

## **Education for Sustainable Communities**

*C&I / DCES 375 - 3 Credits - Tuesday/Thursday 1-2:15 - Classroom: TEB 243*

*Professor Noah Weeth Feinstein - Office Hours: Friday 12-1pm, TEB 226B*

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How can education - for children and adults, in school and out - help to address crucial environmental and social sustainability challenges? What ideas and strategies have guided environmental and sustainability education over the years? What can individual people do to address environmental challenges, and what can only be accomplished by people working together? What does sustainability have to do with justice, and vice versa? Through readings, active discussion, and independent projects, we will examine the principles behind behavior change and empowerment, community action and whole-scale social reform. Drawing on research and theory from across the social sciences, we will explore the uncertain relationship between education and advocacy, seeking the means by which education can have the greatest environmental impact without compromising the core ideals of a democratic society.

The course is divided into three parts. The first part focuses on the history of environmental and sustainability education, connecting these contemporary projects to older educational movements such as nature study and conservation education. As we discuss these movements, we will consider different ideas about what education is and what purposes it serves, seeking a definition that cannot be reduced to either “school” on one hand or “learning” on the other. To help us, we will draw on readings from history, philosophy, and the interdisciplinary study of education. The second part of class focuses on the social science of individual behavior and the factors (such as beliefs, values, and attitudes) that shape it. Here, we will use concepts drawn (mostly) from psychology to challenge and examine the roots of our own environmental and social behaviors as well as those of people around us. The third part of class zooms out from individual people to focus on communities and groups, pulling in ideas about culture and social structure – ideas such as norms, value systems, and social capital – that both complement and challenge the individualistic perspective, forcing us to consider the contrast between ideas like behavior change, on one hand, and community empowerment, on the other. Readings in this part of class, drawn from social psychology, sociology, and anthropology, will also lead us to examine the relationship between sustainability and justice, asking how environmental ideas and ideals relate to the health, wellbeing, and political empowerment of different groups of people. In both the second and third parts of class, we will (1) discuss how sustainability is defined and what it looks like, (2) learn about promising practices, and (3) examine key research findings.

Although this class is listed as a lecture course, you should expect a great deal of interaction—with me, with each other, and with other members of the university community. Class participation is important, but there will be many ways to participate. If you are reluctant to take part in large group discussions, you will be able to participate in other ways throughout the semester. Students who are familiar with social science methods will find some parts of class easier; students who are more comfortable around philosophy and the humanities will have an easier time in other parts. Both are ultimately important.

### **What can you expect to get from the course? (AKA “Learning Goals”)**

*This course address two core learning goals for majors in Community and Environmental Sociology:*

- 3. Learn general theories on basic social processes, especially those related to the relationships between society and the environment and the social organization of communities.*
- 4. Learn communication skills in the social sciences.*

*In terms more specific to this course, students who complete the assignments and readings, and engage regularly in discussion, will end the course with the ability to:*

- Describe the social movements that shaped contemporary environmental and sustainability education*
- Explain and apply the complicated and controversial idea of sustainability*
- Articulate a clear definition of education that goes beyond schools and classrooms*
- Analyze factors that influence individuals’ decisions about sustainability-related action*

- *Understand how social structure and social context shapes sustainability-related action, and describe how some factors relevant to sustainability can only be seen and changed at the community level*
- *Identify educational strategies that can be used to make change at the individual and community level, and understand the advantages and limitations of different educational perspectives*
- *Explain how and why some environmental projects come at the expense of poor, minoritized, and otherwise vulnerable groups of people*
- *Be one big step closer to applying all of the above to concrete, messy, real-world situations.*

## Assessment: How I figure out your grade

Grades will be based on four things:

- (1) **Attendance and participation (15%)**. You can miss up to two classes without incurring any penalty, as long as you let me know in advance (and have a good reason). Absences beyond this will count against you, though you can make up the difference by completing additional brief writing assignments. SEE BELOW FOR MORE ON HOW THIS PORTION OF YOUR GRADE IS CALCULATED. If something about your schedule (such as participation in a team sport) requires you to miss several classes, talk to me at the beginning of the term, and we will work out in advance a set of make-up assignments that you can do to compensate for your absences.
- (2) **Brief writing assignments (20%)**. Five times throughout the course, you will complete a brief (less than a page) written assignment in response to the assigned readings. These assignments, which will be graded on a 0-4 scale, will be used to augment discussion during class.
- (3) **Midterm exam (25%)**. Students will complete a midterm exam in class on Thursday, March 12<sup>th</sup>. This open-note, open-readings exam will consist of three essay-style questions, but you'll only need to complete two. Anything we cover in course readings and during class is fair game, so be sure to get notes from a classmate if you need to be absent.
- (4) **A final assessment (40% of grade)**. There are two options, both of which will be explained in more detail in the third week of class. Here's the short version:
  - a. First, you may choose to work in small groups of 3-4 on consulting projects that address important campus sustainability challenges. Developed in collaboration with the Office of Sustainability, these projects will require significant out-of-class meeting time as you meet with local stakeholders and apply course concepts to real-world problems. Your group will give a final presentation in class on **Tuesday, May 3**, and turn in a paper describing your recommendations and how you developed them on or before **Thursday, May 10**. This is probably the more demanding of the two final project options, but it is also likely to be more fun than the alternative. These projects will give you the chance to influence the university and to develop practical skills that will serve you well if you plan to seek a job in a sustainability-related field. To ensure fairness, your grade for the final assignment will be based in part on your group members' evaluations of you.
  - b. Second, you can complete a take-home (open book, open note) final that will be handed out on the last day of class and due on the **Thursday, May 10**. Similar in structure to the midterm, this exam will cover *all* readings and in-class material, though it will emphasize material we cover after the midterm.

**How is the "attendance and participation" portion of your grade calculated?** 10 points are awarded for attendance, 5 for participation. For attendance: every class you miss beyond the two permitted absences will subtract one point from the 10 maximum attendance points, unless you complete a make-up assignment. For participation: this is not a competition, and it is possible for everyone in the class to get full credit. Some people participate more in small group activities, while others make their best contributions in whole-class discussion. Either is fine, and I will regularly circulate through the class during small group activities to take note of who is actively and constructively taking part. Overall, I will award you five points if you consistently both bring your own ideas and build on the ideas of your

classmates, four points if you consistently participate and add your own creativity and insight to activities, three points if you consistently participate, two if you're engaged sometimes, and one if you're just showing up.

Grading is subject to a very gentle curve, which works this way: I will take the highest point total in the course and subtract it from 100%. I'll then add that number to everyone else's point total. So, if one person gets 96 of 100 possible points from all of the assignments, I'll add 4 points to everyone's point total (100-96=4). I will then assign each person a grade according to her or his (adjusted) point total according to the table below. Note that these ranges are adjusted to be merciful at both ends: the ranges for A and D are larger than the ranges for other grades.

A (90-100)	AB (85-89)	B (80-84)	BC (75-79)	C (70-74)	D (60-69)	F (<60)
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### **IMPORTANT NOTE #1: Harassment and Title IX**

UW–Madison prohibits discrimination in all University programs and activities, and this includes sex discrimination and sexual harassment. Title IX makes it clear that violence and harassment based on sex and gender is a Civil Rights offense subject to the same kinds of accountability and the same kinds of support applied to offenses against other protected categories such as race, national origin, etc. If you or someone you know has been harassed or assaulted, you can find resources here:

- Information on Title IX: <http://www.oed.wisc.edu/title-ix.htm>
- Information on sexual harassment: <http://www.oed.wisc.edu/sexual-harassment-information.htm>
- Information on sexual assault: <http://www.oed.wisc.edu/safety-and-sexual-assault.htm>

### **IMPORTANT NOTE #2: Inclusion and disability**

I am strongly committed to including students with disabilities in all course activities. Please tell me as soon as possible if you need any special accommodations in the curriculum, instruction, or assessments to enable you to fully participate in this course (special accommodations for individuals with obvious or documented disabilities require 2 weeks advance notice). In most cases, I will need documentation from the McBurney Center (a copy of your VISA), though you are welcome to talk to me even if you do not have this documentation. I will try to maintain the confidentiality of all information you share with me.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE #3: Lernantoj, kiuj ankoraŭ lernas anglan**

If you can read and write English fluently, please be aware that there may be students around you who are still learning. By (1) speaking clearly, (2) being willing to explain slang and figures of speech, and (3) offering other sorts of constructive help after you are sure it is wanted, you can help them get the education they deserve from this great university. It's not your job, but it *is* good manners. After all, wouldn't you want the same kind of help in if you were in their position? One last thing: remember that someone who doesn't look like you and isn't from here may speak and write English better than you do. Remember to check your assumptions *before* you offer help.

**If English is not your first language** and you expect to struggle with the reading and writing components of this course, please come talk to me early in the semester. I may be able to help by showing you how to prioritize your reading and offering you feedback on your writing. You may also find it helpful to use the writing center, a fantastic (and surprisingly convenient) resource for all students: <http://writing.wisc.edu/>

### **What we will be reading and talking about, and when things are due**

This course takes an interdisciplinary perspective, which means that the readings come from many different scholarly traditions. Students who have a strong background in the natural and social sciences

may find the philosophical and historical material challenging, while students from the humanities may find the social scientific material challenging. Everyone will feel lost at some point; the best piece of advice I can give you is this: **read the first page of each reading a week before it is due!** This will help you estimate how long you're going to need to finish it and plan your time accordingly. The calendar of below includes the topics for each week and the readings due each day. It will change a bit, but major deadlines are unlikely to change. Please look ahead, and **mark important dates on your calendar.**

**NOTE: ALL READINGS ARE AVAILABLE ON OUR COURSE LEARN@UW WEBSITE.**

Week 1: The roots of environmental and sustainability education

*Read by Thursday 1/25:* Brief excerpts handed out in class – Leopold and Comstock

Week 2: Environmental Education and the origin of “sustainability”

*Read by Tuesday 1/30:* The Tbilisi Declaration: <http://www.gdrc.org/uem/ee/tbilisi.html>  
Stapp, W. B., Bennett, D., Bryan, W., Fulton, J., MacGregor, J., Nowak, P., ... & Havlick, S. (1969). The concept of environmental education. *Journal of Environmental Education*, 1(1), 30-31.

*Read by Thursday 2/1:* World Commission on Environment & Development. (1987). *Our Common Future (The Brundtland Commission report)*. Geneva, CH: United Nations. chapter 2

Week 3: Civic engagement and the challenge posed by advocacy

*Read by Tuesday 2/6:* Counts, G. S. (1978). *Dare the school build a new social order?* (Vol. 143). SIU Press. PAGES 3-37

Disinger, J. F. (2001). K-12 education and the environment: Perspectives, expectations, and practice. *The journal of environmental education*, 33(1), 4-11.

*Read by Thursday 2/8:* Pedretti, E. (1997). Septic tank crisis: A case study of science, technology and society education in an elementary school. *International Journal of Science Education*, 19(10), 1211-1230.

➤ **Reading responses due on Tuesday from group 1**

Week 4: The tensions between “environmental” and “sustainability”

*Read by Tuesday 2/13:* Sachs, W. (1992). Environment. In W. Sachs, Ed. *The Development Dictionary*, pp. 26-37. London: Zed Books.

Williams, C. C., & Millington, A. C. (2004). The diverse and contested meanings of sustainable development. *The Geographical Journal*, 170(2), 99-104.

*Read by Thursday 2/15:* Westheimer, J. & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(2): 237-269.

➤ **Reading responses due on Tuesday from group 2**

Week 5: Focus on the individual – attitudes, beliefs, and the roots of behavior

*Read by Tuesday 2/20:* Heberlein, T. A. (2012). *Navigating environmental attitudes*. Oxford University Press. Chapters 2-3

*Read by Thursday 2/22:* Wray-Lake, L., Flanagan, C. A., & Osgood, D. W. (2010). Examining trends in adolescent environmental attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors across three decades. *Environment and Behavior*, 42(1), 61-85.

➤ **Reading responses due on Tuesday from group 3**

Week 6: Focus on the individual – models and cases

*Read by Tuesday 2/27:* Stern, P. C. (2000). New environmental theories: toward a coherent theory of environmentally significant behavior. *Journal of social issues*, 56(3), 407-424.

*Read by Thursday 3/1:* Case readings – JIGSAW (three groups will each have a different reading)

➤ **JIGSAW: reading responses due from everyone on THURSDAY**

Week 7: Seeing individuals in context (plus final project prep)

*Read by Tuesday 3/6:* Jensen, B. B., & Schnack, K. (1997). The action competence approach in environmental education. *Environmental Education Research*, 3(2), 163-178.

*Read by Thursday 3/8:* Stern, M. J., Powell, R. B., & Hill, D. (2014). Environmental education program evaluation in the new millennium: what do we measure and what have we learned?. *Environmental Education Research*, 20(5), 581-611.

➤ **Reading responses due on Tuesday from group 1**

Week 8: Mid-course Q&A and reflection on 3/13. Midterm on 3/15

*Read:* No readings this week.

➤ **In-class midterm on Thursday**

Week 9: Focus on the community – envisioning sustainable communities

*Read by Tuesday 3/20:* Ross, A. (2011). *Bird on Fire: lessons from the world's least sustainable city*. Oxford University Press. (Chapters 1 & 4)

*Read by Thursday 3/22:* Benton-Short, L., & Short, J. R. (2013). *Cities and nature*. New York: Routledge. (Chapter 16: Urban Sustainability)

Cardwell, D. (2015). Green energy inspiration off the coast of Denmark. *New York Times* 1/17/05.

➤ **Reading responses due on Thursday from group 2**

Week 10: Focus on the community – norms and frames

*Read by Tuesday 4/3:* Cialdini, R. B. (2003). Crafting normative messages to protect the environment. *Current directions in psychological science*, 12(4), 105-109.

McKenzie-Mohr, D. (2000). Promoting sustainable behavior: an introduction to community-based social marketing. *Journal of Social Issues*, 56(3): 543-554.

*Read by Thursday 4/5:* Nisbet, M. C. (2009). Communicating climate change: Why frames matter for public engagement. *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development*, 51(2), 12-23.

➤ **Reading responses due on Tuesday from group 3**

Week 11: Focus on the community – morals, culture, and connectedness

*Read by Tuesday 4/10:* Feinberg, M., & Willer, R. (2013). The moral roots of environmental attitudes. *Psychological science*, 24(1), 56-62.

Hoffman, A. J. (2011). Climate science as culture war. *Stanford Innovation Review*

Hulme, M. (2009). *Why We Disagree about Climate Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

*Read by Thursday 4/12:* Pretty, J., & Ward, H. (2001). Social capital and the environment. *World development*, 29(2), 209-227.

Gladwell, M. (2002). Political Heat: The great Chicago heat wave and other unnatural disasters. *The New Yorker*, August 12, 2002.

➤ **JIGSAW: reading responses due from everyone on Tuesday**

Week 12: Focus on the community – place and power

*Read by Tuesday 4/17:* Howley, A., Howley, M., Camper, C., & Perko, H. (2011). Place-Based Education at Island Community School. *The Journal of Environmental Education*, 42(4), 216-236.

*Read by Thursday 4/19:* Speer, P. W., & Hughey, J. (1995). Community organizing: An ecological route to empowerment and power. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 23(5), 729-748.

**Reading responses due on Thursday from group 1**

Week 13: Focus on the community – empowerment

*Read by Tuesday 4/24:* White, M. (2011). D-Town Farm: African American resistance to food insecurity and the transformation of Detroit. *Environmental Practice*, 13(4): 406-417.

*Read by Thursday 4/26:* Callewaert, J., & Marans, R. W. (2017). Measuring progress over time: The sustainability cultural indicators program at the University of Michigan. In *Handbook of theory and practice of sustainable development in higher education* (pp. 173-187). Springer International Publishing.

➤ **Reading responses due on Tuesday from group 2**

Week 14: The University and the World

*Read by Tuesday 5/1:* International comparison article TBD.

*Read by Thursday 5/3:* No readings due - Final presentations, end-of-course reflection and evaluation

- **Reading responses due on Tuesday from group 3**
  
- **FINAL Exams/projects DUE:** Thursday, May 10<sup>th</sup> @ 5pm.

**In case you were curious (or checking my syllabus for required information)**

**How are credit hours met for this course?** This course meets the standard requirements for a three-unit course under the traditional Carnegie definition: we'll have 150 minutes of classroom time plus about twice that much homework/reading per week over about 15 weeks.