

## **Education for Sustainable Communities**

*C&I / DCES / Env Studies 405 - 3 Credits - Tuesday/Thursday 9:30-10:45 - Online!*

*Professor Noah Weeth Feinstein - Office Hours: Friday 10-11am, Zoom*

[nfeinstein@wisc.edu](mailto:nfeinstein@wisc.edu)

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 we learn from the crises and solutions of the past, and what needs to be reinvented for the present? 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—both with me and with each other. 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 in the United States, and discuss how these emerged from particular historical context*
- 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.*

### **How this ONLINE edition of the class will work**

When this class meets in person, I rely a lot on discussion to make the material engaging and personal. It is challenging to re-create the energy of in-person discussion in a Zoom window - especially in a class of 40 people. So I've decided to try something different instead. Here's how this class will work:

- **RECORDED LECTURE CONTENT:** Most of the core conceptual content will be presented in short, pre-recorded talks (powerpoint slides with audio) that you can access on the course website. There will be 2-3 of these per week, with each one lasting 10-15 minutes. Watch them whenever it is convenient to you, as long as you watch them before discussion.
- **LIVE DISCUSSIONS:** In week 1, you'll participate in discussions on both Tuesday and Thursday. After week 1, I'll split the class into two discussion groups – a Tuesday group and a Thursday group. For the rest of class, with the exception of midterm and final exam review weeks, you will only have to attend the synchronous discussion once per week – either Tuesday or Thursday, with your assigned group. **NOTE:** once you're assigned, you'll attend ALL Tuesdays or ALL Thursdays – no switching.
- **ONLINE REFLECTIONS AND DISCUSSION BOARDS:** Once in a while, I will ask you to complete an online reflection by adding a response to a google doc, or participate in an online discussion forum on the course website. Participation in these complements the live discussion, and counts as part of your attendance and participation.
- **WEEKLY UPDATES:** Every week on Thursday evening I will post material for the following week and send out detailed instructions on what to do when.

### **Assessment: How I figure out your grade**

I believe that your grade should be based primarily on your willingness to put time and effort into the course. To make this easier, there are multiple opportunities to improve your grade. Be aware, though, that these opportunities come before the end of the class, so it's to your benefit to keep track of how you're doing. Grades will be based on four things:

- (1) **Attendance and participation (20%).** You can miss up to two live discussions 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. Students often feel that the grading for these assignments is hard, but it serves an important purpose: I use these assignments to communicate my grading standards for the midterm and final exams. ***At any point in the semester, you can submit additional writing assignments for additional credit.***
- (3) **Midterm exam (20%)**. There will be a take-home (open book, open note) midterm assigned at the end of class on 3/16 and due before 9pm on 3/18. This exam will consist of three essay-style questions, but you 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. ***Students unhappy with their midterm grades will have the opportunity to make up some credit by answering an additional make-up question, distributed the week after the midterm.***
- (4) **A final assessment (40% of grade)**. There will be a take-home (open book, open note) final that will be handed out on the last day of class and due on **Thursday, May 6**. 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. ***Students who receive an A on the midterm (including the make-up question)*** have the additional option of doing an independent project instead of completing the take-home final exam. The exact nature of the project may vary from student to student, but it must include a substantial written summary that makes explicit use of course themes.

**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)
------------	------------	-----------	------------	-----------	-----------	---------

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

**ALL READINGS ARE AVAILABLE ON OUR COURSE LEARN@UW WEBSITE.** 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 when it is first assigned/uploaded!** 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.**

Week 1: Course intro + Nature Study (Tues 1/26, Thurs 1/28)

Comstock, A. B. (1911). *Handbook of nature study*. Cornell University Press.

OPTIONAL: Meyers, I. B. (1910). The evolution of aim and method in the teaching of nature-study in the common schools of the united states. *The Elementary School Teacher*, 11(4), 205-213.

Week 2: Conservation Education + Environmental Education (Tues 2/2, Thurs 2/4)

Pinchot, G. (1910). *The fight for conservation*. Doubleday, Page.

Leopold, A. (1970). A Sand County almanac: With other essays on conservation from Round River.

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.

OPTIONAL: The Tbilisi Declaration: <http://www.gdrc.org/uem/ee/tbilisi.html>

Martinez, D. (2003). Protected areas, indigenous peoples, and the western idea of nature. *Ecological Restoration*, 21(4), 247-250.

Week 3: Sustainability Education + Civic engagement and the challenge posed by advocacy (Tues 2/9, Thurs 2/11)

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

Bullard, R. D., & Wright, B. H. (1990). The quest for environmental equity: Mobilizing the African-American community for social change. *Society & Natural Resources*, 3(4), 301-311.

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.

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

Week 4: The tensions between “environmental” and “sustainability” (Tues 2/16, Thurs 2/18)

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

Hickel, J. (2015). Five reasons to think twice about the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals. *Africa at LSE*. <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/africaatlse/2015/09/23/five-reasons-to-think-twice-about-the-uns-sustainable-development-goals/>

Smith, J., & Gladstein, A. (2018). How the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals Undermine Democracy. *Quartz Africa*. <https://qz.com/africa/1299149/how-the-uns-sustainable-development-goals-undermine-democracy/>

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 (Tues 2/23, Thurs 2/25)

Heberlein, T. A. (2012). *Navigating environmental attitudes*. Oxford University Press. Chapters 1-3

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

Week 6: Focus on the individual – models and cases (Tues 3/2, Thurs 3/4)

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

Case readings – JIGSAW (three groups will each have a different reading)

➤ **JIGSAW: reading responses due from everyone prior to their assigned discussion group**

Week 7: Seeing individuals in context (Tues 3/9, Thurs 3/11)

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

Wiggins, G., Wiggins, G. P., & McTighe, J. (2005). *Understanding by design*. ASCD. Chapter 1.

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

Week 8: Mid-course Q&A and reflection on 3/16. Midterm due on 3/18 (Tues 3/16, Thurs 3/18)

No readings this week. **EVERYONE ATTENDS TUESDAY DISCUSSION**

➤ **Midterm assigned on 3/16, due on 3/18 by 9pm**

Week 9: Focus on the community – envisioning sustainable communities (Tues 3/23, Thurs 3/25)

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

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 TUESDAY from group 2**

Week 10: Focus on the community – norms and frames (Tues 3/30, Thurs 4/1)

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.

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 (Tues 4/6, Thurs 4/8)

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.

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 prior to their assigned discussion group**

Week 12: Focus on the community – place and power (Tues 4/13, Thurs 4/15)

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.

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 TUESDAY from group 1**

Week 13: Focus on the community – empowerment (Tues 4/20, Thurs 4/22)

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

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: Reflection and consolidation (Tues 4/27, Thurs 4/29)

[reading to be determined]

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

➤ **FINAL Exams DUE: Thursday, May 6th @ 9pm.**

### **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. I know that there are formal processes and procedures in place to handle this through the McBurney Center, but sometimes these don't tell the full story. Please tell me as soon as possible if there is something else I should know to help you participate fully in the course and get as much as you possibly can from the experience. 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: **Check your assumptions before you offer help.** Scannies don't all look alike! And neither do great writers and speakers of English.

**If English is not your first language** and you believe the reading and writing components of this course will be challenging to you, 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/>

### **IMPORTANT NOTE #4: Children in class and other family responsibilities**

NOTE for 2021 edition – obviously some of these specifics don't apply, but the principle remains the same! Let me know if you have questions.

I understand that you have important obligations outside of school, obligations that need to be balanced against “being a student.” If you have children, please know that:

- (1) Breastfeeding babies are welcome in class as often as is necessary.
- (2) For older children and babies, I understand that unforeseen disruptions in childcare often put parents in the position of having to miss class to stay home with a child. While this is not meant to be a long-term childcare solution, occasionally bringing a child to class in order to cover gaps in care is perfectly acceptable.
- (3) If you bring babies or children to class, I will ask you to sit close to the door. If your child needs special attention and is disrupting learning for other students, you may step outside until their needs are met.
- (4) If and when children are present in class, I expect all students to work with me to create a welcoming environment that is respectful of parents and their children.

Family responsibilities are not limited to parenting. I have had students with other sorts of care responsibilities, as well as students with responsibilities to their family farm or business. If such obligations make it hard to participate in class in the typical way outlined here, please talk to me and we'll figure something out.

**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 (including both lectures and discussions) plus about twice that much homework/reading per week over about 15 weeks.