



Emily Polk

Advanced Lecturer
Writing and Rhetoric Studies

Bio

BIO

Emily Polk is a writer, teacher, scholar, and mother who teaches and writes about community-led responses to climate change, the mobilization of social movements, and climate equity. She developed and taught some of the first courses at Stanford University on Gender and Climate Change, Communicating Climate Change, and Environmental Justice Storytelling. Prior to getting her doctorate, she worked as a human rights and environment-focused writer and editor for nearly ten years around the world, helping to produce radio documentaries in Burmese refugee camps, and facilitating a human rights-based newspaper in a Liberian refugee camp. She has also worked as an editor at Whole Earth Magazine and at CSRwire, a leading global source of corporate social responsibility news. Her own writing and radio documentaries have appeared in National Geographic Traveler, the Boston Globe, NPR, The National Radio Project, AlterNet, Central America Weekly, the Ghanaian Chronicle, and Creative Nonfiction, among others. Her book, *Communicating Global to Local Resiliency: A Case Study of the Transition Movement*, was released in 2015. Her recent article, "Communicating Climate Change: What went wrong, how can we do better?" was published in the *Handbook of Communication for Development and Social Change* and is used in classrooms in the US and around the world.

She is an Advanced Lecturer in the Program in Writing and Rhetoric and has a Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst and a Masters in Human Rights from Columbia University. Emily's courses focus on global development, climate change, and environmental justice, and invite students to interrogate the discourses (and assumptions) around the approaches, methods, and ideologies regarding how and when social change happens.

ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- Advanced Lecturer, Writing and Rhetoric Studies

ADMINISTRATIVE APPOINTMENTS

- Coordinator Notation in Science Communication, Program in Writing and Rhetoric, (2021-2024)
- Writing Specialist, School of Earth, Energy and Environmental Sciences, (2015-2020)

HONORS AND AWARDS

- Lloyd W. Dinkelspiel Award for Distinctive Contributions to Undergraduate Teaching, Stanford University (2020)
- Excellence in Teaching, School of Earth, Energy, and Environmental Sciences (2019)
- Haas Center Faculty Fellow, Haas Center For Public Service (2019)

BOARDS, ADVISORY COMMITTEES, PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- Affiliate, Stanford Center for Human and Planetary Health (2025 - present)

Research & Scholarship

CURRENT RESEARCH AND SCHOLARLY INTERESTS

Environmental Justice Discourse and Literature; Climate Change Communication and the Arts; Community Engaged Learning; Global Social Movements

Teaching

COURSES

2025-26

- Environmental Wayfinding: Cultural, Artistic, and Spiritual Approaches to Life on a Changing Planet: EARTHSYS 108, EARTHSYS 208, NATIVEAM 108, RELIGST 108X (Spr)
- Trashed! Waste and Our Planetary Predicament: ESF 26 (Aut)
- Wild Writing: EARTHSYS 149, EARTHSYS 249, NATIVEAM 149 (Spr)
- Writing & Rhetoric 1: Trash Talk: Writing from the Bin to the Biosphere: PWR 1EPA (Spr)

2024-25

- Environmental Justice and Human Rights Lab: EARTHSYS 196A, HUMRTS 196 (Win)
- Environmental Storytellers Collective: EARTHSYS 131J (Win)
- Intermediate Writing: Introduction to Science Communication: PWR 91NSC (Aut)
- Wild Writing: EARTHSYS 149, EARTHSYS 249 (Spr)
- Writing & Rhetoric 1: The Rhetoric of Global Development and Social Change: PWR 1EP (Win)
- Writing & Rhetoric 2: Trekkers, Trampers, and Travelers: Storytelling On The World's Trails: PWR 2EPD (Spr)

2023-24

- Environmental Justice and Human Rights Lab: HUMRTS 196 (Win)
- NSC Portfolio Preparation I: PWR 99ANSC (Spr)
- NSC Portfolio Preparation II: PWR 99BNSC (Win)
- Portfolio Preparation I: PWR 99A (Aut)
- Wild Writing: EARTHSYS 149, EARTHSYS 249 (Spr)
- Writing & Rhetoric 2: Trekkers, Trampers, and Travelers: Storytelling On The World's Trails: PWR 2EPD (Aut)

2022-23

- Environmental Communication Capstone: EARTHSYS 294 (Aut, Spr)
- Environmental Justice Storytelling: Writing for Impact: EARTHSYS 91EJ, PWR 91EPA (Aut)
- Environmental Justice and Human Rights Lab: EARTHSYS 196A, HUMRTS 196 (Aut, Win, Spr)
- Portfolio Preparation I: PWR 99A (Aut, Spr)
- Portfolio Preparation II: PWR 99B (Win)
- Wild Writing: EARTHSYS 149, EARTHSYS 249 (Spr)

STANFORD ADVISEES

Doctoral Dissertation Co-Advisor (NonAC)

Rachel Herring

Master's Program Advisor

Melanie Robles

Doctoral Dissertation Reader (NonAC)

Stephanie Fischer

Publications

PUBLICATIONS

- **Towards environmental justice: A framework and strategic approach for implementing community based participatory research in the earth and environmental sciences** *ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE & POLICY*
Wilson, A. M., Polk, E., Field, C. B., Fendorf, S.
2025; 167
- **Communities conditionally support deployment of direct air capture for carbon dioxide removal in the United States (vol 5, 175, 2024)** *COMMUNICATIONS EARTH & ENVIRONMENT*
Scott-Buechler, C., Cain, B., Osman, K., Ardoin, N. M., Fraser, C., Adcox, G., Polk, E., Jackson, R. B.
2024; 5 (1)
- **Fostering Climate Crisis Global Literacies in the Classroom** *CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBAL LITERACIES*
Polk, E., Beach, R., Webb, A.
edited by Kerkhoff, S. N., Spires, H. A.
2023: 230-246
- **Integrating community based participatory research approaches into climate justice digital media projects** *Youth Created Media on the Climate Crisis: Hear Our Voices*
Polk, E.
Routledge.2023; 1: 17
- **Towards an ocean-based large ocean states country classification** *MARINE POLICY*
Hume, A., Leape, J., Oleson, K. L. L., Polk, E., Chand, K., Dunbar, R.
2021; 134
- **Situating the Scientist: Creating Inclusive Science Communication Through Equity Framing and Environmental Justice** *Frontiers in Communication*
Polk, E., Diver, S.
2020
- **Communicating Climate Change: Where Did We Go Wrong, How Can We Do Better?** *Handbook of Communication for Development and Social Change*
Polk, E.
Springer.2018
- **Momentum in the age of sustainability Building up and burning out in a transition town** *PERMA/CULTURE: IMAGINING ALTERNATIVES IN AN AGE OF CRISIS*
Polk, E.
edited by Wallace, M., Carruthers, D.
2018: 97–105
- **Sustainability and Participatory Communication: A Case Study of the Transition Town Amherst, Massachusetts** *MANAGEMENT COMMUNICATION QUARTERLY*
Polk, E., Servaes, J.
2015; 29 (1): 160-167
- **Communicating Global to Local Resiliency: A Case Study of the Transition Movement**
Polk, E.
Lexington Books.2015
- **Revolutions, Social Media, and the Digitization of Dissent: Communicating Social Change in Egypt** *Sustainability, Participation, and Culture in Communication*
edited by Servaes, J.

Intellect.2013: 137–152

- **Folk Media Meets Digital Technology for Sustainable Social Change: A Case Study of the Center for Digital Storytelling** *Global Media Journal*
Polk, E.
2010; 10 (17): 30