

SUSTAINABILITY SEMINAR

BE THE CHANGE

Counts towards a GE - can be recommended or required for some majors for that GE

Course Overview

What is sustainability? How can one voice shift the paradigm and inspire others to do the same? How can these individual voices come together to mobilize collective action? How can college campuses be utilized as a palate for global change?

These are just a few of the key themes and lessons behind this course, which focuses on the impacts behind social and environmental responsibility, campaigns and movements. At the end of this course, students will have brainstormed and successfully implemented a collaborative campus project that addresses a key issue regarding environmental sustainability. Students will be well informed and educated on the term “sustainability” and how it applies to their every day lives as global citizens. Students will discuss the impact and relevance of a variety of environmental movements on their college campus, in their community and around the world.

Semester Long Class

August 26 through second week of December

August/September – Week 1 – Introduction to the course

What is Sustainability?

- Entry Survey – will evaluate each student’s initial understanding of the term sustainability, what it means to them and which environmental challenges they are most concerned about
- Interactive Exercise – plan a scavenger hunt to engage students in learning about campus and community locations that support sustainability and ethical business practices. (This may include sustainable businesses and buildings around campus, farm-to-table restaurants, urban gardens or farms, green grocers, parks, etc.)
- What is sustainability? (Theme of the first two lectures) – this topic will be very interactive
 - o Professors/teachers will be asked to gather as many responses as possible from students to use as a guide for the class
- HW: Short essay assignment asking students about their personal background and what drew them to take the class

September – Week 2 – Social movements

- Discuss the history of major environmental movements (in the U.S. and around the world) and how they affected generations, politics and the planet
 - o Assess: Regarding these historical movements, what worked and what didn’t? How can we apply this wisdom in today’s society?
- Discuss sustainability movements and initiatives specific to your campus (history and future visions)
 - o Assess: Which were most important? Effective? Why?
- HW: Read (insert relevant articles/passages here) and respond with a blog post.

September – Week 3 – Passion Projects

- Introduce and discuss the meaning behind “passion projects”
 - o The class will be asked to evaluate where people’s passions lie and determine if there is overlap with certain passions (ex. does everyone value a common aspect of the environment)?
- Student’s begin research on a passion project
 - o Guideline: “If you knew you couldn’t fail, what change would you make on campus.”

September – Week 4 – Field Trips

- Get the students out of the classroom and into the action!
 - o Prepare a class trip to a local farm, farmers market, sustainable institution on campus, national park, environmental non-profit, etc.
 - o Students will prepare any questions they have for the representatives of the location they will be visiting. Preparation for the field trip will take place during the first class of that week, and the actual trip will take place during the second class of that week.
- HW: Short essay homework assignment on what the student took away from the field trip – what did they learn, what was most interesting, what was more inspiring, etc.

Month of October

- Focus primarily on Project Green Challenge (projectgreenchallenge.com) – encourage all students to participate (mandatory), either in groups or individually
 - o Class discussion on it's importance and impact
- Days off from class to work on completing challenges or “work days” where students can come to class to focus on completing a challenge
- Fun exercises in coordination with challenge themes while keeping student's passion project in mind for any relevant days.
- Class discussion about challenge content
 - o Leader board to track class progress and allow for extra credit points for students in leadership positions on the board

November: Week 1

- Focus will return back to student's passion project outlines
- Begin class presentations of everyone's unique passion projects
- Select one project that appeals to the class
 - o Using a 2/3 vote, the idea that wins will be selected as the class project to be implemented on campus

November – Weeks 2 & 3

- Brief lecture on successful campaigning, potential challenges and wisdom behind best practices
 - o Professor/teacher will prepare relevant readings, videos, and inspiration to guide students
- Assign committees with specific tasks to launch the project into action
- HW:
 - o Research the project – have other schools implemented similar ideas? What were some successes? Challenges?
 - o Come up with a list of stakeholders on campus who can help move the project forward
 - o Set up meetings in advance and be prepared with an outline of the project or even a presentation
- Invite a major stakeholder come speak to class to host a Q&A panel

November – Week 4

- Use this week to continue and complete the work necessary for the passion project
 - o Assess: Are the students actually able to make this change on campus? What are the tangible end goals?

Final Week

- Presentations on each committees' research and work in regards to the project
- Final Report – Students will be asked to collect their work and organize it in a research paper, as if it were to be published in a journal
 - o This will count as 50% of the student's grade
 - o Students will be able to submit their work to TTG's EcoEngine website
- Exit Survey – evaluate the student's progress in becoming a more conscious person, assessment of the class, etc.
 - o What does sustainability mean to the student now? How is that definition different from the first week of class and what caused that difference? How has the class influenced the student?