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Sustainability in Action (EVPP 480-001) Syllabus Summer 2014

Credit Hours: 4**Meeting Times:** Tues/Thurs. 10am – 4pm from May 22 to June 19, 2014**Room:** Music/Theater Building 1008**Class Website:** <http://evpp480su14.pbworks.com>**Instructor:****"Dr. Dann" Sklarew, Ph.D.**

Office: David King Hall Room 3018 or via skype:

Office Hours: immediately after class,
or via skype whenever "available" there.Email: dsklarew@gmu.eduVoicemail: 703-993-2012
(but try electronic media first)**Contents below:**

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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 at personal, home and community scales.

Working in interdisciplinary "START" 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 ongoing sustainability projects on the GMU campus or the nearby community. However, options for other relevant projects – feasibly implemented during our course period – will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Many of the class meetings will be seminar or workshop 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 in different aspects of one's life. They will provide practical information. Presentations by guest speakers will be complemented 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

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) also serves reference, while this and other materials identified by professor or students will 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 professor to place such on reserve for you.

Graded Course Components

- 1) This course requires students to:
 - attend **9 class meetings** (or arrange make-up activity with instructor(s) for any partially or wholly missed sessions) = at least 15 half-day sessions;
 - complete at least **20 hours of project-related service**, with hours recorded on our [service log](#); and
- 2) Across several sessions, 1-2 students will select and circulate readings relevant to one the session themes in CSL, and will **lead discussion** of these and the CSL readings for that sessions. 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 24 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)** implement ongoing action research projects in consultation with their instructor, alumni from prior cohorts of this course, or a mentor from the community served by the project. For projects on the George Mason campus, the mentor may be representative from the Office of Sustainability or another staffer identified (with instructor's guidance, as needed):

- Student teams will present their work plan in the 2nd week (sessions 2–3), refined and finalized by the end of that week. Detailed guidelines and an evaluation rubric for this proposal will be provided.
- Students will report on their progress in the 3rd and 4th 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 —10 points, per [discussion leadership rubric](#).
2. Participation (individual) — 90 points, per [participation rubric](#).
3. START Report and Final Presentation (team) — 200 points per [start rubric](#).
4. Service Hours (individual) — 100 points (5 pts. for each service hour recorded in full on the [service log](#), up to 20 total hours).
5. [WordPress Blog](#)/Journal (individual) — 100 points (20 pts. per entry x 5 entries) per [journal rubric](#).

Grading scale:

Multiplying the total points above by 2 will be used to produce a final score between 0 and 1000. This score will be allocated to a letter grade as follows:

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://evpp480su14.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 10% (from top score) 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.

Examinations

There are none. (Hurray!)

Other Information

See [schedule](#).

GMU supports a writing center 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/>

GMU Counseling and Psychological Services (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 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/>

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/>

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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