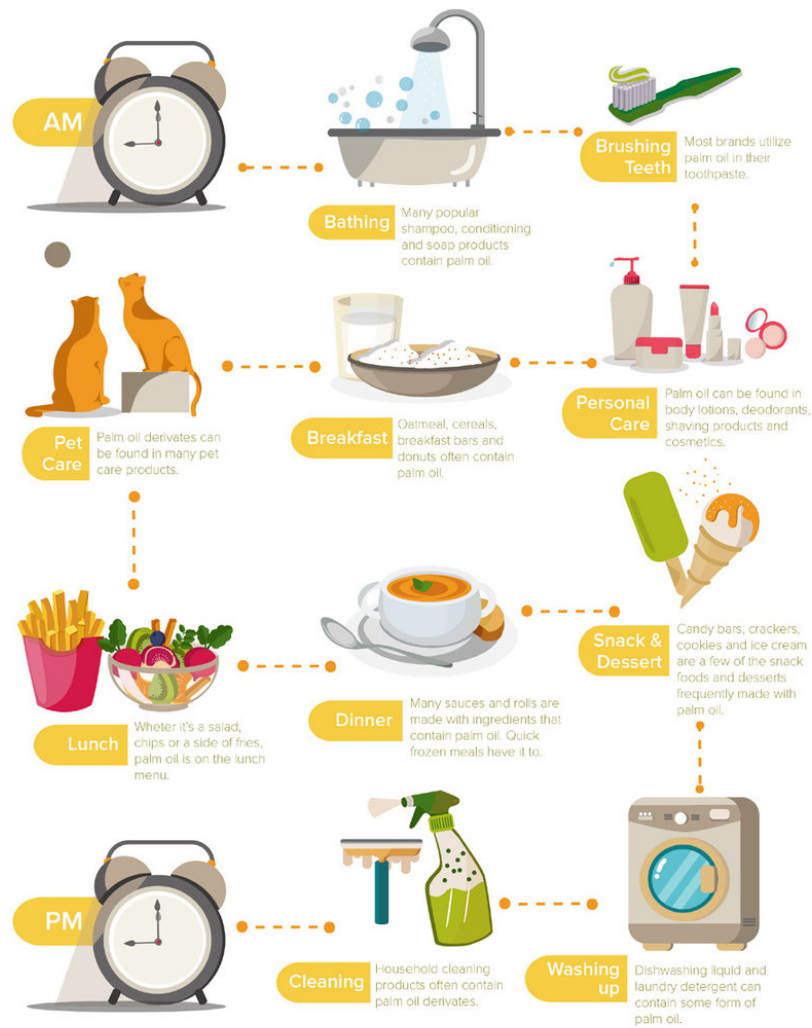


Figure 2: A Day in Your Life - Palm Oil (based on design by Philadelphia Zoo)

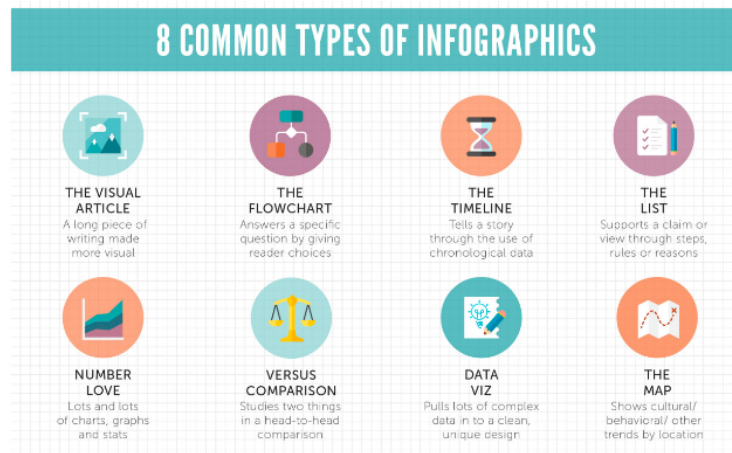


Figure 3: Different Categories of Infographics