



University
of Victoria

Geography 406

Sustainable Cities

Tentative course outline subject to change. See CourseSpaces site for updates.

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Office: DTB 214 | office hours Mondays & Thursdays 12:00-1pm or by appointment

Course times: Spring 2019 | Monday & Thursday 10 – 11:20 am

Course Overview

This course grapples with the daunting challenges facing contemporary cities and opportunities for promoting more sustainable paths forward. Blending theoretical reflection and practical case analysis of innovative, local and international sustainability projects, we explore how we might create vibrant places that would allow us to live, get around, build, work, create, and engage with others in socio-culturally, economically, and ecologically responsible and regenerative ways. In the midst of a time of great pessimism, the course takes a critically optimistic tone, focusing on creative visioning and marking out promising pathways to a brighter future while recognizing the significant barriers in the way. As well as standard lectures, the course will be built around engaging group discussion, a careful read of two recent texts - “Sustainist Design Guide” and “Happy City”, guest speakers, field excursions, and provocative videos.

Learning Goals

- Demonstrate a solid foundation in urban planning, sustainability, and the diversity of contemporary perspectives in urban place theory and place-making practices,;
- Demonstrate an understanding of debates in human geographical inquiry as concerning place-making, sustainability, urban design, political ecology;
- Cultivate one’s own “geographical imagination” by critically assessing current urban sustainability practices.

Course readings

There are two mandatory textbooks for this course as well as mandatory CourseSpaces readings, around all of which the course is has been designed. Reading – and engaging with the readings (highlighting, underlining, taking good notes etc.) – is essential for your enjoyment of and success in this course.

Mandatory texts (you need to buy these by the time the course begins):

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

Course Policies

1. Late policy – 10% penalty per day late for 3 days (for assignment). Contact instructor before field trips if you must miss (for legitimate, documented reason). Zero tolerance for missing your seminar presentation or for late final exams.
2. Plagiarism – zero tolerance (see UVic's [academic integrity policy](#))
3. Accessibility – please meet with me and the [Centre for Accessible Learning](#) early if you may need accommodation.
4. Do your part to ensure a safe, kind, engaging classroom. Be punctual, respectful, open to diversity, compassionate, and attentive. Please turn your cell phones off in class, unless we're looking something up.
UVic takes sexualized violence seriously, and has raised the bar for what is considered acceptable behaviour. We encourage students to learn more about how the university defines sexualized violence and its overall approach by visiting www.uvic.ca/svp.

Course Components & Assignments

1. **Academic Journey Assignment (15%)** – Due Jan 17.
2. **Sustainist Design Case Study Assignment (20%)** – In a small group you will research, and produce a short illustrated case study of a sustainability project based on the framework developed in the *Sustainist Design* text. Due Feb. 26 at midnight.
3. **Happy City Seminar (20%)** – In a small group (3 people) you will lead a discussion focusing on a chapter from the text *Happy City* sometime during the second half of the term.
4. **Participation (20%)** – consists of quality contributions to class discussion; participation in field trips; and attending 2 relevant events during the term – writing up and submitting a short well-written overview of the event (1-2 pages), what you learned and how it related to class.
5. **Final Exam (25%)** – Take home exam given on April 5 and due on April 8.

Class Meetings and Participation—We will meet together twice a week (Mondays and Thursdays). Classes may include lectures, guest speakers, field trips, film clips, presentations, student-lead segments and discussion of materials. I may bring visitors to class occasionally when their research work is relevant to our learning and I think you might enjoy meeting them and hearing about the kinds of work they do. Your participation grade will reflect your willingness to engage in both your own questions and reflections in class, as well as those of your colleagues.

I will put any supporting learning resources for the course (from me or other colleagues in the course) on the CourseSpaces site.

Undergraduate Grading Standards

| A+ | A | A- | B+ | B | B- | C+ | C | D | F |
|---------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|-------------|
| 90-100% | 85-89% | 80-84% | 77-79% | 73-76% | 70-72% | 65-69% | 60-64% | 50-59% | 49% or Less |

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.

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 skills and good habits around critical thinking*, effective written and visual communication, working with others, 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 landscape, place, geohumanities and ways of seeing, I also want you to develop particular skills and habits. Keep in mind that future people you will work with will be just as concerned with your skills and habits as your marks.
3. Effective learning involves recognizing how the course material is directly relevant to your life – in this case how your own story is woven into the story of a landscape. Rather than think of classes as irrelevant drudgery that you have to get through, think of them as unique opportunities for personal transformation and growth.

*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 things that 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.

Notes on Assignments

Assignments: For all assignments use 12 pt Serif font, 1-inch margins, number pages, and a list of references. DO NOT include a title page (save paper!), but DO include your title, your name, my name, the course number, and the date at the top of the first page. Staple your paper in the top left corner (NO FANCY BINDERS!!!). Please follow the word length requirement.

Referencing: Students are required to follow a standard referencing style, using in text citations and bibliography (usually Chicago Style: AUTHOR-DATE in human geography). Exact formatting can be of your own choice, but please examine and follow a geography journal such as Annals of the Association of American Geographers, Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, or Progress in Human Geography for examples of proper citation styles.

Course Experience Survey

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 more detailed information nearer the time but please be thinking about this important activity during the course.

Tentative Schedule

The following schedule is subject to change but will give you a sense of how the course will progress. Consult the CourseSpaces site for updates as well as for additional weekly readings.

| Week | Topic | Due Dates |
|-------------------|---|--|
| Jan 7, 10 | Intro A journey to sustainability | |
| Jan 14, 17 | What is the history of modern cities? How can Indigenous perspectives help? | “Your Academic Journey” assignment due |
| Jan 21, 24 | Modernism to Sustainism Sustainist design | |
| Jan 28, 31 | Sustainist design FIELD TRIP: meet with Councillor Ben Isitt, downtown | |
| Feb 4, 7 | Happy City 1 Happy City 2 & 3 | |
| Feb 11, 14 | Political Ecology & sustainable agriculture FIELD TRIP to Gorge Park Community Gardens | |
| Feb 18, 21 | NO CLASS: READING BREAK | |
| Feb 25, 28 | Urban natural areas & prep for Cuthbert Holmes Field Trip Sustainist Design Case study debrief | Case study due Tues. Feb 26, Midnight |
| Mar 4, 7 | FIELD TRIP: Cuthbert Holmes Park Happy City 4 & 5 | |
| Mar 11, 14 | Case studies Happy City 6 & 7 | |
| Mar 18, 21 | Happy City 8 & 9 FIELD TRIP | |
| Mar 25, 28 | Happy City 10 & 11 Happy City 12 & 13 | |
| Apr 1, 4 | Happy City Wrap-up Semester Wrap-up | |