CRN 20487
HNRS SS 1520 Perspectives in Social Science
Sustainability: What It Is and How to Do It
Weber State University
Fall 2013
Community Engaged Learning (CEL) Designation

Professors: Dr. Hal Crimmel, Dr. Alice Mulder, Jenn Bodine
Meeting Place: Stewart Library 227
Meeting Time: MWF 10:30-11:20

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Required Texts:
Alan Weisman, The World Without Us
Thomas A. Easton. Environmental Studies, Fourth Edition
Handouts and readings on WSU Canvas

Course Description:

This introductory course offers an integrative, multi-disciplinary approach to sustainability. It connects disciplines and ideas from the sciences to the humanities, and provides students with a broad background in sustainability concepts, theory and practice through the modules listed below. In this course students have opportunities to make connections between disciplines, between their own lives and the physical world, and between their own lives and the social, economic, and political spheres. The course also provides a structured opportunity for students to practice community-engaged learning and student research.

Specifically, the course focuses on the topics of ecology basics, climate change science, environmental thought, environmental economic policy, current/contemporary environmental issues, land use and the built environment (sustainable planning, energy conservation, renewables, green technology) among others. Students completing the course will next semester be ready to work as a WSU Environmental Ambassador for the Office of Sustainability, where they could plan, contribute to, or implement projects that grow out of their academic work in this class.

Course-Specific Learning Outcomes that students will demonstrate by the completion of the course are:

- knowledge of key concepts and terms relevant to ecology, sustainability, and environmental thought
- knowledge of specific issues such as climate change, air and water quality, and energy conservation
- knowledge of some sustainability implementation and assessment tools
- knowledge and experience with community-engaged learning practices

Honors Student Learning Outcomes

The Honors learning outcomes for this class include:
- appreciation for the interrelationship of things, and the multiple perspectives from which a subject can be addressed
- the comprehension of abstract arguments and the ability to move between the general and the particular
- informed interest in current issues and events
Social Sciences General Education Mission Statement

**Mission statement:** The mission of the Social Science general education area is twofold: 1- to provide students with a basic understanding of humans and their behavior within their environments; and 2 - to assist students in their efforts to contribute to society in their particular professions and as responsible citizens of their various communities.

Social Sciences Learning Outcomes for Honors Classes

**Learning outcomes:** Social sciences general education classes must accomplish three out of five student learning outcomes. The five possible learning outcomes are listed below, with the three for this class listed in bold.

- Describe a social science approach to studying and understanding human behavior.
- **Describe basic assumptions about humans and their behaviors from a social science perspective.**
- Explain the basic elements and operation of a sociocultural system.
- **Explain the interactions between individuals and their sociocultural and/or natural environments.**
- Apply a social science perspective to a particular issue and identify factors impacting change (past or present).

**Policies:**

Class Participation & Conduct:

Please come to class on time and prepared to discuss assigned reading and your writing. Active participation improves your final grade; lack of participation hurts your final grade. No texting once class has started.

**Attendance:** *There are no “excused absences,” but you get four absences without penalty. Every absence thereafter, regardless of reason, will reduce your final grade by two points. Eight absences or more typically results in a failing grade. Habitually arriving late to class may count toward your absence total.*

**Late papers/assignments:** All work is due in class on the assigned date. Late papers will not be accepted unless you have made prior arrangements. Late paper penalties may apply.

**Academic Dishonesty:** As specified in PPM 6-22 IV D, cheating and plagiarism violate the Student Code. Plagiarism is “the unacknowledged (uncited) use of any other person’s or group’s ideas or work.” Students found guilty of cheating or plagiarism are subject to failure of a specific assignment, or, in more serious cases, failure of the entire course.

**Core Beliefs:** According to PPM 6-22 IV, students are to “[d]etermine, before the last day to drop courses without penalty, when course requirements conflict with a student's core beliefs. If there is such a conflict, the student should consider dropping the class. A student who finds this solution impracticable may request a resolution from the instructor. This policy does not oblige the instructor to grant the request, except in those cases when a denial would be arbitrary and capricious or illegal. This request must be made to the instructor in writing and the student must deliver a copy of the request to the office of the department head. The student's request must articulate the burden the requirement would place on the student's beliefs.”

**Disability Accommodation:** PPM 3-34 notes: “When students seek accommodation in a regularly scheduled course, they have the responsibility to make such requests at the Center for Students with Disabilities (tel. 626-6413) before the beginning of the quarter [semester] in which the accommodation is being requested. When a student fails to make such arrangements, interim accommodations can be made by the instructor, pending the determination of the request for a permanent accommodation.”

**Emergency Campus Closure:** In the event of an extended campus closure, check your WSU Wildcat email account for further instructions about how to keep up with class. It will be your responsibility to check in frequently with your WSU email account in order to complete the class.
Assignments and Grades:

Your grade for the course is based on a 100-point scale. It consists of the following assignments.

- Short reflection paper #1 (400 words) (5 points)
- Short reflection paper #2 (400 words) (5 points)
- Paper (5 pages) (20 points)
- Terms and concepts take home exam (15 points)
- One Class Presentation + Environmentally-themed Community Engaged Learning Project (30 points)
- Active classroom participation and preparation: (25 points)
  - includes frequent and quality contributions to class discussions, completing assigned readings, participating in peer editing workshops, attending three Engaged Learning Series events, and working effectively in class small groups.

Community Engaged Learning Project (worth 30% of course grade)

Project topic and goal

One aim of this course is to get you engaged in implementing some aspect of sustainability with our campus community. The project this semester is a WSU community education project linked with the 2013-2014 Engaged Learning Series on theme of air.

Each student will focus on some issue associated with Northern Utah’s air quality problem drawing from one of the following topics with which air quality is linked:
- climate change
- human health and adverse affects
- economic costs (medical, businesses, residents)
- energy consumption (fossil fuels and alternatives)
- land use and transit planning
- government policy and regulation
- aesthetics/quality of life
- socio-cultural and behavioral factors

The goal of this project is to inform and stimulate reflection and consideration on the part of WSU community members regarding the various facets of the air quality issue, including how each member of the community is affected by and contributes to the problem, as well as how individuals may make changes to reduce it. The WSU community, numbering over 25,000, is larger than many small cities. As such the impacts this collective of people has on the environment are significant, particularly given that the university is mainly a “commuter campus.” Not only does the WSU community encompass a large number of people, but its members hail from the wider communities in which WSU is embedded, meaning that education of the WSU community has potential to ripple into a much wider pool.

For the student this project aims to help prepare students for civic engagement with the experience of a community education effort, including the challenges and rewards therein. Project details and requirements will be provided later in class.

*Students, with instructor permission, may choose to address another sustainability issue other than air quality. The chosen issue must be relevant to the WSU community or Utah.

Course Outline

Please note that sometimes you will be reading texts that we will not have time to discuss in class—please do not be disturbed by this. In the spirit of the Honors Program, part of the goal of this class is to expose you to as many ideas and perspectives as possible, even if we cannot always discuss them as a class!

Week One: Introduction & Preservation vs. Conservation
8/26 Assessment / Course Introduction
8/28 ES, Selection 1 (Your Environmental Studies textbook), George Perkins Marsh: selection from Man and Nature
8/30 ES, Selection 2 / John Muir: “Hetch Hetchy Valley” / Campus Tour

Week Two: Preservation vs. Conservation
9/2 No Class: Labor Day Holiday
9/6 ES, Selection 4 / Aldo Leopold: “Thinking Like a Mountain” / Reflection Paper #1 Due
9/9  *Weisman*, Prelude + Chapter 1 / discussion of CEL project
9/11  *Weisman*, Chapters 2 and 3
9/13  *Weisman*, Chapters 4 and 5

Week Four: Exploring the Workings of Humans and Nature: *The World Without US*
9/16  *Weisman*, Chapters 6 and 7 / Reflection Paper #2 Due
9/18  *Weisman*, Chapters 8 and 9
9/20  *Weisman*, Chapter 10 and 11

9/23  *Weisman*, Chapters 12 and 13
9/25  *Weisman*, Chapters 13 and 14
9/27  *Weisman*, Chapters 15 and 16

Week Six: Concluding *The World Without Us* and Getting to Ecological Basics (ecosystems, cycles, ecosystem services)
9/30  *Weisman*, Chapters 17, 18, 19 and Coda
10/1  ES, Selection 10 / “Ecosystems and Human Well-being” / 5 Page Paper Due

Week Seven: Fundamental Roots of Environmental Problems (population, religion, ownership, culture, economics?)
10/7  ES, Selection 5 / Paul S. Martin: “Prehistoric Overkill: The Global Model”

Week Eight: Sustainability, Environmental Justice, Sustainable Development
10/14  On Honors 1520 Canvas: “Taking Sides” reading on sustainability (use Issue 1, 2 or 9)
10/16  ES, Selection 31 / Robert D. Bullard, from “Environmental Justice for All” / CEL project plan due
10/18  No Class: Fall Break

Week Nine: Environmental Issues – Food, Water, Air and Human Health
10/21  ES, Selection 25, Lester Brown ”Could Food Shortages Bring Down Civilization?”
10/25  Visit Utah Physicians for Healthy Environment - [http://www.uphe.org/](http://www.uphe.org/), read some entries from “Pollution and Health” section

Week Ten: Environmental Issues – Fossil Fuels, Air Pollution and Climate Change Basics
10/28  ES, Selection 22 / Pilkey and Young: “The Rising Sea”
11/1  In class film: *EARTH: The Operator’s Manual* / Take home exam due

Week Eleven: Sustainability Assessment and Implementation Tools
11/4  Greenhouse Gas Emissions Data Collection and Reporting (Readings on Honors 1520 Canvas)
11/6  Assessing Sustainability (Readings on Honors 1520 Canvas)
11/8  Assessing Sustainability – Building Level (Readings on Honors 1520 Canvas)

Week Twelve: Energy Conservation, Management and Renewable Energy Basics
11/11  Energy Basics, Conservation and Efficiency (Readings on Honors 1520 Canvas)
11/13  Energy Management Tools (Readings on Honors 1520 Canvas)
11/15  Renewable Energy Basics (Readings on Honors 1520 Canvas)
Week Thirteen: Sustainable Transportation and Paths to Sustainability
11/18  Sustainable Transportation (Readings on Honors 1520 Canvas)
11/22  No Class: Thanksgiving Holiday

Week Fourteen: Facing Environmental Issues - Paths to Sustainability
11/25  The Economics of Sustainability (Readings on Honors 1520 Canvas)
11/27  Fostering Sustainable Behavior (Readings on Honors 1520 Canvas)
11/29  ES, Selection 38 / Jared Diamond, from Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or to Succeed

Week Fifteen: Final Projects Due
12/2  Presentation of Final Projects
12/4  Presentation of Final Projects / CEL Project Journal and Final Reflection due
12/6  Presentation of Final Projects

Final Exam Week
12/11  Post-Class Assessment from 10:30 a.m. - 12:20 p.m.

Grading Criteria Used for Honors 1520 Essays

A:
An essay or paper in this category:
• is well developed and well organized
• clearly illustrates and develops key ideas
• displays a high degree of inventiveness & originality
• displays a sophisticated and superior use of language
• demonstrates syntactic variety
• is virtually free from errors in mechanics, usage, sentence structure, and diction

B:
An essay or paper in this category:
• is well organized and developed, though it may have small flaws in organization or paragraphing
• illustrates and develops some key ideas
• displays good control of language and a consistent tone
• demonstrates some syntactic variety
• is generally free from errors in mechanics, usage, sentence structure, and diction

C:
An essay or paper in this category:
• is adequately well developed and organized
• illustrates and develops one or two key ideas
• displays capable and accurate use of language
• may display occasional errors in mechanics, usage, sentence structure, and diction, but not a consistent pattern of such errors

D:
An essay or paper in this category may also have positive qualities while exhibiting one or more of the following:
• displays weakness in development or organization
• reveals a number of errors in mechanics, usage, sentence structure, or diction in an otherwise adequate paper
• suggests a lack of understanding of the assignment, a marked lack of understanding of the texts under discussion in the paper, or a superficial rendering of argument. With the exception of the summary essay assignment, papers that merely summarize fall in this category.