

Fall 2015  
**M R 1:00-2:20 pm**  
**COR B111**

# Geog 406

## Sustainable Cities

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Office: DTB B210

Office hrs: M 3-5 pm

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### Course Overview

This course grapples with the challenges and opportunities facing contemporary cities. We begin with a critical interrogation of this wildly popular but elusive concept of “sustainability”. We then use two recent texts - on “Sustainist Design” and “Happy Cities” - as a base for exploring the complexity of urban sustainability. The course features a blend of theoretical reflection and practical case analysis of innovative, local and international sustainability projects, with an engaging field component. We want to explore how we might create vibrant places that would allow us to live, get around, build, work, and engage with others in socio-culturally, economically, and ecologically responsible and regenerative ways.



### Assessment

- Policies:**
1. Late policy – 10% penalty per day late for 3 days (for assignment). Contact instructor before Quizzes or field trips if you must miss (for legitimate, documented reason). Zero tolerance for late final exams.
  2. Plagiarism – zero tolerance (see UVic’s [academic integrity policy](#))
  3. Accessibility – please meet with instructor and the [Resource Centre for Students with a Disability](#) early if you may need accommodation
  4. Do your part to ensure an engaging classroom. Be punctual, respectful, compassionate and attentive.
1. **Readings Quizzes** – (15%) ½ hour quizzes on Sept 28, Oct 19, Nov 12
  2. **Sustainist Design Case Study Assignment** (25%) In a group of 2-5 you will research and produce a short illustrated case study of a sustainability project based on the framework developed in the “Sustainist Design” book. Due Oct 14<sup>th</sup>.
  3. **Final Exam** (30%) – Take home exam given on Dec 3 and due on Dec 10.
  4. **Field Trip Participation** (15%) – Attendance at 2 of 3 planned field trips and a 1 page well-written reflective summary of your experience (on your own or with a group of 2-5).
  5. **General Participation** (15%) – consists of quality contributions to class and / or online forum discussion AND attending 2 relevant events during the term, writing up and submitting a short well-written overview of the event, what you learned and how it related to class OR working alone or with a group of 2-5 undertaking a project contributing to local sustainability efforts with a community group or government and submitting a short well-written summary of your involvement, experience, and learning
- Note on marks: A-level marks (80%+) reflect exceptional (beyond expectations), outstanding, or at least highly competent efforts. B+/B level marks (73-79%) reflect good or at least acceptable efforts (usually above the class average). B-/C+ level marks (65-72%) represent average efforts, showing some understanding but deficient in some way. C/D level marks (50-64%) represent passable but largely insufficient efforts, while F marks (<50%) represent failing the course.

### Course readings

There are two mandatory course texts and additional readings will be posted on the CourseSpaces site. Reading - and engaging with the readings (highlighting, underlining, taking good notes etc.) – is essential for your enjoyment of and success in this course.

1. Schwarz, M. & Krabbendam, D. , B. 2014. *Sustainist Design Guide*.
2. Montgomery, C. 2013. *Happy City: Transforming Our Lives Through Urban Design*.

If you look at the science about what is happening on earth and aren't pessimistic, you don't understand the data. But if you meet the people who are working to restore this earth and the lives of the poor, and you aren't optimistic, you haven't got a pulse. What I see everywhere in the world are ordinary people willing to confront despair, power, and incalculable odds in order to restore some semblance of grace, justice, and beauty to this world.

- *Paul Hawken*

## Notes on learning expectations

1. Think deeply about why you are here and what you want to get out of your experience at UVic in the short time you'll be here. Use this time wisely to develop marketable skills and good habits - e.g. effective written, visual and oral communication, critical thinking\*, problem solving, empathic listening, organization, perseverance, and initiative.
2. I consider such skill development and good habit formation as being at least as important as content mastery in this course. While I want you to learn important things about sustainable communities, I also want you to develop particular skills and habits. Keep in mind employers are much more concerned with your skills and habits than your marks. For example, communicating insightfully and persuasively about ecological and issues is absolutely critical for bringing positive change about.
3. Effective learning involves recognizing how the course material is directly relevant to your life – in this case how sustainability is not just some topic of scholarly consideration but intimately about your future on this planet.
4. \*Note: critical thinking is often misrepresented as cynical, pessimistic, or “being against things”. In this class it should rather be understood in terms of healthy skepticism with received wisdom recognizing the world could / should be otherwise; ceaseless, piercing questioning of status quo “common sense”; trying to make important linkages and connections; recognizing and evaluating multiple perspectives and the values and assumptions underlying each (including our own); evaluating evidence and arguments (while recognizing power relations in knowledge claims), arriving at defensible positions on issues and working towards a more respectful, inclusive, just, and fair world (or country in this case).

## Important Dates:

Sept 7 – No class

Sept 28 – “Sustainist Design Guide” Quiz

Oct 8 – “Sustainist Design Guide” Assignment due

Oct 19 – “Happy City” Quiz #1

Nov 12 – “Happy City” Quiz #2

Dec 3 – Last day of class, all outstanding work due, take home final administered

Dec 10 – Take-home final due

Note: at this time I have not confirmed dates of field trips

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

I value your feedback on this course. Towards the end of term, 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 via MyPage 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.