

Quest 1/Environmental Studies 102
Introduction to Sustainability
Fall 2013

TTH: 3:00-4:30
3215 Sage Hall

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Course Description: In this course, we explore the many contested meanings of the term “sustainability,” as well as its application in a variety of ways. Sustainability might mean, for some people, nothing more than tips for how to live “green.” In this class, however, we will treat sustainability as a lens of inquiry, a way of analyzing and assessing the complicated social, economic, and environmental problems that our society faces in the twenty-first century. These issues arise all around us, in the food we eat, the cars we drive, and the communities that we inhabit. And they occur at a variety of scales—from the very local (such as the campus of the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh) to the global. There is no single path to sustainability, no single solution to complicated problems. In this class we will learn to think critically about sustainability issues, policies, solutions, and responsibilities. We will seek to answer the question: **How do people understand and create a sustainable world?**

An additional goal of this class is to further your liberal arts education. What does this mean? The liberal arts education focuses on general learning, intellectual ability, and critical thinking rather than technical or professional skills. The goal of this class, then, is not just to convey specific information about sustainability but to teach you how to interpret this information critically, and how to understand modern environmental issues in their social, historical, and political context. A liberal arts education provides the tools we need to be active citizens of our communities. This course thus fits the University Studies Program at UW Oshkosh. In Spring 2008, UW Oshkosh adopted a set of Essential Learning Outcomes to help define the meaning of liberal education in the twenty-first century. One of these outcomes is the recognition that a liberal education recognizes our “Responsibility, as individuals and communities.” This includes “Knowledge of sustainability and its applications.” This course is designed to help us think about our responsibilities to each other, to our communities, and to our environment.

Learning Outcomes: Upon completing this course, students will be able to:

- 1.) Have a basic understanding of the expectations of higher education at UW Oshkosh and the resources available to students meet these expectations.
- 2.) Define sustainability and explain why definitions of the term are complicated and contested.
- 3.) Identify the three pillars of sustainability (economic, ecological, social) and explain the interconnections of the three pillars as they relate to a policy, practice, activity, or object.
- 4.) Describe the relationship of sustainability to liberal education, higher education, and the UW Oshkosh University Studies Program.
- 5.) Explain how sustainability issues, policies, and activities are revealed and addressed at a variety of scales (local, community, national, global).
- 6.) Demonstrate an understanding of the responsibilities implied by knowledge of sustainability and its applications at personal, communal, and governmental scales.

Short Assignments & Reading Quizzes: Periodically throughout the semester, students will be asked to complete short assignments related to class content and themes. These might include short responses to the readings, in-class reading quizzes, written responses to events/co-curricular activities (at least two of which will be required, and which you will attend with the class peer mentor), or other assignments. These will be graded on a check/check-plus basis, and count towards 10% of your grade. Fully completing these assignments not only will benefit your grade, but will also provide an avenue for you to demonstrate your engagement in the course.

Individual/Small Group Meetings: At least once during the semester, you are required to set up a meeting with me—either alone or in a small group—to discuss your transition to college, how to find resources on campus, and to be sure that we all have the same expectations for this class. Some class time has been reserved for these meetings, as noted in the syllabus.

Peer Mentor: Our peer mentor for this class is Paige Courtney. Paige will be attending some of our classes, going on campus tours, and serving as a resource for students. The role of the peer mentor is to help students with the difficult transition to college. She can be a source of advice, a model, and a friend to incoming students. Among other things, Paige will organize several required extra-curricular events for our class. These will include attending the Earth Charter Banquet on Monday, September 30 and also attending the meeting of student groups. These events will be discussed in greater detail later in the semester. Paige can be reached on the class facebook page (to be set up during week 1), via email at court84@uwosh.edu or by text/phone at (262) 968-9533.

Graded Assignments: Students will be evaluated on the following components, each of which will be discussed in more detail during class:

- Attendance and participation: 20%
- Short assignments: 10%
 - Based on completion of short in- and out-of class assignments and reading quizzes
- Why I came to College Paper: 5%
 - 2 page paper integrating the readings thus far with a statement about why came to college
- Sustainability Education Paper: 20%
 - 3 page paper on the importance of sustainability and relationship to liberal education
- Sustainability Interconnections Paper: 20%
 - 4 page paper on the interconnections of the three pillars of sustainability and how these pillars function at a variety of scales (local, community, national, global) and in a variety of issues.
- Final Paper—Sustainability Object Analysis: 25%
 - Students are expected to choose one object of every-day life (a bicycle, a cup of coffee, a banana, a car, etc.) and use that object as the basis of a 5-page sustainability analysis. This might focus on governmental policies to affect sustainability, the responsibility to change individual behavior, the role of education in changing consumer patterns, or some other element of sustainability. In this paper, students must demonstrate their understanding of the complex topic of sustainability and its applications. This assignment will be discussed in detail during class.
 - **Must also be uploaded to student e-portfolio, along with 1 page reflection on the assignment, as discussed in class.**

Attendance, Discussion and Participation: Your participation in discussions and other class activities is essential. This course will only be successful with full student engagement and participation. Attendance will be taken each day; your grade will drop significantly after two unexcused absences. If you have more than five unexcused absences, you will fail the course. An “unexcused absence” is any absence for which you cannot provide a note from a doctor, another professor, or some other documented explanation of your absence. If you simply cannot make a class, please contact me before the class meets; perhaps an arrangement can be made to ensure that you are not penalized for missing class for legitimate reasons. Your active participation is the key to your learning the material and to the success of the course—both for you as an individual and for the class as a whole.

Please check your email account regularly for updates and last minute information about upcoming class meetings. Also, email is generally the best way to get in contact with me.

Readings: In an effort to save students the cost of a University-produced reading packet, many course materials have been placed on the Polk Library’s Electronic-Reserve or the course D2L page. These are REQUIRED readings. There are two required texts, which are available at the University Book Store:

- Andres Edwards. *The Sustainability Revolution: Portrait of a Paradigm Shift* (New Society Publishers, 2005).
- James Farrell. *The Nature of College: How a New Understanding of Campus Life Can Change the World*. (Milkweed Editions: Minneapolis, MN, 2010).

First Year Experience: Throughout the semester, we will be taking short trips around campus, having in-class discussions, and welcoming visitors into our class to introduce us to the variety of opportunities in and challenges of attending the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. Among other topics, these discussions will include:

- University Studies Program (USP): The purpose of the University Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh is to inspire intellectual curiosity in our students, encourage them to understand their responsibilities as educated people, and lay the foundation for the skills and knowledge that will enable them to succeed not only as university students, but also as engaged local and global citizens. Our explorations of

sustainability in this class will be paired with the two other questions that students will encounter in other portions of the USP: **how do people understand and bridge cultural difference?** and **how do people understand and engage in community life?** These three “signature questions” together make up the QUEST component of the USP, which is designed to promote students’ development of the foundational skills necessary to succeed at the university and their awareness of the value and importance of a liberal education. These Quest courses are joined with the EXPLORATION component, which is designed to provide students with a broad understanding of the human experience through different disciplinary ways of knowing, and the CONNECTION Component, which is designed for students to integrate and synthesize knowledge from their Quest and Explore experiences in an advanced writing course that synthesizes all three *Signature Questions*. More information about the USP program can be found at <http://www.uwosh.edu/usp/>.

- **Early Alert Grading:** The university has adopted a campus-wide program called Early Alert to help identify students who are at-risk academically based on their attendance, participation, and grades in the first month of each semester. We will discuss what these Early Alert notifications mean and how to respond to them should you receive one. Your early alert grade will be calculated based on your participation in class activities during the first 3 weeks of the semester and the 2-page “Why I came to college” paper.
- **ePortfolios:** The UW Oshkosh ePortfolio provides the opportunity for students to document and connect their learning throughout their college education, as well as to *reflect* on what they have learned. We will discuss how to manage and use the ePortfolio in class. Students are required to upload their final paper (Sustainability Object Analysis) to their ePortfolio.
- **Academic Resources:** During the semester, we will discuss the wide variety of campus resources available to students to help them succeed at UW Oshkosh, including Academic Advising, Career Services, the Counseling Center, the Center for Academic Resources, the Writing Center, and many more.
- **Writing Center:** The Writing Center helps students of all ability levels improve their writing. Trained peer consultants help writers understand an assignment, envision possibilities for a draft, and improve their writing process. They even help writers learn to identify their own proofreading errors. Students can make a free appointment or stop by to see whether a consultant is available. For more information, view their website (<http://www.uwosh.edu/wcenter>), call 920-424-1152, email wcenter@uwosh.edu, or visit them in Suite 102 of the Student Success Center.
- **Polk Library/Information Literacy:** Polk Library offers many professional librarians who can help you find library resources for your research. Specifically, Ted Mulvey, the Information Literacy Librarian, is available to assist you as you access, evaluate, and use information in University Studies Program classes. Phone: 920-424-7329; email: mulveyt@uwosh.edu. You may also set up a research advisory session with a librarian at: rap@uwosh.edu.

Course Policies and Conduct: All of us must do our best to be intellectually honest and tolerant of personal differences. Environmental topics are often controversial, and we all have our own beliefs. I hope that everyone will feel safe to express an idea, even if that idea is not a popular one.

There are some university guidelines for behavior that I expect all of us to abide by as well. One of these has to do with plagiarism, or taking credit for the work of others. This is a serious offense and will be treated according to university guidelines; failure of the course is a potential outcome of academic dishonesty. This doesn’t mean you shouldn’t talk with other students about what you are thinking or writing; but when you write something on a paper or exam, it must be in your own words, not copied from someone else. We will discuss what plagiarism means more fully during the course of the semester. If you have any questions about academic honesty, and what might or might not be considered plagiarism, please ask, rather than taking a risk with grave consequences.

Please let me know what I can do to accommodate any disabilities that you might have.

Grading Scale:

A	93-100	B+	87-89	C+	77-79	D+	67-69	F	≤ 59
A-	90-92	B	83-86	C	73-76	D	63-66		
		B-	80-82	C-	70-72	D-	60-62		

Course Calendar

Unit 1: Education, Sustainability, and Education for Sustainability

Wk 1: Thursday, September 5: Introduction and Course Themes

Wk 2: Tuesday, September 10: The Meaning of the Liberal Arts

Reading: William Cronon, “‘Only Connect...’: The Goals of a Liberal Education,” ER

UW Oshkosh Essential Learning Outcomes

UW Oshkosh University Studies Program website, <http://www.uwosh.edu/usp>, review

Assignment: D2L essay assignment, as discussed in class

Short Discussion: Education in the 21st Century

Thursday, September 12: Sustainability and the Liberal Arts

Reading: Farley and Smith, “Sustainability: If It’s Everything, is it Nothing?”, ER

Weissmann, “Sustainability and Liberal Education,” ER

Wk 3: Tuesday, September 17: Sustainability and Education

Reading: David Orr, “Earth in Mind,” ER

Thursday, September 19: Campus Sustainability Tour; **Due: Why I Came to College Paper**

Reading: Review UWO Sustainability Initiative Webpage & Dept of Res. Life Green Living webpage

Wk 4: Tuesday, September 24: Sustainability defined

Reading: Edwards, *Sustainability Revolution*, xiii-10

Fricker, “Measuring up to Sustainability,” ER

Thursday, September 26: Education for Sustainability: What Do We Need to Know?

Reading: Stibbe & Luna, *Handbook of Sustainability Literacy*, ER

Short Discussion: Academic Honesty & Responsibility

Unit 2: Interrogating Sustainability

Wk 5: Monday, September 30: Required Attendance to Earth Charter Banquet, details TBA

Tuesday, October 1: **Sustainability Education Paper due**

No reading; **Class meets in Student Success Center Lobby**; tour of SSC and introductions to Advising,

Counseling Center, Writing Center, Career Services, Academic Resources, and Mapworks

Thursday, October 3: Sustainability and Community

Reading: Edwards, *Sustainability Revolution*, 11-49

Agyeman, “Where Justice and Sustainability Meet,” ER

Schedule individual/peer group meetings for Weeks 6-7

Wk 6: Tuesday, October 8: Sustainability and Economy

Reading: *Choices for Sustainable Living*, “Business and Economy,” ER

Edwards, *Sustainability Revolution*, 49-97

Short Discussion: E-Portfolios & General Education

Thursday, October 10: No class; Schedule Individual/Group meetings with Jim

Reading: Continue Reading Edwards

Wk 7: Tuesday, October 15: Sustainability and Ecology

Reading: Edwards, *Sustainability Revolution*, 97-122

Indicators of Sustainability reading, ER

Wednesday, October 16: Individual Meetings, if scheduled

Thursday, October 17: No class; Schedule Individual/Group meetings with Jim

No Reading

Wk 8: Tuesday, October 22: Case Study 1: Food as Industry, Food as Health

Reading: Pollan, "Power Steer," ER

Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation*, ER

Hurst, "The Omnivore's Delusion," ER

Thursday, October 24: Case Study 1: Food as Community

Reading: *Choices for Sustainable Living*, "Food," ER

Wk 9: Tuesday, October 29: Nuclear Energy Pros and Cons

Reading: *Taking Sides*, ER

Chameides, "Nuclear Energy Taking Its Hits," ER

Thursday, October 31: Nuclear Energy and Social Sustainability

Reading: Hecht, *Being Nuclear*, ER

Short Discussion: Diversity, Inclusivity, & Sustainability

Unit 3: Sustainability in Everyday Life

Wk 10: Tuesday, November 5: Ecological Footprints; **Interconnections Paper Due**

No Reading; Class meetings in Computer Lab for Ecological Footprint Exercise & Discussion

Thursday, November 7: The Nature of College

Reading: Jim Farrell, *The Nature of College*, ix-34

Wk 11: Tuesday, November 12: Stuff

Reading: Farrell, *The Nature of College*, 35-66

Short Discussion: Study Abroad

Thursday, November 14: Sustainability in Food, Cars, and Screens

Reading: Farrell, *The Nature of College*, 67-156

Wk 12: Tuesday, November 19: Sustainable Socializing

Farrell, *The Nature of College*, 157-198

Thursday, November 21: Sustainable Thinking

Reading: Farrell, *The Nature of College*, 199-63

Library Workshop: Researching Stuff; class meets in Polk Library; come prepared with at least three objects you might be interested in writing your final paper about.

Wk 13: Tuesday, November 26: Sustainability: Whose Responsibility?

Reading: McKibben, *Eaarth*, ER

Thursday, November 28: No Class; Thanksgiving Recess

Wk 14: Tuesday, December 3: Who Else's Responsibility?

Reading: Leopold, *Sand County Almanac*

Short Discussion: Civic Engagement & Sustainability

Thursday, December 5: What next?

Reading: Edwards, *Sustainability Revolution*, 123-140

Farrell, *The Nature of College*, 249-63

Wk 15: Tuesday, December 10: Sustainability in Education Revisited

Reading: Review UW Oshkosh University Studies Website

D2L assignment, as discussed in class

Thursday, December 12: Final Thoughts & Concluding Discussion

Final Object analysis & reflection due; must be uploaded to D2L and ePortfolio by 5:00 pm