evpp480sp12: Syllabus

Welcome to Sustainability in Action (EVPP 480)

Course Syllabus

Instructor: Dann Sklarew, Ph.D.

Office: Mason Hall 217i

Office Hours: Fridays 2:15-4:15pm, or via skype whenever "available" there.

Email: dsklarew@gmu.edu

Voicemail: 703-993-2012 (but try electronic media first)

Course Description

In the wake of global concerns about environmental change, the issue of attaining sustainability has become internationally important. To attain sustainability requires action at environmental, social and economic levels. To provide students with valuable and tangible experience in practical aspects of realizing sustainability goals and to and transfer theory into practice, this course allows students to engage in real-world, sustainability-related projects that provide benefits for a target community.

Working in interdisciplinary teams, students will identify and attempt to solve a sustainability-related problem or address a sustainability-related need in a specific target community. Priority will be given to sustainability projects on the GMU campus or the local community. However, options for other relevant projects will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Many of the class meetings will be seminar sessions involving students and guest speakers from the GMU faculty and outside speakers dealing with sustainability issues in their teaching, research and practice. These sessions will focus on how sustainability is viewed by different disciplines and will provide practical information on how practitioners in different fields implement sustainability in their work. Presentations by guest speakers will be followed by student-facilitated discussions of readings relevant to the seminar topic. These readings will be chosen at least one week beforehand by the guest speakers and the student facilitators. The remaining class meetings will be designed to support student groups' work on projects and final presentations.

Course Prerequisites

This is intended to be the capstone course for the B.A. in Environmental and Sustainability Studies and the minor in Sustainability Studies. To enroll in this course undergraduate students must have completed or be concurrently enrolled in all other required general education courses. Prior sustainability and/or environmental studies course is also highly recommended; prior knowledge of such material is assumed.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:
- identify and effectively address sustainability needs in their target "community";
- utilize appropriate sustainability resources effectively;
- recognize and appreciate the interdisciplinary nature of sustainability;
- transform sustainability theory into practice, through use of action research.
- **(Any YOU would like to add or change? If so, please do so within 3 days of the first class!)**
  - **Apply sustainability in our lives.**
  - **Be more proactive about the environment.**
  - **Make sustainability more appealing.**
  - **Make sustainability more feasible for (and proliferate) green businesses.**
  - **Develop sustainability action skills, through campaigns, theories behind actions, planning and transferring into action.**

Materials

For or discussion, we will be using NWEI's *Choices for Sustainable Living* ("CSL"). The first chapter can be downloaded here. The whole will be available directly from the publisher for purchase (at cost) during the first day of class, cutting out the middle man in terms of cost to you. If you prefer to access a copy via 2-hour reserve in the Johnson Center library, please inform your instructor to place such on reserve for you. Other materials identified by professor or students will posted to our references section.

Graded Course Components

1) This course requires students to complete at least 50 hours of project-related service outside the class period and to attend 15 class meetings (~2 hours each -- OPTION: 10 class meetings of 3 hours each, your preference?), observe one local government sustainability meeting, and contribute to delivering 1 Earth Week [or related sustainability] event over the course of the semester. (20 sessions in all, but you pick the government meeting -- see Session 2 options below -- and Earth Week event.)

2) Student START teams will plan and implement their projects in consultation with their instructor or a mentor from the community served by the project. For projects on the George Mason campus, the mentor will likely be an representative from the Office of Sustainability.

3) Student teams will submit a formal project proposal in the 3rd week, refined and finalized by the 4th week. Detailed guidelines and an evaluation rubric for this proposal will be provided in the 2nd week.

4) Students will report on their progress in the 8th and 12th week. Detailed guidelines and an evaluation rubric for these progress reports will be provided in advance.

5) Students will document their journals and projects in a final, on-line portfolio. Detailed portfolio guidelines and an evaluation rubric will be provided. Portfolio will include written components to satisfy general education synthesis requirement for demonstration of competency in written communication. (This course is being submitted to meet for General Education synthesis requirements, but has not been approved for such yet.)

6) At the final course meeting, students will participate in a public symposium, making formal presentations on their projects

to the class, along with a panel of guest faculty and community mentors. Detailed presentation guidelines and an evaluation rubric will be provided; this presentation will satisfy the general education synthesis requirement for demonstration of competency in oral communication.

7) Each student will select and circulate readings relevant to one of the weekly themes, and will facilitate discussion of these readings that week.

8) Participation in seminar discussions will also be graded (including providing readings and facilitation of discussion on a designated day.)

Grading

Community Mentor's Evaluation of Project—100 points (less 2 pts for each service hour recorded less than 50)
Final Presentation—200 points
Portfolio—400 points
Participation—100 points

Grading scale:

A+	1000-970	**C+**	799-770
A	969-930	**C**	769-730
A-	929-900	**C-**	729-700
B+	899-870	**D**	699-600
B	869-830	**F**	599-0
B-	829-800		

Course Web Site and Submission Policy

Updated syllabus, all electronic course materials, announcements, rubrics, etc., will be posted to our course website, http://evpp480sp12.pbworks.com. Wherever practical, written assignments will also be submitted through this site, in order to reduce paper usage and ensure proper logging of submissions. If you have trouble accessing the site, please contact your instructor.

Assignments are to be submitted **before** the beginning of class on the day due. Late work will be reduced one grade per day. No work will be accepted over one week late without a valid written medical excuse or notice of death in the family.

Honor Code

When you enrolled in this course you agreed to abide by the university's Honor Code. The Honor Code does not preclude collaborative work, such as informal discussions and studying in communities. Nor does it preclude assigned group work. The Honor Code does require that work you, as an individual, turn in ultimately be the product of your own individual synthesis or integration of ideas, and that the work a group turns in ultimately be the product of the group's collective ideas. If you are uncertain of the line between collaboration and cheating, see an instructor. As always, cite your sources. If you do not, it is plagiarism. Plagiarism means lifting someone else's ideas or words and presenting them as your own without proper attribution of the source. This includes all sources, including those found on the Internet. Use an approved citation method, such as MLA, APA, etc.
Much of our class time will be spent working in teams and individually on problem sets. These problem
sets form the core of the course. They will encourage you to sharpen your conversation skills

Accomodation for Students With Disabilities

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please communicate such to your professor

and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

Sick Policy

If you are too sick to come to class, have high fever, etc., please inform your professor ASAP. Insofar as no assignment is due that day, you will generally be offered attend in via [skype] webinar or provided with one or more optional make-up sessions (see "optional" items on schedule below). Assignments which are not submitted on-time on sick days will still be marked according to "Late Work" criteria above.

Email Policy

GMU faculty and staff may only correspond with students through the students' GMU assigned email accounts. Emails sent from other accounts will not necessarily be answered.

Examinations

There are none. (Hurray!)

Other Information

See Schedule.