

ENV 201E INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABILITY

Term
Lecturer:
E-mail:

Office Hours:

Class Meetings:

Prerequisite: open to all language levels; taught in English.

Students: ISA students

Contact hours: 45

I. Course Description

This course is an introduction to the basic concepts of sustainability. We will explore the environmental, economic, and social dimensions of sustainability and how these dimensions are interconnected. Topics covered may include the history of environmentalism, consumer behavior and consumption, energy sources, natural and built environments, social issues, public policies, and economic development.

Students will be asked to engage with the topics through readings, videos, and case studies to deepen their understanding of sustainability challenges and their solutions with an interdisciplinary approach.

II. Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Understand the basic concepts of sustainability and how the environmental, economic, and social dimensions are interconnected.
- Develop critical thinking skills to evaluate sustainability issues and challenges alongside potential solutions.
- Apply the concepts and knowledge learned in the course to real-world problems at the local and global level.
- Understand how individual behaviors can impact global wellbeing (and implement sustainable practices into everyday life)

III. Course Content (order of content may be modified)

1. Introduction to Sustainability
 - a. Environmental, social & economic
 - b. UN Sustainable Development Goals

2. Consumption
 - a. Waste & waste management
 - b. Recycling
3. Energy & Climate
 - a. Energy sources & consumption
 - b. Climate change
4. Ecosystems & Biodiversity
 - a. Tragedy of the Commons
 - b. Extinctions – animal & plant
5. Water & Food/Agriculture
 - a. Water cycle, water and wastewater treatment, stormwater management
 - b. Agriculture and sustainability
 - c. Food – Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), organic, local
6. Social & Environmental Justice
 - a. Environmental policies
 - b. Case Studies: Real-World Environmental Justice
 - i. Ex: Food deserts, Clean water access, Environmental gentrification
7. Economy
 - a. Doughnut Economics
8. Forward Thinking: What Comes Next

IV. Bibliography

Articles and web resources will be provided via Schoology.

- A selection of relevant articles from <https://grist.org/> - a nonprofit, independent media organization dedicated to telling stories of climate solutions and a just future.
- Sustainability by the U.S. EPA: <https://www.epa.gov/sustainability>
- Greece Country Profile by the European Environment Agency: <https://www.eea.europa.eu/themes/sustainability-transitions/sustainable-development-goals-and-the/country-profiles/greece-country-profile-sdgs-and>
- United Nations, The Paris Agreement: <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/the-paris-agreement>
- The Story of Stuff Video: [The Story of Stuff](#)
 - Other Story of Stuff resources as applicable: <https://www.storyofstuff.org/>
- A selection of relevant TED Talks: <https://www.ted.com/topics/sustainability>
- Environmental Justice Atlas: <https://ejatlas.org/>

V.I. How to succeed in this course:

To successfully complete this course, attendance is essential as enables the necessary **participation**. Both spontaneous and prepared interaction are categories used in the evaluation.

Due to the variety of topics covered in this course, come **prepared**. Becoming an **active learner** is one of the best ways to successfully finish this course: come always prepared to class: use the syllabus to be aware about will be covered or due in class, do all assignments before class, review before the class and be organized.

V.II. Course evaluation:

Grades will be determined according to the following.

Sustainability & Me – What’s my Ecological Footprint?	25%
Group Activity & Reflection – Limited Resource Activity (Systemic and Social Inequalities Demonstration)	35% (10% Group Activity 25% Reflection Paper)
Integrating Knowledge – Current Sustainability Issues	40%

Assignments & Assessments

All written assignments should be original work. Writing should be thoughtful – including critical reflection and analysis – free of major grammatical errors and show signs of editing before submission. They should be double-spaced in a 12-point, easy-to-read, font.

- Sustainability & Me – What’s my Ecological Footprint?
 - Students will complete an ecological footprint assessment (found online at <https://www.footprintcalculator.org/home/en>). Students should consider their footprint from their day-to-day life at home, not from their time abroad. If students are unsure of various aspects of their footprint, they should make their best-educated guess or default to the average provided on the calculator.
 - After completing the assessment, students will write a 3-5 page paper reflecting on their Ecological Footprint. Students will provide an overview of their personal Ecological Footprint and their initial reactions to their footprint. Students will then compare their personal Ecological Footprint to the average of their home country, and the average of their host country – how does your footprint compare to the average footprint? Does the average of each country surprise you? Why or why not? Finally, students will review and analyze some of the solutions, and discuss which solutions they can implement easily, and which solutions would be more challenging.
- Group Activity & Reflection – Limited Resource Activity (Systemic and Social Inequalities Demonstration)
 - In class, students will complete the Limited Resource Activity (directions found online at https://groundworkusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/GWUSA-Learners-to-Leaders-Environmental-Justice-Literacy_Curriculum_08.10.18.pdf page 6 – the activity can be modified to use supplies on hand, with fewer groups as needed. The course instructor can serve as the volunteer for each group if additional volunteers aren’t available). At the end of the activity, there will be a guided group

discussion. Students are expected to actively participate to receive full credit for the assignment (10%)

- After completing the activity in class, students will write a 3-5 page paper reflection on the activity. Students will expand on the group discussion questions and deeply consider how this activity demonstrated systemic and social inequalities in society. Students should consider the role they played in their group – what actions did they take? Did they ever choose not to speak up or act? Why did they make those choices? Was there anything they could have done differently? Students should also reflect on their group as a whole – how did they make group decisions? Did they have enough resources needed? If the activity was repeated, would they make different or similar choices given their increased knowledge? Finally, students should reflect on how they see this activity being applicable to real-world scenarios – how can they use this experience to make an impact on issues impacting them/their communities? (25%)
- Integrating Knowledge – Current Sustainability Issues
 - Students will research a current sustainability/environmental issue that is impacting their home or host communities. Students should pick a topic/issue that is meaningful or interesting to them. Using the knowledge gained from this course, they will write a 5-7 page paper in which they critically analyze the issue, discuss the challenges, and provide possible solutions.

Grade dissemination:

During the first week, the students will be explained how they will learn of their grades from assignments and assessments

IMPORTANT: the dates outlined for the exam, quizzes and delivery of the work, including the oral presentation if appropriate, are **NON-MOVABLE** except for **FORCE MAJEURE**. The exceptions will have to be approved by the professor and academic direction.

If a student considers that there is a force majeure, he/she will have to show the document to the teacher at the time of the request. Without the corresponding document, any exception will be accepted.

The following are considered forces of cause majeure:

- medical reasons
- academic issues justified by the home university
- safe issues (appointment at the consulate, embassy or police)
- job interview
- return to the country of origin due to the loss of a close relative

VI. Grading scale

Final grades will be calculated according to the following scale:

Grading Scale (%)	
94-100	A
90 – 93	A-
87 – 89	B+
84 – 86	B
80 – 83	B-
77 – 79	C+
74 – 76	C
70 – 73	C-
67 – 69	D+
64 – 66	D
60 – 63	D-
0 – 59	F

Grade dispute:

The deadline for claiming grades is 30 days from the receipt of the certificate at the university of origin.

VII. Course policies

VII.I. Attendance

Class attendance is mandatory and is taken every class day and reflected in the course attendance sheet.

An 85% attendance rate is required for the successful completion of the course. Perfect attendance will be taken positively into account in the participation section.

If a student exceeds this limit, 10 points will be taken off of the final grade. Reaching a 20% of unexcused absences means that the transcript for this subject will show “not attended course”.

Excused absences: Medical Certificates that will be considered only if issued by a physician (not notes from the family explaining the student’s absence). The certificates must include the exact dates for which a student should be excused for having missed classes. Courses cannot be audited, so attendance is possible only for students enrolled in a specific class.

Punctuality: Students are expected to arrive on time to class and to return directly to class after class breaks. Arriving 10 minutes late (or more) and/or early class departures are considered unexcused absences and will be taken into account as half an absence.

Attending class is not only the presence in the classroom. The professor will encourage active participation in the course.

Auditors: Courses cannot be taken as auditors, thus attendance is possible only for students enrolled in a specific class.

VII.II. Conduct in class

Students who actively participate in classroom activities and who maintain a professional and respectful attitude will be evaluated positively. Students must not eat or use laptops during the class (unless specifically authorized by the teacher).

VII.III. Late work

One half point will be taken off (from the learning activities grade) for homework that is submitted late repeatedly. Late assignments will be corrected but will not be graded.

Missing a class does not release the student from completing the homework assigned or studying the topics covered in class that day.

VII.IV. Make-up Exams

If a student cannot be present for an examination for a valid reason (see V.II.) and approved by the professor and academic direction, a make-up exam will be given.

VII.V. Exam retention

After exams are graded, the teacher will review the examination with the class and collect all exams. The exams will be retained for one semester following the current one, and then they will be destroyed.

VII.VI. Academic Honesty

Students are expected to act in accordance with their university standards of conduct concerning plagiarism and academic dishonesty.

VII.VII. Special accommodations

Students with special needs who require reasonable accommodations, special assistance or specific aid in this course (either for properly making-up classes, taking exams, etc.) should direct their request to Academic Coordination during the first days of the course.

Teaching staff is required to report any disclosures harassment or violence of any kind.