

Sustainability in Action (EVPP 480-001)
Syllabus – Spring 2013

Credit Hours: 4

Meeting Times: Fridays 10:30am – 2:20pm

Room: Innovation 132

Class Website: <http://evpp480sp13.pbworks.com>

Instructors:

"Dr. Dann" Sklarew, Ph.D. (co-instructor)	Allison Richards, M.S. (co-instructor)
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Course Description

In the wake of global concerns about environmental change, the issue of attaining sustainability has become internationally important. To achieving 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 transfer theory into practice, this course allows students to engage in real-world, sustainability-related action research projects that provide benefits for a target community.

Working in interdisciplinary teams, students will identify and work 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 nearby 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 realized by different disciplines. They 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. The remaining class meetings will be designed to support student groups' work on action research 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 coursework is also highly recommended, as prior knowledge of such material is expected.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this course, students should demonstrate "Sustainability in Action" (SA) competence by being able to:

1. Identify and effectively address sustainability needs in their target "community" (SA-1);
2. Utilize appropriate sustainability resources effectively (SA-2);
3. Recognize and appreciate the interdisciplinary nature of sustainability (SA-3);
4. Transform sustainability theory into practice, through use of action research (SA-4).

In addition, to fulfill Mason-wide expectations for integrating scholarship into classes, students will pursue scholarly inquiry (SI) and Creation of Scholarship (CS), specifically becoming competent in their ability to:

1. Articulate and refine a focused and manageable ACTION RESEARCH question that appropriately addresses key aspects of a priority SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE (SI-1).
2. Gather evidence appropriate to the question (SI-3b)
3. Situate ACTION RESEARCH within a broader context (SI-4b)
4. Report and present ACTION RESEARCH (process, results, lessons learned) to peers, panel of guest faculty and community mentors using appropriate scholarly conventions [see #6 of graded course components below] (SI-3d, CS-3)
5. Demonstrate awareness of broader implications of ACTION RESEARCH (CS-4)

Finally, in order to meet the expectations for a General Education Synthesis course, students should be able to:

1. Communicate effectively in both oral and written forms, applying appropriate rhetorical standards (e.g., audience adaptation, language, argument, organization, evidence, etc.). (GES-1)
2. Using perspectives from two or more disciplines, connect issues in a given field to wider intellectual, community or societal concerns. (GES-2)
3. Apply critical thinking skills to evaluate the quality, credibility and limitations of an argument or a solution using appropriate evidence or resources. (GES-3)

(Course activities are designed to simultaneously address multiple learning objectives.)

Materials

For our discussions, we will be using NWEI's [Choices for Sustainable Living](#) ("CSL"). The first chapter can be downloaded [here](#). The whole will be available directly in the GMU Bookstore or from the publisher for purchase (at cost).

John C. Derbach's [Acting as if Tomorrow Matters](#) (also available as ebook) may serve as a supplementary reference, while this and other materials identified by professor or students will be posted to our [references](#) section.

If you prefer to access a copy of either via 2-hour reserve in the Johnson Center library, please inform your instructor(s) to place such on reserve for you.

Graded Course Components

1) This course requires students to:

- attend **15 class meetings** (or arrange make-up with instructor(s) for any missed sessions);
- complete at least **50 hours of project-related service**, including 10+ in support of others' START projects and 5+ contributing to delivery of 1 Earth Week [or related] sustainability event over the course of the semester – with hours recorded on our [service log](#); and
- observe **one pre-approved local government sustainability meeting**. (See government schedule.)

2) Each week, a (START) team of 2–4 students will select and circulate readings relevant to one of the weekly themes in CSL, and will **lead discussion** of these and the CSL readings for that week. Readings must include at least 1 peer-reviewed journal article per student on the team. For each such article, that student should present a brief summary of its contribution or significance to that week's CSL discussion. The team will also open and facilitate the discussion (see guidance on CSL p. 8), then prepare notes with highlights from the in-class discussion. Notes should be posted to our wiki for that session 48 hours before the next in-class session (so that points might be incorporated into that next week's session).

3) **Participation** in seminar discussions will also be scored. (Please read materials in advance and come prepared to share your perspective and/or questions.)

4) **Sustainability Transformation Action Research Teams (STARTs)** will plan and implement their action research 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 may be a representative from the Office of Sustainability or another staffer identified (with instructor's guidance, as needed):

- Student teams will present a formal project proposal in the 3rd week, refined and finalized and written version submitted by the 4th week. Detailed guidelines and an evaluation rubric for this proposal will be

provided.

- 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.
- At the final course meeting, students will participate in a public **action research [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.

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.

Grading

1. Discussion leadership w/readings, opening, facilitation and summary (team) —100 points
2. Participation (individual) —100points
3. START Report and Final Presentation (team) —400 points
4. Service Hours (individual) —200 points (less 4 pts for each service hour recorded less than 50)
5. Portfolio— (individual) 200 points

Grading scale:

970-1000 A+	870-899 B+	770-799 C+	600-699 D
930 - 969 A	830-869 B	730-769 C	000-599 F
900 - 929 A-	800-829 B-	700-729 C-	

Course Web Site and Submission Policy

Updated syllabus, all electronic course materials, announcements, rubrics, etc., will be posted to our course website, <http://evpp480sp13.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

Accommodation 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, unless medical excuse provided by your doctor's office.

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](#).

Footnotes

Any learning objectives YOU would like to add or change? If so, please do so within 3 days of the first class!

Schedule

Date	Session	Objectives/Outputs	Inputs (Assignments Due &/or Materials Reviewed)
Jan 25	01	1.Introductions (topic, people, objectives, format, schedule) 2.Formation of START teams (focus and discussion session picked) 3.Prepare for next time (see "Inputs" on next row)	5.Video welcome 6.Course wiki URL 7.Presentations by instructor intro.: advancing sustainability as our focus, and action research as our means.
Feb 1	02	6.Any Sustainability Progress in the USA? (faculty presentation) 7.CSL1: A Call to Sustainability – discussion led by START X students 8.START project details , rubric, schedule, Q&A (faculty-led) 9.START problem statements , and their significance justified, by teams, with feedback from Mason sustainability panelists (invited from AEGreen, Mason Dining and the Office of Sustainability) 10. STARTs meet to refine problem statements, develop START proposals (w/panelists' ad hoc feedback)	Discussion leads – post links to readings on references page by 11:59pm on Monday, prepare opener, select facilitator & note-taker. All read: CSL Chp. 1 and readings provided by discussion leads (note reflections in your journal); (optional:) ATM Part I. STARTs – post draft problem statements and their significance (with evidence of preliminary research) to your respective START pages. All – document service hours this week in service log .
Feb 8	03	START proposals drafted (by noon), presented for feedback at noon (feedback from faculty peers)	STARTs – post summary of proposal to your START pages, including any baseline data. All – document service hours this week in service log .
Feb	04	4.STARTs summarize updates made to proposals, based	STARTs – post refined project proposal,

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15		<p>on session 03 feedback.</p> <p>5. Ecological principles in a nutshell (faculty presentation)</p> <p>6. CSL2: Ecological Principles – discussion led by START X students</p> <p>7. Service Learning Market – Students (and guests?) share START needs for peer assistance + ideas other service opportunities. (Ideas for Mar. 8 &/or Apr. 12 class activity?)</p>	<p>linked from to your START page, including baseline and call for volunteers (if needed)</p> <p>All read: CSL 2 and readings provided by discussion leads (note reflections in your journal).</p> <p>All identify: At least 2 service learning opportunities for students to put sustainability into action before May, 2013. (One may be from your START project.)</p> <p>All – document service hours this week in service log.</p>
Feb 22	05	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CSL4: Community – discussion led by START X students, (any invited guests, team, maybe Mason's Sustainability LLC RA or other reps...?) • Service Learning Progress & Plans – students report on first month service learning actions, discuss any lessons learned about putting sustainability into action, and share opportunities and next steps for service learning in March and April. 	<p>All read: CSL 4 and readings provided by discussion leads (note reflections in your journal).</p> <p>All – document service hours this week in service log.</p>
Mar 1	06	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's Driving Sustainability Changes? (faculty presentation) • CSL5: Transportation – discussion led by START X students, with guests invited from Mason and Mobility Labs 	<p>All read: CSL 5 and readings provided by discussion leads (note reflections in your journal); (optional:) ATM Part II.</p> <p>All – document service hours this week in service log.</p>

Date	Session	Objectives/Outputs	Inputs (Assignments Due &/or Materials Reviewed)
Mar 8	07	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Team time to prepare for START Progress Report #1 (performance assessment, obstacles overcome) Optional: class community service activity (community garden, trash pick-up, other?) 	All – document service hours this week in service log.
Mar 22	08	START Progress Report #1 presentations (performance assessment, obstacles overcome)	STARTs – post progress report to your START pages. All – document service hours this week in service log.
Mar 29	09	SAKURA MATSURI (meet at Mason Pond with any pot luck contributions in hand) 6.Service Learning Progress & Earth Week Plans – students report on second month of service learning actions, discuss lessons learned, and plan for Earth Week service activities. 7.CSL3: Food – discussion led by START X students, with guests invited from Mason Dining (Sodexo) and Mason Office of Sustainability	All read: CSL 3 and readings provided by discussion leads (note reflections in your journal) All who want to picnic: Please bring a pot luck contribution. All – document service hours this week in service log.
Apr 5	10	1.What's preventing greater progress towards sustainability? (faculty presentation and discussion) 2.What have we learned (so far) from attending government meetings? (faculty-guided roundtable discussion) 3.CSL6: Consumption and Economy – discussion led by START X students, with guests invited from Masons Auxiliary Enterprises Green team (AEGreen), anywhere else, team?	All read: CSL6 and readings provided by discussion leads (note reflections in your journal); (optional:) ATM Part III. All – document service hours this week in service log.

Date	Session	Objectives/Outputs	Inputs (Assignments Due &/or Materials Reviewed)
Apr 12	<u>11</u>	1.Team time to prepare for START Progress Report #2 (performance + initial impacts) 2.Optional: class community service activity (community garden, trash pick-up, other?)	All – document service hours this week in <u>service log</u>.
Apr 19	<u>12</u>	1. START Progress Report #2 (performance + initial impacts) 2. Implement Earth Week service learning opportunities	STARTs – post progress report to your <u>START</u> pages. All – document service hours this week in <u>service log</u>.
Apr 26	<u>13</u>	1. CSL7: Visions of Sustainability – discussion led by START X students (any guests?) 2. Implement and report on Earth Month service learning opportunities (Part 2)	All read: CSL7 and readings provided by discussion leads (note reflections in your journal) All – document service hours this week in <u>service log</u>.
May 3	<u>14</u>	1. Hereafter, how can we accelerate progress towards sustainability? Any new insights from service learning? From government meetings attended? From journal insights? (faculty presentation and group discussion) 2. START Symposium preparation , including consultation with faculty and peers 3.Course Evaluations	All – submit journals (at least 7 entries) to faculty via email (or paper, if multimedia) All – document remaining service hours this week in <u>service log</u>.
May 10	<u>15</u>	START Symposium & Course Wrap-up	STARTs post and present final presentations of action research projects , start to finish, including reflections, advice for follow-up