

351M-Multicultural/ 351O-Social Science/351U-Humanities: Sustainability and the creative imagination: *The End or Beginning of a New Way of Life?*

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This course is an iteration of *Innovations in Sustainability*, a student generated course offered in Fall 2019. We will study communities, practices, and principles that are pioneering ways of living, relating, and creating a sustainable future in the midst of the contemporary global environmental, economic, and political crises. The premise is that the new emerges from the old, both in nature and in human affairs. What are the ways in which the new is being imagined and practiced in communities around the world? How does this imaginary draw on a history of utopian thinking from the past? What is it about our nature as a species that makes us have such a destructive and creative impact on our planet? What does re-inventing our way of life mean? Finally, what are the structural reasons for our current crisis? We will find answers by drawing upon faculty from across disciplines on our campus and by students working in groups on projects that seek to build sustainable futures in the present.

Weekly meetings will include lectures, discussions, field trips, and project-based work in groups and individually. The first half of the class will be led by faculty, introducing students to concepts, approaches, and histories from their disciplinary strengths; and helping you identify the problem you would like to work on in this class. In the second part, students will work primarily in groups, on specific issues that you have selected to work on.

Course Objectives:

By the end of the course, students should have acquired:

- A working knowledge of how various academic disciplines and communities understand and define the relationship between *community* and *sustainability*.
- An understanding of creativity as a fundamental feature of the human species.
- Experience in working collaboratively on formulating problems, choosing forms of enquiry and expression best suited to the problem, and creating plans and/or practical solutions
- Basic skills in presenting and communicating research and findings with others, including, making choices of medium based on the project goals.
- A deepened ability for self-reflection and a sense of ethical responsibility to oneself and others

Readings/texts

Everything is available online or on D2L other than the following:

- William McDonough and Michael Braungart, *Cradle to Cradle* (New York, 20002)

- Kali Akuno (Editor) & Ajamu Nangwaya, *Jackson Rising The Struggle for Economic Democracy and Black Self-Determination in Jackson, Mississippi* 2017

Readings must be done prior to the class they are assigned for.

Assignments:

1. Idea book: 10%: Keep a journal in which you respond to the weekly readings. Your responses should consider: What did you find most compelling about the readings? What significant aspect did the author/s leave out? If they did, why do you think they did that? Was it the time period, author bias, or available technology? Note passages, sentences, terms you found significant. Finally, what ideas did the reading generate for you? It could be an observation, a plan, something to follow up on. The idea book should include materials other than words, e.g., pictures, poems, tables, data, printed notes—whatever is necessary for you. Name your book. You must always have this book with you in class. In certain classes, you will be given an assignment. This will be your journal entry for that week and can be completed **before or after** the class.
2. Group portfolio: 10%: From Week 4, your group will keep a website/portfolio/blog/folder where you will keep your research, highlighting projects, ideas or problems that you found in association with the assigned readings for the class, record of your experiences and materials you found. This is material that you generate as much for yourself as for others in class. This will also come in handy when you create your group presentations to be workshopped Week 9.
3. Project proposal for the final project: 15%. The proposal should formulate the problem; describe your research, including the method and/or process; outline plan of action; budget; and time line. 3-5 pages. This will be turned in by the group as a whole and must also be put on the group's webpage.
4. Final Project 50%.
 - 10%: evaluation by peers and self-evaluation of individual contribution to the project.
 - 10% for the presentation of your project.
 - 30% on the project and report on challenges, insights, and future recommendations.
5. Class participation 15%

Week 1: Introductions - to each other and the course

- **Sustainability: What does that mean?**
- **Learning to trust: lessons from theater.**

Week 2: Climate Change: Dr. Justin Schoof (Geography)

Week 3: The Creative imagination/the human as homo faber

Week 4: Current state of food production and sustainable food systems

Field trip to [All Seasons Farm](#), a certified organic farm about [10 minutes south of campus](#). Tour with farmer, Jill Rendleman and overview of issues of sustainable food production; health benefits of locally grown food; risks of conventionally grown food; the costs of organic food.

Week 5: Architecture – designing our homes and cities

Week 6: Energy/Engineering

Week 7: Conservation in Community

Week 8: SIU Sustainability & Workshop and present your projects.

Week 9: Creativity and capitalism; ecology and the contemporary arts; designing your projects

Week 11-15: work on group projects and critiques.

Presentation of Projects: Time and Venue to be determined.

Week 16: Course evaluations; de-briefing