

International Perspectives on Climate Action

State University of New York, New Paltz

3 Credits

Course Description:

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been called the roadmap to a sustainable future by addressing complex challenges facing countries and people around the world. This course will introduce students to the history and development of the SDGs while exploring important themes and issues of a particular goal. Students will apply the insights gained to a collaborative project focused on their selected SDG with an international community-based, non-profit organization (NGO).

By the end of the course, students will be able to:

- Create a personal definition of sustainability and cite examples that support it
- Analyze the usefulness of the SDGs as a framework for action towards a more sustainable and equitable world from both a local and global perspective
- Explore and critically examine the issues and themes of SDG #13, Climate Action
- Develop, implement and contextualize a storytelling based project in collaboration with an international community-based or nonprofit organization whose work addresses SDG #13

Assignments and Grading

There are three main components to this course:

1. An introduction to the climate imperative and the UN's climate apparatus.
2. Your choice of lens through which you will gain a deeper understanding of some of the complex issues inherent in SDG 13
3. A Storytelling project developed in collaboration with the Friends of Brackenhurst Forest in Kenya to support their climate action efforts

You will be expected to participate in our online course discussions, including responding to posts by your classmates. You will also have short assignments in each unit of the lens you select, such as creating diagrams to illustrate the concepts you have studied. Your group will be responsible for developing the project with Friends of Brackenhurst Forest, for which you will submit a project outline and description and the final project.

<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Percentage of Final Grade</u>
Participation, including class discussions	30%
Assignments within your selected lens	20%
Project proposal	10%
Final Project	40%

Participation

Participation in graded discussion forums is a key part of this course. You will be asked to create a discussion post and comment on postings from your peers. Please see the course information page in Blackboard for discussion topics and due dates, and be sure to follow the directions in the discussion prompts.

Remember that a discussion in an academic forum is different from a comment section on a website. You may wish to draft your reply, and review it for content, critical thinking, tone, spelling, and so on. Please be sure to review the netiquette guidelines posted below.

Graded discussions:

Discussion 1:

Based on the work you've done in your lens, discuss three of the most pressing issues for SDG 13. Explain why these are critical issues, how these issues could be addressed, and how geography and/or culture influences the approach to addressing these issues.

Your initial post of at least 3 paragraphs is due July 21.

Respond to at least 2 other student posts in this section by July 23. Make sure at least one of the posts you respond to is written by a student going through another lens. Ask questions and respond to questions asked of you. We want you to engage with each other to explore how the lenses define and shape the way important issues are framed. Feel free to include images and relevant links.

Discussion 2:

Researching Friends of Brackenhurst Forest

Review the introductory information provided in our folder in Blackboard. Find resources (on the internet or through your personal connections) that inform you about the context of this organization, for example, dominant language(s), cultural characteristics of the area, economy, transportation and other logistics, etc. Post 3-5 paragraphs summarizing what you find, emphasizing what you think will be most important for other students to understand when developing the project. Initial post is due July 24. Ask questions of your peers and respond to questions asked of you throughout the project development phase.

Assignments:

Project with Friends of Brackenhurst Forest

You will work with your assigned team to develop and refine your project proposal. In Blackboard you will find a word doc and PDF of the project proposal assignment. Each team will submit a proposal for the "NGO story" portion of the assignment AND the "media project" portion.

To be clear on that- your team is creating two products. The first is a "story of the NGO." This may be whatever media format(s) your team selects. As I see it, this story tells the history, purpose, and activities of the NGO.

The second product is your "media project." This is a more targeted product that serves a specific purpose for the NGO. FBF described their need to "introduce themselves" to the nearby communities and potential members including their "value proposition" for members as well as showing off the forest they are restoring.

Deadlines for proposals: First draft- 10pm, Wednesday, July 29. Final draft- 10pm, Friday, July 31.

Upload instructions: You are to upload the proposal by 10pm Wednesday. You can revise your Wednesday submission and submit a second draft on Friday. By 10pm Friday you should upload your proposal to the google folder so that FBF can review and respond. FBF does not need your first draft- we will only send them the final draft. You only need to upload one file for both projects, and only one person from your group needs to upload.

A note on professionalism: Your first draft can be full of questions and comments on which you need guidance. This first draft can contain half-baked ideas. It can even have some portions incomplete. However, if your first draft is highly incomplete or has many questions I would expect to have some quality interaction with your group via zoom before you complete the final draft. The purpose of these interactions would be to help you progress to a narrowly focused project that you can complete with high quality work within our timeline. On the other hand, if you produce a comprehensive rough draft with fewer questions then I may be able to give you the required guidance via email. Your final draft should be polished and have each section clearly completed. Your final draft should provide a clear picture of the work you will do, justification and objectives for the work, specific products to be created, and roles and deadlines for group members.

Project scope: The task before you is not easy. We're to create high quality media products for an NGO we only just met. All our work with the NGO will be online, with limited interactions. With all this in mind, I encourage you to keep your project ideas small and give yourselves the best chance at creating high quality products. Short videos, podcasts (perhaps with photos), and photo essays may work well for their needs.

Project proposal due July 29 (draft) and July 31 (final).
Final project due August 10.

Course Organization

Course content is organized in folders. In Blackboard, you will find folders for each of the lenses, a folder for the project assignment, and a folder on the Friends of Brackenhurst Forest. .

The purpose of studying issues through a particular lens is to give you an idea of the variety and complexity of the SDG, while highlighting strategies and approaches to addressing these issues. In our class, you will have discussions that will allow you to interact with your peers who

may be looking at the SDG through other lenses. This multiplicity of views provides you an overview of the breadth of issues in our SDG and how they can be addressed.

You will need to select one lens and work through the content in that folder. You will have access to all of the folders, and you are welcome to study multiple lenses, however, you are responsible for selecting one lens and completing the content in that folder. You will need to sign up for that medium by completing the final project sign up sheet by the end of Thursday, July 16. If you do not sign up by 11:59 pm on Thursday, you will be assigned a lens to study. Sign up is available in Blackboard in the course welcome message.

Schedule of Course Activities

July 16-17

Participate in the Icebreaker introduction and select your lens by the end of the day, Thursday July 16.

July 20-24

Work through the materials and activities in your selected lens.

Discussion 1: Initial post due July 21. At least two responses to your peers due July 23.

Discussion 2: Initial post due July 24. Questions and Discussion with your peers to prepare your project proposal ongoing through July 31.

July 27-31

Project planning and information gathering with your NGO partner.

Note: Your group will be planning and developing this project together. Your particular role will be decided as the project is planned. You are expected to participate in meetings with your partner NGO, with other students in your group, and with your facilitator, and to be an active participant in discussions in the project folder. Summary notes from conversations with your partner should be posted in the project folder and will be counted towards your participation grade.

Assignment: Project proposal. Details are posted in Blackboard Y

August 3-7

Project work. You will be working on your project with other students and with your NGO partner. Your final project will need to be submitted and uploaded by August 10.

August 10-14

Discussion Activity: Reflection on Climate Action

Final project submitted and uploaded by August 10.

Lenses and Topics

Lens: Environmental Planning

1. Climate change as a wicked problem

- a. Elaborate on the scientific evidence that supports the conclusions that: a) climate change is occurring; b) climate change is anthropogenic;
 - b. Outline the arguments made by climate activists that there exists a moral imperative to mitigate the impacts of climate change;
 - c. Explain the characteristics of wicked problems, and identify those that are particularly salient to climate change and action;
 - d. Describe why global climate change is a wicked problem, and identify wicked characteristics of climate change;
 - e. Describe the steps of creating a mind map;
 - f. Articulate overarching observations about our collective understanding of climate change, based on observations and discussion of the mind maps created by participants in this course.
2. Frameworks of sustainability
 - a. Elaborate on several different frameworks of sustainability. The frameworks emphasized in this unit are:
 - i. Three Pillars of Sustainability
 - ii. Neoliberalism
 - iii. Strong and Weak Sustainability
 - iv. Resilience
 - v. Assessment of Sustainability.
 - b. Recite the Brundtland Commission's definition of sustainability and elaborate on its meaning;
 - c. Elaborate on the meanings and evolution of key concepts of the UN's sustainability program, including the Brundtland Commission, Millennium Goals and SDGs;
 - d. Use the sustainability frameworks presented in this unit to think critically about the on-the-ground realities of climate change and climate action. We will think critically about the Marshall Island and Hani Rice Terrace cases, though students should be able to extrapolate their learning to other cases.
 - e. Use the sustainability frameworks as starting points for describing and critiquing the UN SDGs.
 3. Social-ecological systems and ecological planning
 - a. Define ecological planning;
 - b. Describe the ecocentric ethic, and be able to identify policies, programs or projects that incorporate on the principles of ecocentrism;
 - c. Diagram the typical planning process and explain the actions that occur in each step;
 - d. Create a social-ecological systems map, and use the map to identify important elements of the human and ecological environments for consideration when implementing ecological planning;
 - e. Explain some relationships between the UN SDGs, SDG 13, and ecological planning
 4. The UN SDGs and SDG 13: Climate Action
 - a. Group the SDGs into categories based on similar focus areas or themes, and explain the methodology and characteristics of the categories.
 - b. Describe the intent of SDG 13, the metrics used to measure progress on this goal, and progress made over the past years;

- c. Explain the Small Island Developing States initiative, and its relationship to SDG 13.
- 5. Climate policy and programming at the UN
 - a. Draw and annotate a UN organizational chart/diagram that illustrates the organization's bureaucracy and structure around climate science and action;
 - b. Explain the purposes, functions of, and differences among several different climate oriented offices and programs. This includes examples of projects, programs and policies implemented by the UN and member nations and the ways that they exemplify climate action;
 - c. Elaborate on IPCC's science-based policy making process. This includes IPCC's report writing and science communications mechanisms.
 - d. Describe the ways that the media cover and manipulate IPCC reports, and the ways that this might influence consumers' perceptions of climate change, development of climate policy and climate action on the ground.
- 6. Partnerships and stakeholders for UN SDG 13
 - a. List many of the stakeholder constituencies whose perspectives are considered important in planning for and carrying out the UN SDGs;
 - b. Describe how officially recognized stakeholder groups participate in UN planning processes for the SDGs and SDG 13;
 - c. Elaborate on the breadth and variety of partnerships involved in meeting the UN SDGs, and SDG 13 in particular, and discuss recommended improvements to the partnership programs;
 - d. Create a stakeholder or organizational profile of a group engaged in UN SDG 13.

Lens: Food, Nutrition and Agriculture

- 1. Climate Action and the Food System
 - a. Why study food?
 - b. The modern food system as a driver of environmental degradation
 - c. Estimating your global footprint
 - d. Food in the Anthropocene
- 2. Climate Action, Food and Equity
 - a. Nutrition Equity
 - b. Food system inequities
 - c. Issues within the global food system
 - i. Safe working conditions
 - ii. Fair wages
 - iii. Animal welfare
 - iv. Disease transmission
 - v. Legal aspects
 - vi. Health
- 3. Climate Action and Animals in the Food System
 - a. Sustainable diets
 - b. Pasturing and husbandry
 - c. Dairy
 - d. Role of individual dietary choices in food system change
- 4. Climate Action and Wasted Food
 - a. Creating a sustainable food future

- b. Wasted food audit
 - c. Wasted food and natural resources
- 5. Climate Action and Agriculture
 - a. Crop production
 - b. Chemicals in agriculture
 - c. Land use change
 - d. Biodiversity infringement
- 6. Climate Action and Dietary Variety
 - a. Ensuring homeostasis with diversity
 - b. The importance of biodiversity
 - c. Minimally processed foods
- 7. Climate Action and Plastic Packaging
 - a. Plastic and health
 - b. Plastic and waste
 - c. Plastics recycling
 - d. Plastics audit
 - e. Packaging alternatives
- 8. Are we doomed?
 - a. Promoting food sustainability
 - b. Shifting eating patterns
 - c. Food systems interventions

ACADEMIC HONESTY

Academic integrity: Students are expected to maintain the highest standards of honesty in their college work. Cheating, forgery, and plagiarism are serious offenses, and students found guilty of any form of academic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary action. New Paltz's policy on academic integrity is found at http://www.newpaltz.edu/ugc/policies/policies_integrity.html, and several excellent resources to help with avoiding plagiarism are available on the Sojourner Truth Library's website: <http://lib.newpaltz.edu/assistance/plag.html>.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

Reasonable accommodation of individuals with disabilities: Students needing classroom and/or testing accommodations related to a disability should contact the Disability Resource Center (Student Union, Room 210, 845-257-3020) as close as possible to the beginning of the semester. The DRC will then provide students' instructors with an Accommodation Memo verifying the need for accommodations. Specific questions about services and accommodations may be directed to Deanna Knapp, Assistant Director (knappd@newpaltz.edu).