Course title: Sustainability and the Anthropocene
Course code: (GI) ENVI 2002 MASP
Programs offering course: Madrid Open Campus Block
Open Campus Track: STEM and Society
Language of instruction: English
U.S. semester credits: 3.00
Contact hours: 45.00
Term: Fall Block II 2020

Course Description
This course explores changes to our global environment in the Anthropocene and practices used to solve these impacts. It poses questions of current sustainability and global system failure. Can we design a society and economy that is sustainable, democratic, and prosperous? This course uses a broad interdisciplinary approach to build their understanding of central issues of sustainability. We critically examine sustainability through the lens of culture and societal change, political conflict, ecological economics, global environmental issues, globalization and development and ecological design.

Learning Objectives
By completing this course, students will:

- Define the Anthropocene, Holocene, the Great Acceleration and its impact on the Environment
- Understand the central elements of sustainability and critique historical attempts at sustainability
- Understand the complex interaction between the human- and the environmental- sphere; use critical thinking to discuss how environmental problems relate to human well-being
- Understand how local sustainability scales to regional and global sustainability
- Comprehend the intersection of human activity, culture, resource use and sustainability, and articulate strategies for achieving a more sustainable global future

Course Prerequisites
None.

Methods of Instruction
The course will be taught using lectures, case studies, an individual presentation, as well as field trips to events and locations. Classroom activities will involve group work and critical discussion groups considering and discussing key concepts. Students will also be expected to carry out an ethnographic field observation task and present their data to class for discussion. Invited guest speakers will add to the learning objectives of this course.

Assessment and Final Grade
1. Critical Reflections (3) 20%
2. Essay 15%
3. Individual Presentation 20%
4. Field Visit Journal 25%
5. Participation 20%
TOTAL 100%

Course Requirements
Critical Reflections (3)
Students will be presented with three individual environmental issues for debate and consideration. They will compose a 500-word response to each of the provocations. The first critical reflection will require them to discuss the major global threats around a current environmental issue. The second reflection will involve them in exploring a current national or global suggestion that is being considered as a way for solving a major environmental issue. The third provocation will require them to discuss the results from possible solutions that
have been implemented. The final critical response will critically reflect on an ongoing failure to act and debate about reducing a known environmental hazard despite current research and ethics that indicate the need for action. The reflections will be graded by how comprehensive and critically they address and respond to the different issues and provocations.

**Essay**

Students will select an aspect from the topics discussed in weeks one, two or three, and write a 1200-word essay on that aspect. The essay will consist of an introduction, an analysis of the topic, and a discussion about the main themes around the topic. It will draw on four academic readings to support the views discussed.

**Individual Presentation**

Each student will have 10-minutes to present their essay topic in front of the class. The presentation will be graded on how well the student presents their subject to the class, in a manner that expresses the main issues and understandings about the topic for a general lay audience. The presenter should be prepared to answer questions about the presentation by drawing on the content from mandatory readings and course content.

**Field Visit Journal**

Students will create a field journal reflecting on information collected during outside-of-classroom excursions throughout the course. The field journal should creatively utilize different forms of media (such as photographs, diagrams etc.), as well as written commentary relating to observations. The journal should include a 700-word written evaluation for each of the two site visits undertaken during the course. The evaluation must include at least two scholarly sources. The field journals will be graded based on demonstrated understanding of syllabus concepts and how these may be applied in practice. More detailed instructions will be given in advance of this assignment. The field journal must be submitted by the last week of the course.

**Participation**

Participation is valued as meaningful contribution to tangible learning, utilizing resources and materials as part of the course. Meaningful contribution requires students to be prepared in advance of each class session and to have regular attendance. Students must clearly demonstrate they have engaged with the materials as directed, for example, through classroom discussions, online discussion boards, peer-to-peer feedback (after presentations), interaction with guest speakers, and attentiveness on co-curricular and outside-of-classroom activities. Participation is NOT the same as attending.

**Attendance**

Regular class attendance is required throughout the program, and all absences will result in a lower participation grade for any affected CIEE course. Due to the intensive schedules for Open Campus and Short Term programs, absences that constitute more than 10% of the total course will result in a written warning.

Students who transfer from one CIEE class to another during the add/drop period will not be considered absent from the first session(s) of their new class, provided they were marked present for the first session(s) of their original class. Otherwise, the absence(s) from the original class carry over to the new class and count against the grade in that class.

For CIEE classes, excessively tardy (over 15 minutes late) students must be marked absent.

Attendance policies also apply to any required co-curricular class excursion or event, as well as to any required field placement. Students may not miss placement/work hours at an internship or service learning site unless approved in advance by the Academic Director and placement supervisor. All students must complete all of the requisite 100 minimum work hours on site at the internship or service learning placement to be eligible for academic credit.

Students who miss class for personal travel, including unforeseen delays that arise as a result of personal travel, will be marked as absent. No make-up or re-sit opportunity will be provided.

Attendance policies also apply to any required class excursion, with the exception that some class excursions cannot accommodate any tardiness, and students risk being marked as absent if they fail to be present at the appointed time.

Absences for classes will lead to the following penalties:
N.B. Course schedule is subject to change due to study tours, excursions, and local holidays. Final schedules will be included in the final syllabus provided to students on site.

**Weekly Schedule**

**Week 1**

**Class: 1.1 Sustainability and Our Future**

The syllabus will be reviewed in detail. The objectives of the course and the core concepts relating to environment and ethics will be presented and discussed.

Reading:

**Week 2**

**Class: 2.1 Earth and the Sustainability Crisis**

This class seeks to examine a range of fundamental questions relating to sustainability: Do we have a sustainability crisis? Why is sustainability important? How has humankind contributed to a sustainability crisis? What systems and methods are used to measure and report our planet’s current sustainability status?

Reading:

**Class: 2.2 The Challenges of Sustainability**

Students will examine current predominant challenges facing humankind and the development and management of sustainable systems. This class will look specifically at the role of humankind in degrading sustainability.

Reading:

**Class: 2.3 Assessing Anthropogenic Impacts and Sustainability Performance**

Students will provide an overview of how environmental and social impacts and performance can be measured and meanwhile investigate key indicators that are used in practice by both business and
Week 3

Class: 3.1 Planetary Boundaries - Drivers of Global Environmental Change

The vulnerability of distant peoples and places to global change in environment and society is nested and tele-connected. Here, we question that such vulnerabilities are linked through environmental change process feedbacks, economic market linkages, and flows of resources, people, and information.

Reading:

Class: 3.2 Global Changes to Human Environments: Synergisms in Drivers and Impacts

Global tipping points and planetary boundaries are discussed around the concept that more than the sum of the parts: interaction and cumulative effects. Anthropocene pressures on the earth are also discussed.

Reading:

Class: 3.3 Water and Ice Spaces

Planetary boundaries of exploration of ice caps, melting icecaps and water usage are discussed. A co-curricular visit to the Kurnell Desalination plant will be arranged.

Date Due for Submission of the Critical Reflection #2 Assessment

Week 4

Class: 4.1 Human-Environment Interactions and Ecosystem Services

In this class students will discuss nature in terms of the value beyond what it offers humans. Students will also undertake a site visit to an inner city roof garden and a community-run food garden.

Reading:

Class: 4.2 Imagining an Unsustainable Future and Creating a Restorative Economy

In this class, students will discuss how our economic system exacerbate sustainability challenges. They will also debate whether capitalism has to be bad for the environment or can greed ever be green. This class will consider these complex questions but also introduce students to various market-based approaches to solving ecosystem challenges.

Reading:

Class: 4.3 Challenging our Cultural Assumptions
In this class students will discuss what role should institutions and businesses have in addressing environmental challenges; how much responsibility individuals and communities have in addressing and acting on environmental challenges.

Reading:


**Date Due for Submission of the Essay Topic Assessment**

**Week 5**

Class: 5.1 Human Population Growth on a Finite Planet: Addicted to Growth

This session evaluates Malthus position, and questions what would happen if everyone on earth lived and consumed as first world nations.

Reading:


Class: 5.2 The Great Disruption: Changing Human Behavior and Systems

In this class we will consider questions around global dilemmas, such as the inevitable Great Disruption and willing individuals are to change environmentally harmful behaviors. Students will also review several case studies of host country and international environmental behavior-change programs and campaigns.

Reading:


Class: 5.3 Poverty and Inequality in the Anthropocene

Students will engage with the international and domestic programs of charities and organisations which address poverty.

Reading:


**Due Date for Submission of Individual Presentation Assessment**

**Week 6**

Class: 6.1 Animal Ethics and Industry: Establishing Priorities for a Sustainable Future

Students will consider how we define our relationship with animals and discuss the ethics and sustainability of consuming animal products.

Reading:


Class: 6.2 Challenges to Creating a Green Economy: Blueprint for a Sustainable Future

Human standard of living vs. environmental will be discussed and how our choices will determine our future.

Reading:

Students will review the concepts presented in the course, discuss takeaways, and outline next steps for living a sustainable lifestyle. Students will present their individual presentations.

**Due Date for Submission of the Field Journal Assessment**

**Course Materials**

**Readings**


**Online Resources**