

INTS 4388 Special Topics in Interdisciplinary Studies: Sustainable Communities

Monday 3:00-5:50pm, University Hall Room 25

Instructor

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Course Description

This special topic course explores broad environmental and social issues in sustainable communities. The course reveals underlying natural processes that support a sustainable urban economy, and that, at the same time, are affected by unsustainable built environment and activities. The course serves as a laboratory for working with governmental and non-governmental organizations in the DFW area and developing issue-based, action research projects to solve real-world environmental problems in our communities. Potential topics include water conservation, waste management, food and resources, wildlife conservation, watershed protection, native landscaping, energy efficiency, renewable energy, housing diversity, public transit and community participation. The course combines lecture, student-led discussion, in-class activities, site visits and collaborative team work for service learning projects in DFW communities. There is no pre-requisite for this course.

*Instructor acknowledges generous advice from Dr. Maria Martinez-Cosio of SUPA and Dr. Jiyeon Yoon of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at UTA for developing student-led and hands-on curriculum and from Dr. Shirley Theriot, Director of the UTA Center for Community Service Learning, for incorporating service learning in the curriculum.

Learning outcomes

- Understand broad environmental and social issues in building sustainable communities
- Define a specific problem of interest in our communities and design issues-based classes and action research projects
- Acquire an effective problem solving ability through various hands-on activities and service learning
- Acquire an ability to outreach to communities and raise public awareness on sustainability
- Develop one's sense of environmental stewardship

Textbook

Additional readings will be distributed by instructor and student groups and will be available on course's Blackboard.

Requirements& Grading

Grades will reflect class participation, individual reflection essays and a research group project. Students are expected to keep track of their performance throughout the semester and seek guidance from available sources (including the instructor) if their performance drops below satisfactory levels.

Requirements	Evaluation	Weight
Class Participation	Attendance: 14 classes x 0.5 points each = 7	10%
	Active participation (instructor's observation) = 3	
Individual Reflection Essays	Class topics: 5 essays (4 points each)= 20	30%
	Service learning: 2 essays (5 points each) = 10	
Group Project	Class program design & performance = 20	60%
	Action research project = 40 <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Documentary movie making = 10- Final presentation = 10- Final paper = 10- Evaluation from group members = 6- Evaluation from service advisor = 4	
TOTAL		100%
Letter Grade		
	A	>= 90
	B	>=80
	C	>=70
	D	<70

*Important note: **Incomplete grading "I" or extensions are not available in this class** unless severe illness or documented extenuating circumstances justify it.

- **Class Participation (10%)**: Students are expected to attend class and actively participate in class activities. Each class attendance is worth 0.5 points and Dr. Ko and Ann Foss will evaluate the level of participation (3 points) at the end of the semester.

- **Individual Reflection Essays (30%)**: Among the weeks from Week 5 to Week 15, students are expected to choose **five** topics of their interest and submit a one page (single spaced) written reflection essay on each of the chosen class topics (excluding the class topic their group designs). Each essay is worth 4 points. The essay must connect your impression of each class (guest lecture or field trip) **to the literature** that was assigned for that class. **Due each Friday following a class** (e.g. if our class is on Monday, Feb. 4th, the due date is Friday, Feb. 8th). In addition, students must submit **two** separate one page (single spaced) written reflection essays on their service learning experience and progress (**Deadlines: March 9th and April 20th**). Each service learning reflection essay is worth 5 points.

- **Group Project (60%)**: A group research project engaging with local communities is the center of this class. The group project will be evaluated through six criteria:
 - **Class design and performance**: Each group is responsible for designing a class to best deliver the chosen issue to the class. The groups will design their class either as a **guest lecture** with in-class activities OR a **field trip** hosted by a local organization (must be located within a 20 minute drive from UTA). Three sample classes are held in the beginning of the semester to demonstrate the expectations for possible formats. Each group is also responsible for **assigning reading materials** and **meeting with instructors (sign up for office hours) two weeks ahead of their assigned class**.

 - **Action research project**: Throughout the semester, each group conducts an action research project collaborating with local organizations related to the assigned topic. After students sign up for their group of interest on February 4th, each group visits its assigned local organizations once a week and works for one hour per week from Week 5 to Week 14 (excluding the week of spring break). Deliverables of the project are: **a two-minute documentary film** that fosters public awareness of the assigned topic, **a 10-minute final presentation** and **a 6-8 page final paper** (single spaced, graphic communications such as maps, figures, charts, etc., are highly recommended). Students' contribution to this project is evaluated by group members and a project advisor from the local organizations. The final paper must be submitted to SafeAssign in Blackboard in order for students to view and correct any evidence of plagiarism.

Schedule

Week	Dates	Schedule	Class Topic	Group Research Project
1	1/14	Class Overview	Class overview and service learning lecture	Learn about the issues and service learning
2	1/21	MLK	Reading: Condon, 2010 Chapter 1, Blackboard; Hough 2004, Chapter 1, Blackboard	
3	1/28	Lecture	Issues in sustainable communities	
4	2/4	Service learning invitation	Local organizations	Sign up for groups
5	2/11	Lecture	1. Green infrastructure (Fouad Jaber)	Work on the project *Service learning reflection essays due: March 9 th and April 20 th
6	2/18	Lecture + Field Study	2. Green building (Dan Lepinski)	
7	2/25	Lecture + Field Study	3. Food & resources (Bill Gilmore and John Darling)	
8	3/4	Group 1	4. Diverse & Affordable Housing	
9	3/11	Spring Break	None	
10	3/18	Group 2	5. Alternative Transportation	
11	3/25	Group 3	6. Native Plants	
12	4/1	Group 4	7. Waste Management	
13	4/8	Group 5	8. Water Treatment	
14	4/15	Group 6	9. Wildlife Conservation	
15	4/22	Group 7	10. Public Participation	
16	4/29	Final Project Presentation		
17	5/3	Final Paper Due		

**As the instructor for this course, I reserve the right to adjust this schedule in any way that serves the educational needs of the students enrolled in this course.*

Other General Notes

Attendance Policy: Students have the responsibility to fully participate. This participation includes, but is not exclusive to, attendance, class discussions, the individual evaluating and sharing of research that is relevant to their own future career interest as it relates to sustainable communities, and preparing for and participating in team presentations. As a rule, undergraduate students should expect to spend three to four hours preparing for each hour spent in class (i.e. for a three hour class each week, 9 to 12 hours of preparation). If a student does miss a class, they need to contact the instructor ASAP to determine what, if any impact there is to his/her final grade.

Drop Policy: Students may drop or swap (adding and dropping a class concurrently) classes through self-service in MyMav from the beginning of the registration period through the late registration period. After the late registration period, students must see their academic advisor to drop a class or withdraw. Undeclared students must see an advisor in the University Advising Center. Drops can continue through a point two-thirds of the way through the term or session. It is the student's responsibility to officially withdraw if they do not plan to attend after registering. **Students will not be automatically dropped for non-attendance.** Repayment of certain types of financial aid administered through the University may be required as the result of dropping classes or withdrawing. For more information, contact the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships (<http://www.uta.edu/ses/fao>).

Americans with Disabilities Act: The University of Texas at Arlington is on record as being committed to both the spirit and letter of all federal equal opportunity legislation, including the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)*. All instructors at UT Arlington are required by law to provide "reasonable accommodations" to students with disabilities, so as not to discriminate on the basis of that disability. Any student requiring an accommodation for this course must provide the instructor with official documentation in the form of a letter certified by the staff in the Office for Students with Disabilities, University Hall 102. Only those students who have officially documented a need for an accommodation will have their request honored. Information regarding diagnostic criteria and policies for obtaining disability-based academic accommodations can be found at www.uta.edu/disability or by calling the Office for Students with Disabilities at (817) 272-3364.

Academic Integrity: All students enrolled in this course are expected to adhere to the UT Arlington Honor Code:

I pledge, on my honor, to uphold UT Arlington's tradition of academic integrity, a tradition that values hard work and honest effort in the pursuit of academic excellence. I promise that I will submit only work that I personally create or contribute to group collaborations, and I will appropriately reference any work from other sources. I will follow the highest standards of integrity and uphold the spirit of the Honor Code.

Instructors may employ the Honor Code as they see fit in their courses, including (but not limited to) having students acknowledge the honor code as part of an examination or requiring students to incorporate the honor code into any work submitted. Per UT System *Regents' Rule* 50101, §2.2, suspected violations of university's standards for academic integrity (including the Honor Code) will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct. Violators will be disciplined in accordance with University policy, which may result in the student's suspension or expulsion from the University.

Student Support Services: UT Arlington provides a variety of resources and programs designed to help students develop academic skills, deal with personal situations, and better understand concepts and information related to their courses. Resources include tutoring, major-based learning centers, developmental education, advising and mentoring, personal counseling, and federally funded programs. For individualized referrals, students may visit the reception desk at University College (Ransom Hall), call the Maverick Resource Hotline at 817-272-6107, send a message to resources@uta.edu, or view the information at www.uta.edu/resources.

Electronic Communication: UT Arlington has adopted MavMail as its official means to communicate with students about important deadlines and events, as well as to transact university-related business regarding financial aid, tuition, grades, graduation, etc. All students are assigned a MavMail account and are responsible for checking the inbox regularly. There is no additional charge to students for using this account, which remains active even after graduation. Information about activating and using MavMail is available at <http://www.uta.edu/oit/cs/email/mavmail.php>.

Student Feedback Survey: At the end of each term, students enrolled in classes categorized as lecture, seminar, or laboratory shall be directed to complete a Student Feedback Survey (SFS). Instructions on how to access the SFS for this course will be sent directly to each student through MavMail approximately 10 days before the end of the term. Each student's feedback enters the SFS database anonymously and is aggregated with that of other students enrolled in the course. UT Arlington's effort to solicit, gather, tabulate, and publish student feedback is required by state law; students are strongly urged to participate. For more information, visit <http://www.uta.edu/sfs>.

Final Review Week: A period of five class days prior to the first day of final examinations in the long sessions shall be designated as Final Review Week. The purpose of this week is to allow students sufficient time to prepare for final examinations. During this week, there shall be no scheduled activities such as required field trips or performances; and no instructor shall assign any themes, research problems or exercises of similar scope that have a completion date during or following this week *unless specified in the class syllabus*. During Final Review Week, an instructor shall not give any examinations constituting 10% or more of the final grade, except makeup tests and laboratory examinations. In addition, no instructor shall give any portion of the final examination during Final Review Week. During this week, classes are held as scheduled. In addition, instructors are not required to limit content to topics that have been previously covered; they may introduce new concepts as appropriate.