

COURSE OUTLINE
GEOG 406 – Sustainable Cities

Lecture: Thursdays 2:30 – 5:20pm in Clearihue Building A317

Office Hours: Mondays 10:00am – 12 noon and Thursdays 1:00pm - 2:30pm (or by appointment)

Office Location: David Turpin Building B214

Contact: vbarr@uvic.ca

We acknowledge and respect the lək'ʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Welcome to GEOG 406 – Sustainable Cities! In this course we will be exploring how cities (mostly in Canada but learning from elsewhere too) are grappling with some of the daunting social, ecological and economic crises they are currently facing. We will start with understanding sustainability from an urban perspective, then dive into the various policies, practices and infrastructure cities are using to achieve [some elements of] sustainability. In the end, the goal is to create healthier, more resilient and socially just cities for all.

We will approach the course content from an urban planning perspective with an emphasis on local governance and equity. We will also take an optimistic (even enthusiastic!) tone, illustrating the most promising pathways toward a brighter future for cities, while working to understand the significant structural barriers that continue to exist.

While we will explore some theory, we will spend much more time examining what is going on in cities in practice – through case studies, in-class exercises, field trips, and projects with community partners.

KEY THEMES:

- Health and well-being
- Equity and social justice
- Governance and power

REQUIRED TEXT(S)

There is no textbook for this course. Instead, a series of readings and videos (mostly community stories and online reports from governments, non-profit organizations, researchers and consultants) will be used. Class readings will be made available on Brightspace prior to each lecture.

To do well in this course, it is essential to complete all assigned readings or videos prior to each class. Without that prior knowledge, it will be difficult for you to fully engage in the discussions each class, and it is through those discussions that you are likely to learn the most.

RECOMMENDED TEXT(S)

See Brightspace.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

This course offers the opportunity to learn not just about sustainability in and with cities, but to also gain some of the skills needed to help foster sustainability with urban environments in Canada. Specifically, the course is designed to help you to:

- Gain a strong working understanding of the complex array of social, economic and environmental challenges and opportunities facing Canadian cities;
- Understand how those challenges and opportunities relate to the development of healthy, just cities and communities that offer a place for all to thrive;
- Learn about the variety of ways in which cities are acting to strengthen sustainability (or not);
- Question the ways in which cities are now tackling sustainability-related challenges, and discuss different perspectives and ideas in a respectful way;
- Become more motivated to be part of the solution, now and in the future;
- Learn about, and be part of, exciting work that is being done in the Victoria region.

EVALUATION

Assignment	% of Final Grade	Due Date
Assignment #1: Sustainability assessment of your hometown	10%	January 30
Assignment #2: Just City Backgrounder – equity analysis of one sustainability area	15%	February 27
Assignment #3: Term Project – community-engaged project addressing a local sustainability issue (deliverable + short in-class presentation). Completed in small groups.	25%	April 2
Class Engagement (Participation) – positive contributions to the class learning environment	15%	ongoing
Final Take-Home Exam – open-book, written answer exam to be completed during the regular exam period	35%	During the April exam period

GRADING SYSTEM

As per the Academic Calendar:

Grade	Grade point value	Grade scale	Description
A+	9	90-100%	
A	8	85-89%	
A-	7	80-84%	Exceptional, outstanding and excellent performance. Normally achieved by a minority of students. These grades indicate a student who is self-initiating, exceeds expectation and has an insightful grasp of the subject matter.
B+	6	77-79%	
B	5	73-76%	
B-	4	70-72%	Very good, good and solid performance. Normally achieved by the largest number of students. These grades indicate a good grasp of the subject matter or excellent grasp in one area balanced with satisfactory grasp in the other area.
C+	3	65-69%	
C	2	60-64%	Satisfactory, or minimally satisfactory. These grades indicate a satisfactory performance and knowledge of the subject matter.
D	1	50-59%	Marginal Performance. A student receiving this grade demonstrated a superficial grasp of the subject matter.
F	0	0-49%	Unsatisfactory performance. Wrote final examination and completed course requirements; no supplemental.
N	0	0-49%	Did not write examination or complete course requirements by the end of term or session; no supplemental.

GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT INFO

- Geography Department website: uvic.ca/socialsciences/geography/
- Geography Department Chair: geogchair@uvic.ca
- Geography Undergraduate Advising: geogadvising@uvic.ca

BRIGHTSPACE

Brightspace will be used in this class. There you will find all readings, lecture slides, assignment details, information about field trips and more. Please check it often!

POLICY ON LATE ASSIGNMENTS

13-week classes move very quickly, and late work makes it hard to keep up and engage with your peers. As a result, late assignments will be accepted for up to 1 week after the due date with a 10% penalty.

I know many unexpected things can happen and life can throw unexpected curves. If you are behind in the course or something happens that puts you behind/ you need an extension, please contact me immediately and together we will develop a new workplan.

After one week, I will not accept late work in this course unless it was agreed upon by email as part of an individualized workplan.

POLICY ON ATTENDANCE

Participation in this course is key and is worth 15% of your final grade. In each class we will be completing tasks, discussions, and activities that add to your understanding of the content, so it is essential that you are there. In addition, you will sometimes lead small group activities in class and reflect on that experience. We will use Brightspace for the class readings/videos, preparing for each class with some questions to consider, and learning more about the assignments. I will not be recording lectures but will provide my slides through Brightspace after each class.

I aim for this class to be so fun and interesting that you always want to attend! To that end, we will have guest speakers, two local field trips, and activities in class.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

It is every student's responsibility to be aware of the university's policies on academic integrity, including policies on **cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized use of an editor, multiple submission, and aiding others to cheat**.

Policy on Academic Integrity: web.uvic.ca/calendar/undergrad/info/regulations/academic-integrity.html

If you have any questions or doubts, talk to me, your course instructor. For more information, see uvic.ca/learningandteaching/cac/index.php. AI tools may be used for brainstorming and research, but not for generating final submissions. Students must cite any AI-assisted work and are responsible for the quality of their final work. We will discuss this more fully in class.

ACCESSIBILITY

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a documented disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach me and/or the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) as soon as possible (uvic.ca/services/cal/). The CAL staff is available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals, and arrange appropriate accommodations. The sooner you let us know your needs, the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

POSITIVITY AND SAFETY

The University of Victoria is committed to promoting, providing and protecting a positive and safe learning and working environment for all its members.

SEXUALIZED VIOLENCE RESOURCE OFFICE (SVRO)

If you have been directly or indirectly impacted by sexualized violence, reach out to the SVRO for information, advice, resolution options (restorative and disciplinary) as well as support options and referrals. The SVRO is both survivor-centred and trauma-informed in their approach.

eqhr01@uvic.ca

Sedgewick C Wing

www.uvic.ca/svp

EQUITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS (EQHR)

UVic Equity and Human Rights is a resource for students, staff and faculty who have experienced discrimination and harassment and are looking for informal and formal resolution options as well as advice, coaching and/or education. We are available for confidential consultations so that you can ask questions and learn your options.

equity@uvic.ca

Sedgewick C Wing

www.uvic.ca/equity

RESOURCES FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

The University of Victoria offers a number of resources to support international students as they pursue their studies. UVic's [International Centre for Students](#) is the primary office supporting international students on campus at the university-wide level and provides various supportive program through the [UVic Global Community Initiative](#), including a Mentorship Program and Conversation Partner Program. For academic advising-related questions, students in the Geography Department are also encouraged to meet with the Geography Undergraduate Advisor (geogadvising@uvic.ca) as well as an academic advisor in the [Academic Advising Centre](#) early in their studies to help map out a plan to declare a major and complete university program requirements. Other resources include the [Centre for Academic Communication](#) and the [Math and Stats Assistance Centre](#). International students are also encouraged to contact the International Student Liaison in Geography (Prof. CindyAnn Rose-Redwood, cindyann@uvic.ca), who can assist in making connections with other international and domestic students in the Geography Department and share opportunities for getting involved in departmental activities more broadly.

COURSE EXPERIENCE SURVEY (CES)

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, as in all other courses at UVic, you will have the opportunity to complete an anonymous survey regarding your learning experience (CES). The survey is vital to providing feedback to me regarding the course and my teaching, as well as to help the department improve the overall program for students in the future. The survey is accessed online and can be done on your laptop, tablet, or mobile device. I will remind you and provide you with more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.

WEEKLY CALENDAR

WEEK	DATE (2026)	MODULE / THEME	CONTENT / TOPIC AREA
1	Thursday, January 8	Introduction	Course overview SDGs & 6 course modules
2	Thursday, January 15*		Key elements of urban sustainability How urban sustainability can be measured
3	Thursday, January 22	Social Systems & Human Well-being	Economic development, poverty & equity Community partners meet & greet
4	Thursday, January 29		Public health & healthy cities Environmental justice Guest speaker TBC
5	Thursday, February 5	Urban Planning & Design	Sustainable land use & zoning Active & sustainable transportation planning
6	Thursday, February 12		Field trip #1 – North Park
7	READING BREAK FEBRUARY 15 - 21		
8	Thursday, February 26**	Energy & Resilience	Green building Waste & water management
9	Thursday, March 5		Emergency management & disaster resilience Guest speaker TBC
10	Thursday, March 12	Policy & Governance	Roles of different levels of government Guest speaker(s) TBC
11	Thursday, March 19		Data-driven governance Community engagement and power
12	Thursday, March 26	Summarize & Celebrate	Field trip #2 – Downtown Victoria (TBC)
13	Thursday, April 2		Student presentations & celebration Community partners attend

*January 18 is the last day for 100% reduction of second term fees for standard courses

January 21 is the last day for adding courses that begin in the second term

**February 28 is the last day for withdrawing from full year and second term courses without penalty of failure

DISCLAIMER

The above schedule, policies, procedures, and assignments in this course are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances.

NOTE:

A note to remind you to take care of yourself. Do your best to maintain a healthy lifestyle this semester by eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep and taking some time to relax. This will help you achieve your goals and cope with stress. All of us benefit from support during times of struggle. You are not alone.

Counselling Services - *Counselling Services can help you make the most of your university experience. They offer free professional, confidential, inclusive support to currently registered UVic students.* uvic.ca/services/counselling/

Health Services - *University Health Services (UHS) provides a full service primary health clinic for students, and coordinates healthy student and campus initiatives.* uvic.ca/services/health/

Centre for Accessible Learning - *The CAL staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations* uvic.ca/services/cal/. *The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.*

Elders' Voices - *The Office of Indigenous Academic and Community Engagement (IACE) has the privilege of assembling a group of Elders from local communities to guide students, staff, faculty and administration in Indigenous ways of knowing and being.* uvic.ca/services/indigenous/students/programming/elders/index.php