

ES 102 – Introduction to Sustainability

Course Information

Location: Sage 2221

Scheduled Meeting Times: Mon, Wed, Fri 10:20-11:20 AM

Meeting Dates: 2/5/2024-5/17/2024

Prerequisites: None

Meets requirements for USP Explore Society and Global Citizenship courses

Instructor Information

Professor: Dr. Kathryn Hofmeister

Contact Me: hofmeisterk@uwosh.edu (email), stop by my office (Sage 3449)

- *Please include class title and your topic in the subject line of the email*

Office Hours: Tues 3-4, Wed 11:30-1:00 and by appointment

- I will be in my office (Sage 3449) to meet with students at these times. I will let you know of any exceptions in class or via Canvas announcement.
- If these times do not work for you, send me an email to make an appointment for an in person or virtual meeting.
- I will be taking UWO mandated furlough days on four Thursdays throughout the semester. On these days I am not allowed to perform any work for UW Oshkosh which includes taking phone calls or responding to emails. I will let you know which dates these will be.

Office hours are time for you to:

- Ask questions about assignments
- Get help with class material and talk about individual questions or concerns
- Introduce yourself
- Say hi or have a quick chat
- Talk about school, life, the future
- Get a piece of chocolate or have a cup of tea

Course Description and Objectives

Humans and the natural world are inextricably linked, each influencing and shaping each other. As we envision a future where human needs are equitably met within the limits of available natural resources, we are envisioning a more sustainable world. The definition of sustainability is broad, and the world is a big, diverse place. 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. *Our world is interdependent ecologically, economically, and socially and the choices we make about how to live our own lives have ripple effects that impact the environment and lives of people living across the planet.* We will explore how a simple action, such as buying a t-shirt, connects us to farm fields in Texas where cotton is irrigated with dwindling groundwater resources, mills in China where the fabric dyeing process creates toxic wastewater, and factories in Bangladesh where low wages and poor working conditions dominate. *Our investigations will highlight global interactions and interdependencies and identify ways that global systems can become more sustainable.*

This class will introduce students to the dynamic, interdisciplinary field of sustainability and focus on how to create a sustainable future that supports environmental health, social equity and economic vitality across the globe. We will examine sustainability challenges and examples of integrated, creative solutions to solving the wicked problems of our time – solutions that require thinkers and doers from diverse backgrounds and input from all stakeholders. Despite the many threats to our environment, there is reason to be optimistic. Humans, when working together, can rise to meet sustainability challenges. 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. *Students will explore sustainability issues in the developed and developing world, understand how environmental degradation and social justice issues across the globe are part of sustainability, and investigate how diverse ideas are necessary for coming up with solutions for a more sustainable world.* We will seek to answer the question: How do people understand and create a sustainable world?

Student Learning Outcomes

Students in this course will be able to:

1. 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
2. Recognize how sustainability problems and solutions vary across culture, class, and geography (GC learning outcome #3)
3. Recognize key resource-related challenges and potential solutions
4. Analyze their own connections, as individuals and households with larger sustainability issues at local and global scales (GC learning outcome #7)
5. Engage in interactive group discussions that will promote community within and beyond the classroom
6. Develop and apply critical thinking and communication skills needed to address complex environmental problems facing society

Community and Engagement

Because of its broad interdisciplinarity, the Environmental Studies Program is both one of the most challenging and one of the most rewarding programs at the university. The key to meeting the challenges and gaining the rewards of our program is embracing the idea of *community*. Just as environmental problems cannot be solved without communities coming together in dialogue and action, our classes in ES require you to come together as a community characterized by open participation, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. *Participation* means actively contributing both your voice in class discussions and your work to build knowledge together. *Respect* means listening and making space for your peers' voices while also feeling free to disagree (as the best forms of understanding often arise out of what begins as disagreement). And *responsibility* means holding ourselves accountable for being curious, engaged, and informed members of our shared community.

What we discuss in our classes is often difficult, but if we see each class as a community in which we are actively engaged, we will gain not only the rewards of knowledge and capacity for action, but a sense of feeling supported, both academically and emotionally – of confronting the problems we face together. Further, environmental educations obligate us to address issues we see and to collaborate with others to build relationships and try to make things better. This means embracing your major as *your* program, helping it to be the best version of itself, and getting involved outside of the classroom on campus and beyond. Then you'll truly grow!

The University Studies Program and Global Citizenship

This course is an Explore Society course for the University Studies Program (USP). The Explore classes are designed to provide a solid foundation for the rest of your education here, no matter which major you choose. For further information about the unique general education at UW Oshkosh and the other USP courses that are available, visit the University Studies Program website (<https://uwosh.edu/usp/>).

As part of both the USP and the Global Citizenship program, this course contributes towards a liberal education, empowering and preparing you to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It will provide you with broad knowledge of the wider world (*e.g.*, science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education will help you develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real world settings. Sustainability is inherently an interdisciplinary field, and a liberal arts education will provide the broad knowledge and transferrable skills necessary to tackle the wicked problems we are facing.

Global Citizenship is the knowledge of nations, cultures, or societies beyond the U.S.; the recognition of how interaction, interdependence, and inequity among diverse geographical, social, political, or economic systems have shaped historical and contemporary global challenges and opportunities; and the skills to engage with the responsibilities of informed citizenship in a complex, interdependent, and changing world. As a "Global Citizenship" USP course, students will explore sustainability issues in the developed and developing world, understand how environmental degradation and social justice issues across the globe are part of sustainability,

and investigate how diverse ideas are necessary for coming up with solutions for a more sustainable world.

How to Succeed in this Course

All students can succeed in this course, and I am here to help you along the way. Please do not hesitate to ask questions or contact me to set up a meeting outside of class time. All questions are important here. Success in this course depends on your personal health and well-being. Recognize that stress is an expected part of the college experience, and it often can be compounded by unexpected setbacks or life changes outside the classroom. I strongly encourage you to reframe challenges as an unavoidable pathway to success. Reflect on your role in taking care of yourself throughout the semester, before the demands of exams and projects reach their peak. Please feel free to reach out to me about any difficulty you may be having that may impact your performance in your courses or campus life as soon as it occurs and before it becomes too overwhelming. In addition to your academic advisor, I strongly encourage you to contact the many other support services on campus that stand ready to assist you.

Course Expectations

This is a 3-credit course, which means that students are expected to do at least 9 hours of course-related work or activity each week during the semester. This includes scheduled class lectures and discussions as well as time spent completing assigned readings, preparing written assignments, studying for examinations, and other course-related tasks.

Grades and Assignments

Your grades will be based on the following items (explanations below).

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Semester long personal sustainability project | 20% |
| 2. UWO sustainability group work | 20% |
| 3. Individual and group work | 15% |
| 4. Reading responses | 15% |
| 5. Attendance and participation | 30% |

Grades earned in this course will be based on the following point ranges:

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

Semester long personal project: Students will quantify their own ecological footprint and determine how to become more sustainable for the semester. *An essay describing their personal sustainability action and experience, quantifying the environmental impact of their personal action, and connecting their action and to some global system will be the final paper for this course and will be due on Thursday 5/16/2024.*

UWO sustainability group work: Students will work together to assess sustainability at UWO. This project will involve two components – an assessment of sustainability at UWO with a focus on recycling and a personal commitment to a more sustainable existence for the semester. Students will collect data about UWO’s waste, create advertisements about sustainability to inform their peers, and develop a proposal to improve the sustainability of campus, which will be presented at the end of the semester. *These presentations will take place Monday 5/13/2024 and Wednesday 5/15/2024.*

Individual and group work: There will be in class activities conducted with other students based on reading and lecture content exploring topics including corporate sustainability, food sustainability claims, global energy use, water resources, sustainable development in the developing world, and fake news. *Through these assignments students will explore connections between their own lives and nations and cultures beyond the U.S., investigate what sustainable development looks like across the globe, and solidify their understanding of the environmental challenges we are facing.*

Reading responses: You will be asked to read, watch, or listen to many pieces for this class, including material from the popular press, peer-reviewed scientific papers, and a few podcasts. These materials will provide you background information we will use for class discussion. Some of these pieces will be case studies and windows into the experiences of people all over the world. Other pieces will be technical and might require some time to work through and understand. Each reading will have associated questions for you to answer. *Reading responses are due the night before class. You will get credit for responding thoughtfully as well as for discussing your thoughts and questions in class.*

Attendance and Participation: In keeping with a strong liberal arts tradition that encourages active learning and complete participation in the education process, ***I expect you to attend class regularly, be prepared and actively participate.*** You will receive points for attending class and participating in class discussions and activities. Completing the readings and reading responses will prepare you for class discussions.

- **Being prepared means that you: 1) carefully read the assigned material, 2) come to class with a copy of the reading containing your notes if applicable, and 3) bring a set of questions for discussion.** I fully expect you to have questions because these are challenging readings!

- Your attendance and participation in class is vital to building our class community and having worthwhile conversations.
- I expect you to act like a professional in class. This means you will treat your classmates with respect. In classroom discussions you will address controversial issues carefully and thoughtfully, giving your full attention to the task at hand.

Extra credit: I highly encourage participation in campus events and lectures. As the semester unfolds, I will post any events I feel are appropriate as extra credit for this class in the Events and Opportunities module on Canvas. If you hear of an event for which you would like to get extra credit, let me know. Requirements for extra credit points are written in the Canvas assignment.

Feedback: I will provide feedback in class and on Canvas and will make every effort to post grades within two weeks of quiz, individual work, and reading response submissions. To keep track of your performance in the course, refer to Grades on Canvas.

Due Dates and Late Policy:

- All course due dates will be announced in class and posted on Canvas.
- I know life happens but completing the assignments on time is essential for your success in the course and to support active class discussions. Please come talk with me or email me if you have questions. If you need an extension, you must ask me *before* the due date.
- Reading response assignments are expected to be submitted to Canvas by midnight the day before they are due. Late reading response assignments will not be accepted.
- Individual work assignments received after the due date will be deducted 10% per day and will not be accepted after five days.

Readings

There is no required textbook to purchase for this class. Required readings will be available through the Canvas site for this course.

Course Communication

I will use Canvas Announcements for communicating with the entire class and UWO student email accounts for any individual emails. *Therefore, it is very important that all students select the option to receive email alerts about Canvas Announcements and check their UWO email account regularly.* Remember to create a good impression and prepare your email as you would in a formal job setting – NOT as you would address your friends in email or text. A formal salutation, complete sentences, capital letters where appropriate, proper grammar, punctuation, etc. are expected. I will not respond to emails that are inappropriate or incomprehensible. I always intend to treat students with courtesy and respect and expect the same in return.

Canvas Course Website: The Canvas course website will be used for keeping track of weekly tasks, assignments, announcements, discussion boards, and your grades. To access the course website go to <https://uwosh.edu/canvas/home/>, log in with your Titan account, and select Introduction to Sustainability. *Check Canvas often for your success in the course – details on readings and assignments will be posted there.*

Technology in Class

We all use our devices. But critical and analytical thinking take a hit once screens are out. You are welcome to use a laptop or tablet in this class as long as it contributes to your learning. However, even when devices like laptops are diligently used for typed note-taking, studies show they invite rote transcribing versus mental processing or thinking (Mueller and Oppenheimer, 2014). This leads to poorer academic performance. Consider hand-writing your notes in class for potentially more efficient, deeper, real-time learning. This class, once again, is discussion based. This means that all students are expected to actively listen to one another in order to participate in classroom activities. If you are unable to contribute to the discussion or are otherwise distracted by your computer or cell phone, I will ask that you refrain from using it in class. There will be some class sessions where we will use technology together, and in those instances, all students should make arrangements to bring a laptop or tablet to class.

Mueller, P. A., & Oppenheimer, D. M. (2014). The pen is mightier than the keyboard: Advantages of longhand over laptop note taking. *Psychological Science*, 25(6), 1159-1168.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797614524581>

Academic Honesty

Plagiarism, cheating, stealing, or lying will not be tolerated in this class. I take these subjects very seriously and will take all available measures to address suspected incidents of any of these. Academic honesty policies are clearly defined at this University and all students are expected to abide by them (<https://uwosh.edu/deanofstudents/student-conduct/>). Penalties for violations are severe in this course. Cheating on an exam or plagiarism on a written assignment will lead to a zero, at minimum, with no opportunity for a make-up or extra credit. A second offense will result in you failing the class and referral to the Dean's office for further disciplinary action, which is defined in UWS 14.03, Wisconsin Administrative Code.

A Note about AI/Chat GPT: Generative AI technologies are becoming widespread and have the potential to enhance learning experiences. However, it is important to note that the use of AI should be supplementary and should not replace the development of essential cognitive skills. Generative AI is like Wikipedia - a great place to start, but you, as the author, are responsible for ensuring that the information and outputs are appropriate. Often, ChatGPT and similar sites are wrong in their interpretations of a text. If you choose to use generative AI to help you get started on an assignment, it will be up to you to take the information provided for you and make necessary changes to be more accurate in your own writing. Again, AI can be great for inspiration, but you must clearly demonstrate your own knowledge surrounding content in this course.

Know that work created by AI tools **may not** be considered original work and instead is considered automated plagiarism. It is derived from previously created materials from other

sources that the models were trained on and doesn't accurately cite its own sources. AI models have built-in biases and limitations and function more like a "word calculator" than a substantive creator (i.e., they are trained on limited underlying sources; they reproduce, rather than challenge, biases, offenses, and factual errors in their underlying sources; they lack critical thinking to evaluate and reflect on criteria; they lack abductive reasoning to make judgments with incomplete information at hand).

Remember that most of the writing assignments in this course are based on YOUR OWN reflections and interpretations of readings, so there is no right answer. Do not rely on generative AI to do the thinking for you. I want to know what YOU think, not read a word salad created by ChatGPT.

If you use an AI tool at any point in the development and/or creation of your work for this course – including discussion board posts, exams, papers, and projects – you must include appropriate citations and the acknowledgment below in your Reference list:

Name of publisher/tool producer. (year). Name of AI tool (version date) [Large language model].

You must also include a full transcript of the writing or work produced by the AI tool in an appendix to your work.

Miscellaneous

Students are advised to see the following URL for disclosures about essential consumer protection items required by the Students Right to Know Act of 1990:

<https://uwosh.edu/financialaid/resources/consumer-information/>

My favorite musician is Neil Young.

Diversity and Inclusion in the Classroom

Everyone is welcome in this class, exactly as you are. All races, ethnicities, nationalities, genders, sexualities, religions, abilities, and political affiliations are welcome here. We treat each other with respect, and we listen before we judge. Disagreement with ideas and positions is welcome. Vilification of people, harmful stereotypes, and failure to listen with openness are not welcome. Diversity drives innovation, creativity, and progress. At the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, the culture, identities, life experiences, unique abilities, and talents of every individual contribute to the foundation of our success. Creating and maintaining an inclusive and equitable environment is of paramount importance to us. This pursuit prepares all of us to be global citizens who will contribute to the betterment of the world. We are committed to a university culture that provides everyone with the opportunity to thrive.

Special Accommodation: Students in need of special accommodations to meet any requirements of this course should contact the Accessibility Center (<https://uwosh.edu/deanofstudents/accessibility-center/>) for the University's accommodation request form and documentation requirements as soon as possible to discuss academic accommodations and/or services. If you have any kind of special circumstances that I should know about, including any kind of diagnosed or undiagnosed disability, please tell me right away. Sharing this information with me will allow me to

create a suitable learning environment for you and further facilitate your academic success. All information will be kept strictly confidential.

Religious Holidays and Extracurricular Activities

I will make reasonable accommodations to student requests to complete work missed by absence resulting from observation of religious holidays or extra-curricular activities. Please communicate with me directly. It is your responsibility to take the initiative to work out with the instructor a schedule for making up missed work.

Campus Resources

Early Alert: Early Alert is a program that provides you with an Early Grade Report from faculty. Early Grade Reports will indicate if you have academic performance or attendance issues and specific steps you can take and resources available to help you improve. It is common for students to be unaware of or over-estimate their academic performance in classes so this will help you be aware early on of your progress and provide strategies for success in the classroom. You will receive an email during the 5th week of classes. It is important to read the entire email carefully.

Polk Library/Information Literacy: Polk Library (<https://library.uwosh.edu/>) offers many professional librarians who can help you find library resources for your research. You may also set up a research assistance session with a librarian at <https://library.uwosh.edu/services/forms/research-assistance>

The 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 (<https://uwosh.edu/writingcenter/>) or email wcenter@uwosh.edu.

Undergraduate Advising Resource Center (UARC): Learn about different majors, get advice about registration, and more (<https://uwosh.edu/advising/>).

The Center for Academic Resources: The Center for Academic Resources (CAR; <https://uwosh.edu/car/>) provides free tutoring and supplemental instruction services for students.

UW Oshkosh Environmental Studies Program
 ES 102 Syllabus

| Week | Day | Date | Lecture Topic |
|------|-----------------|--------|---|
| 1 | M | 5-Feb | Course Introduction |
| | W | 7-Feb | Community Building |
| | F | 9-Feb | Definitions of Sustainability |
| 2 | M | 12-Feb | Ecological Systems |
| | W | 14-Feb | Ecological Systems |
| | F | 16-Feb | Humans and Ecosystem Services |
| 3 | M | 19-Feb | Ways of Knowing |
| | W | 21-Feb | Ecological Footprints |
| | F | 23-Feb | Campus Sustainability Observations |
| 4 | M | 26-Feb | Campus Tour |
| | W | 28-Feb | Consumption |
| | F | 1-Mar | Consumption |
| 5 | M | 4-Mar | Waste |
| | W | 6-Mar | Ecological Footprint and Sustainability Actions |
| | F | 8-Mar | Fashion Industry |
| 6 | M | 11-Mar | Fashion Industry |
| | W | 13-Mar | Fashion Industry |
| | F | 15-Mar | Sustainable Economies |
| 7 | M | 18-Mar | Sustainable Development Goals |
| | W | 20-Mar | Sustainable Development Goals |
| | F | 22-Mar | Sustainable Development Goals |
| 8 | 25-Mar – 29-Mar | | No Class - Spring Break |
| 9 | M | 1-Apr | Agriculture and Food |
| | W | 3-Apr | Agriculture and Food |
| | F | 5-Apr | Sustainable Agriculture |
| 10 | M | 8-Apr | Sustainable Agriculture |
| | W | 10-Apr | Hydrology |
| | F | 12-Apr | Hydrology |
| 11 | M | 15-Apr | Big Water Problems - Groundwater |
| | W | 17-Apr | Big Water Problems - Groundwater |
| | F | 19-Apr | Environmental Justice - Water |
| 12 | M | 22-Apr | Environmental Justice - Water |
| | W | 24-Apr | Climate Science |
| | F | 26-Apr | UWO Sustainability Project Group Work |
| 13 | M | 29-Apr | WI Climate Change |
| | W | 1-May | WI Climate Change |
| | F | 3-May | Climate Crisis - EnRoads |
| 14 | M | 6-May | Climate Crisis - Resilience |
| | W | 8-May | Climate Crisis - Resilience |
| | F | 10-May | UWO Sustainability Presentations |
| 15 | M | 13-May | UWO Sustainability Presentations |
| | W | 15-May | Sustainable Futures |
| | F | 17-May | Course Wrap Up |

ES 102 Preliminary Schedule*

*Course schedule changes will be announced in class and updated on Canvas. If any substantive changes are made to the schedule or assignments, notification will be provided in a timely manner and a revised syllabus will be made available.

Reading and assignment due dates are listed on Canvas