ABSTRACT

THESIS: Walking Away from Kyoto: A Critical Rhetoric of Environmental Debate

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This thesis examines public discourses concerning global warming. More specifically, it works to understand how the American media talks about environmentalism within the context of the Kyoto Protocols. This study is rooted in Foucault’s notions of power and discourse and also looks to the theoretical tenets of critical rhetoric developed by McHerrow (1989) and McGee (1990) to understand how the American debate over the protocols might create problematic approaches to environmentalism. These understandings may result from troubling articulations of ideographic fragments, which operate as texts in a postmodern society. As the Kyoto Protocols are set to expire, it is important to explore what influence the discourses surrounding Kyoto may have had. As the effects of humanity upon the environment become clearer, this study questions discourses that not only justify our impact, but may allow us to ignore it altogether. This thesis also contributes to the study of Environmental Communication. Consequently, this thesis examines discourses present in three popular American news magazines to observe how environmentalism is articulated in debates over the Kyoto Protocols and climate change.