**Sustainability in Action**

**Syllabus • Fall 2016**

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**Time and Place**: Wednesdays 6 - 9 pm, Lane 100

**Course Goal:** Expose students to the wide array of sustainability topics and potential careers

**Course Description:**

The need to create a world that is sustainable not only for people but for the environment is undeniable and the need for expertise from a wide variety of field is increasingly obvious. The world will need climate scientists, psychologists, engineers, planners, entrepreneurs and people with many other skills and areas of expertise. Which one will you be? Each week we will learn how a field of study relates to sustainability and how it can be applied to create a more sustainable society. You will leave the course with an understanding of the true breadth of sustainability and the enormous amount of career opportunities available, whether you prefer analyzing data, working with people or digging in the soil.

In general the first hour of the class will be an academic presentation about the topic while the 2nd hour would be a presentation by a professional that works in one of the related fields. Guest speakers, including staff members from Tufts will talk about how their topic applies to Tufts (e.g. could you better manage bird flu by designing the Tufts environment so human risk of being bitten by mosquitos is lessened, wildlife is protected and the environment is preserved?). The remainder of the class would be reserved for student mini-presentations, discussions or other activities.

Students are required to volunteer at a local organization, job shadow or do informational interviews and present about it at the end of the semester.

**Course Reading and Other Resources**

The course reading is all online – either through links to articles and books or through PDFs and websites. This is done deliberately so the students can experience a low-impact ‘paperless’ class.

Trunk will provide access to general course information, announcements, handouts, course readings and assignments, supplemental resources, and other materials throughout the semester. You will be responsible for keeping up to date on all these materials.

**Policies**

If you will not be able to attend a class due to a religious holiday, please inform the instructors as soon as possible so that accommodations can be made. On those rare other occasions when you must be late or absent from class please let us know.

**Grades and Grading Policy**

Grades will be based on attendance and class participation and completion of individual and group activities. Grades will be calculated based on a 1,000 point scale, distributed across the following assignments:

*Blogs*: Each student will keep a weekly blog of their experiences and insights on class-related topics throughout the course of the semester. Students are encouraged to post by the Monday night before class, in order to allow time to read and comment on each other’s blogs. High standards of respect and etiquette are assumed throughout online as well as in-class interactions. Students who prefer to keep an off-line journal should contact the instructors. (11 blogs – 25 pts each)

*Class participation*: Grades for class participation will be assessed based on attendance, preparation for class, enthusiasm and contribution to forum and in class discussions. (200 pts)

*Mini Presentations*: Throughout the semester students will give a few short presentations:

1. On a particular type of climate science (40)
2. On a topic of interest in the arts and humanities (50)
3. On a climate change and health related topic (your choice) (50)
4. On your career exploration experience (60)

W*ritten assignments*: There will be several written assignments assigned throughout the semester. Forum posts: 11 posts – 20 pts each (220), comments on other people’s posts: 1-5 pts each week (9 comment periods: 45 pts; no more than 5 per week, additional comments will be taken into account as part of the class participation grade), informational interview write up: 35 pts, final forum post: 25 pts

The total breakdown is as follows.

**Written assignments**…………………………………..…...325 points (32.5%)

**Presentations**…………………………………………..…...200 points (20%)

**Blogs**.………………………………….…………………… 275 points (27.5%)

**Class participation**.……………………………………….. 200 points (20%)

**TOTAL:** 1000 points (100%)

# Course Syllabus

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| **Date** | **Topic** | **Assignments Due:**  (assignments in **bold** are written tasks) |
| Week 1: Sept 7 | **Introduction**  What is sustainability?  Why is it important?  Course Logistics, incl. volunteer/shadowing reqt  Climate Change intro |  |
| Week 2  Sept 14 | **Climate Science**  Student presentations.  **Climate CoLab**  Laur Fisher | Blog, forum post and presentation about climate science method |
| Week 3:  Sept 21 | **Just Sustainability**: Prof Agyeman 6-7 PM  **Groundwork Somerville**  Chris Mancini 8-9 PM | Blog about Laur Fisher,  forum post, forum comments on either this week or last week’s posts, questions for Julian |
| Week 4:  Sept 28 | **Community Action & behavior change**  Kathy Blume  **Business**  Sebastian Zapato, ABL | Forum post, forum comments on last week’s class (no blog due) |
| Week 5:  Oct 5 | **Waste** **Career Center** – Jim McCarthy 7 -9 | 1. Blog about use of LinkedIn and further thoughts on what you’re going to do for career exploration, 2. Create LinkedIn profile 3. Forum post (and forum comments) on last week’s class |
| Week 6:  Oct 12  Yom Kippur | **Green Buildings**  Shaun O’Rourke  Art Adler | 1. Blog: Part 1: a) Partner with someone in the class to do the “Find Alumni Outreach Activity,” b) Who will you interview for your informational interview requirement this semester? b) Reach out to them and schedule an interview – how did it go? c) What did you learn during the last class that could change the way you view/use LinkedIn? What did you learn that will impact how you do (or will) network with others?   Part 2: a) What form of waste do you think has the biggest impact on the environment? b) Which mitigation strategy most appeals to you? c) If you were asked to address a small group of your peers (in person or via social media) what would you say to them to persuade them to be more mindful about waste?   1. Set up career advising appointment 2. Forum and comments: pick a green building and describe why you think it’s interesting/green |
| Week 7:  Oct 19 | **Food and Agriculture**  Tim Griffin 6-7 PM  John Stoddard, Higher Ground Farm  Kristen Whitmore, World Peas | 1. Forum (no comments due!): Based on reading about Higher Ground and World Peas create questions for them. 2. Blog: Part 1. Which green building topic or potential career interested you the most? Part 2. Update on career exploration progress 3. Mid semester review of class (hand in at beginning of class – put in spot in hallway) |
| Week 8: Oct 26 | **Transportation & Urban Design**  Mark Chase  Kari Hewitt (VHB) | 1. Forum and comments (comments due 10/29): For this week’s Forum Post please do the following.  Familiarize yourself with the material in the Transportation and Urban Design Resource Folder.  Please **read** the document called “Effective TRO Final”.  Please **skim** the other articles in that folder.  Please **use as background / further study** the articles and videos in the sub-folder called “interesting info on many forms of transport.”  Once you are familiar with the material, your forum post assignment is to imagine the WORST place you are familiar with (can be near where you are from, can be a place you have visited, can be a place in the Boston area – whatever, as long as you know it fairly well) and tell us about what makes it so bad from a transportation and urban planning perspective.  THEN use your new knowledge and propose some things you would recommend to change that place and make it better from that same perspective. 2. Blog: What did you learn about food systems and careers that you didn’t already know? Does this impact your potential career choices? |
| Week 9: Nov 2 | **One Health**  Class discussion  **CC & Bears**  Kat Rasp  Start of ZWW | Forum and comments (comments due 11/5): How might one use the connection between climate change and health to move society towards action on climate change?  Blog: Part 1: What did you find most interesting about last week’s class. If you had to work on one aspect of transportation and urban design, what would it be? Part 2: Brief update on career exploration process. |
| Week 10: Nov 9 | **Policy & Government**  Miheala Papa 6-7 PM  Jamie Matteson | Forum and comments (comments due 11/12): Discuss a policy or government action that has impacted (positively or negatively) action on climate change.  Blog: ZWW – what was it like for you? |
| Week 11:  Nov 16 | **Energy:** Easwar and/or Zdenka  Tom Michalman | Forum and comments (comments due 11/19): Read the items in the Renewable energy resource folder (and do your own research).  Then write a Forum Post about an aspect, or type, of renewable energy you find most interesting.  Include pros and cons.  Include how whatever you choose might be developed and expanded in its use.  Consider choosing something you may not know a lot about - and try as best you can to not all choose the same topic.  Perhaps each of you could "begin" your post in the next couple of days with a declaration of what you intend to write about and then go back and add the details in a few more days as you develop them.  That way you will all get a sense of what each of you is doing.  If a couple do choose the same topic it is certainly not the end of the world.  Blog: Thoughts on last week’s class. Brief update on career exploration process. How much instructor participation in the forums do you like? |
| Thanksgiving | |  |
| Week 12: Nov 30 | **Water**  Laura Kuhl  Scott Horsley | Forum and comments (comments due 12/3): Research and discuss how CC will impact some aspect of a water resource.  Blog: Thoughts on last week’s class. Brief update on career exploration process |
| Week 13:  Dec 7 | **Career Exploration**  **Student Presentations** | Blog: Final reflections on career exploration; what have you learned about yourself and your interests over the course of the semester? Due 1 week after last class.  Forum: summary of career exploration  Comments on this forum will count towards participation grade (no assigned comments) |

# Semester Long Assignments

**Arts and Humanities Presentation**

Sign up for 1 class during the semester to give an 8 minute presentation

Bring in piece (or description) of literature, religion, performance or visual art, or music that you feel addresses the climate crisis or other environmental issue. Presentation should be 8-10 minutes and cover the author and other information about its production (when and where it was made, the medium (paint, LP, published book), etc), why you think it was/is impactful, and any evidence (if available) of its impact e.g. changes in attitude towards climate change measured by polling; creation of new laws or regulations; evidence of behavior change in the population, etc.

The intent of this exercise is to demonstrate that you don't have to be a scientist or politician to make an impact, and in fact, many of the most influential people were neither.

**Climate Change and Human Health**

Sign up for 1 class during the semester to give an 8 minute presentation

Research one way climate change could impact human or animal health (e.g. increase in parasites in northern climates). Try to find something the rest of the class wouldn't already know about. Prepare an 8-10 minute presentation for [your chosen date](https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/180WWw2QLllfdnATmIxk_P5xJE5hORNPy30yQME4oYGM/edit#gid=0). You will be assessed on your depth of understanding, ability to simplify a complex topic for a general audience, quality of presentation (easy to follow, nice to look at, etc), and time management (ability to complete the full presentation in 10 minutes).

NOTE that it does not have to be a broad topic! And in fact you might be better served by selecting a limited topic that you can really focus on without rushing through the presentation. Check out the IPCC 5th assessment report section on human health for human-related impacts ([article in Lancet](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2814%2960576-6/abstract), [original document](https://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/assessment-report/ar4/wg2/ar4-wg2-chapter8.pdf)).

**Informational Interview**

Each student is required to do at least one informational interview. Students choosing to do the 5-6 informational interviews option as their career exploration will have 1 automatically counted towards this requirement.

Submit the following:

1. Summary Document (3-4 paragraphs) that includes:
   * The person's name, title, company, brief description of company, why you chose them
   * How you *connected* with them (e.g. through LinkedIn group, your cousin, etc), and how you *contacted* them.
   * General overview of how it went - what did you take away from the interview?
2. Interview notes: Include the questions and your notes about their answers
   * Must be *legible* and *understandable* (e.g. in complete sentences) so you might have to do a little editing.

**Career exploration**

All students will give an 8-10 minute presentation during the last class

Volunteer at a non-profit of interest to you for 12 hours over the course of the semester OR job shadow 1 or more people for 2 days sometimes during the semester OR do 5-6 informational interviews with people in careers that interest you. You may also do a combination. We expect you to spend about 13-15 hours over the course of the semester - this is a little over an hour a week - but you can spread it out however it makes sense for you.

The intent of this assignment is to get you moving and engaged in figuring out what you like. It’s sometimes intimidating to reach out to strangers, so this will be your push to get out of your comfort zone and connect with professionals or try out something you’ve been wondering about. We will help connect you with organizations and people.

By the end of the semester write up the following in a forum post and give a 8-10 minute presentation that covers:

1. What you did (including who, what, where, when)

2. What you learned - primarily about yourself and what you liked and didn't like about the job(s), but you can also include anything interesting or surprising that you learned about some aspect of sustainability.

We recommend writing the content for the forum post first and then putting it into a presentation.

The total grade will encompass both your effort over the whole semester in seeking out something that truly interests you, the forum post and the presentation. Be sure to describe in the forum post, and include in the presentation, details that show your effort. Of course we trust that you are making your best effort, but in order to be able to give you a grade you need to be able to demonstrate it as well. This could be in the form of pictures of your volunteer experience, copies of your interview notes, thank you notes to the person you job shadowed, detailed narratives, etc. Make us feel like we were right there with you!

So, to summarize, be sure to:

1. Complete all blog posts related to career exploration updates thoroughly throughout the semester (e.g. with details of the who, what, when, how you contacted people, the responses, how you are adjusting to setbacks, etc.) (points are included in blog grades)

2. Take pictures, scan letters, notes, etc. and upload them to this assignment or to your forum post (points are included in grades for #3 and #4)

3. Write a forum post by the last class that summarizes lessons learned - think about it as writing to your friends in the class - "this is what I did, this is what I thought about it and this is what you might want to do/think about if you are interested in doing what I did." (25 points)

4. Convert forum post to presentation that takes *no longer than 10 minutes.* (60 points)

*NOTE:* Students doing the 5-6 informational interviews option should use the "informational interview" assignment as a guide for what they should turn in for each interview. You should submit a general overview of your impressions and take-aways from the interviews as a whole in the forum post. Come talk to us if this isn't clear.