

syllabus

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Sustainability in Action (EVPP 480-001 and -002) Syllabus – Spring 2017

Meeting Times: Fridays 10:30am – 2:20pm**Room:** Innovation Hall 215C**Class Website:** <http://evpp480sp17.pbworks.com>**Credit Hours:** 4

Instructors

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Office Hours: by appointment

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(but try electronic media first)

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Course Description

In the wake of the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the international community, the issue of attaining sustainability has become especially timely and important. Sustainable development incorporates and integrates environmental, social and economic concerns. To provide students with valuable and tangible experience in practical aspects of realizing sustainability goals, and 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. Projects can be focused on the GMU campus or the nearby community, or on other target communities. Options for relevant projects will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Many of the class meetings will be seminar sessions involving lectures by the course instructors, and presentations by guest speakers dealing with sustainability issues in their teaching, research and/or daily practices. These sessions will focus on how sustainability is realized by different disciplines, stakeholders and approaches. They will provide practical information on how practitioners in different fields implement sustainability in their work. Presentations by guest speakers will be followed by 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.

The course is taught in 2 sessions, 1 by Dr. Dann Sklarew (001), and the other by Dr. Ingrid Visseren (002). Class will mostly meet in "plenary" (both sessions in one classroom), but sometimes the group will split up into their sessions. See schedule for details.

Course Prerequisites

The course 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

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 and faculty 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 Mason Core 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.). (MCS-1)
2. Using perspectives from two or more disciplines, connect issues in a given field to wider intellectual, community or societal concerns. (MCS-2)
3. Apply critical thinking skills to evaluate the quality, credibility and limitations of an argument or a solution using appropriate evidence or resources. (MCS-3)

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

Materials

Useful information resources identified by professor or students for this course are provided on our references wiki page. Highlights among these materials are –

Textbooks:

1. NWEI's Choices for Sustainable Living ("CSL"), used for our discussions. 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).
2. John C. Dernbach's Acting as if Tomorrow Matters (also available as an ebook) may serve as a supplementary reference.

Academic literature to be used in lectures and class discussions (see references).

(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.)

The Infoguide for EVPP480 is a helpful research tool for your discussion leadership and STARTs (action research teams), created by GMU Research Librarian Kathy Butler (Kbutle18@gmu.edu).

The [#evpp480](#) hashtag on Twitter is also used to share news, information etc., pertinent to "actioneers" (students and alumni of this course). Please feel free to use it to explore and contribute your own tweeted tidbits!

Graded Course Components

1) This course requires students to:

- attend **15 class meetings** (or arrange make-up activity with instructor(s) for any missed sessions);
- complete at least **40 hours of project-related service**, for example:
 - in support of others' START projects and/or
 - contributing to delivery of 1 Earth Week [or related] sustainability event over the course of the semester;

with hours recorded in a timely fashion (i.e., within 1 week) on our [service log](#); and

2) Students are required to read the **academic literature** on the 3 themes of the literature (action research, SDGs, or transformative change), and actively contribute to the discussion on these topics. They are required to report on the reading for 1 of the themes in their portfolio (see under 5).

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 and/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, per [discussion leadership rubric](#).
2. Participation (individual) —150 points, per [participation rubric](#).
3. START Report and Final Presentation (team) — 400 points per [start rubric](#).
4. Service Hours (individual) — 200 points per [service learning rubric](#) (5 points for each service hour recorded in full on the [service log](#)).
5. Wiki Journal — (individual) 150 points (30 points per entry x 5 entries) per [journal rubric](#).

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://evpp480sp17.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](#) and pledge "not to **cheat, plagiarize, steal**, and/or **lie** in matters related to academic work."

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.

Finally, please note that accurate reporting of service hours – which may be audited – is also important part of academic integrity. Misrepresentation of service learning hours will be considered a violation of the Honor Code.

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.

Need Help?

We're here for you!

Librarian Liaison for Environmental Science and Policy (EVPP) Courses

She may be able to assist you in your research for any aspect of this course (service, action research or CSL session leadership). Her contact information is:

Kathy Butler
A244 Fenwick Library
kbutle18@gmu.edu
703-993-3341

The Writing Center

The Writing Center is staffed by both undergraduate and graduate tutors, who can help improve your writing skills through direct support on specific assignments or in general, face to face or on-line. <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>

Learning Services

Learning Services provides a variety of experience based learning opportunities through which students explore a wide range of academic concerns. [Study skills workshops](#) and individual study skills counseling provide learning experiences to improve academic skills. Information about tutors available through many Mason academic departments can be found on our [Tutoring](#) page. <http://caps.gmu.edu/learningservices/>

Office of Student Support (OSSCM) and Resources for Crises

OSSCM -- <http://osscm.gmu.edu> -- provides comprehensive (and confidential) services for your safety and well-being.

Some students struggling to make ends meet may be trading off studies for shelter, food, healthcare or other human needs. Others are in crisis in other ways. If you or a friend are facing any of these sorts of challenges, please help others to help you! Here are two lists of local resources, originally compiled by an EVPP 480 START team in Spring 2014:

- On campus resources: <http://osscm.gmu.edu/resources/campus-resources>
- Off-campus resources: <http://osscm.gmu.edu/resources/off-campus-resources>

We hope these resources may help you to achieve lasted personal security, sustainability and well-being!

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

CAPS provides a wide range of services to students by a staff of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors. CAPS individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs are designed to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance. <http://caps.gmu.edu/>

WAVES

WAVES helps students develop and maintain healthy lifestyles through one on one support, and interactive programs and resources. Topics addressed include healthy relationships, stress management, nutrition, sexual assault, drug and alcohol use and sexual health. <http://waves.gmu.edu/>

Other Information

See [schedule](#).

Footnotes

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

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