

## **Geography 250: Sustainability in Theory and Practice**

QUEST III - Sustainability

Spring 2020

MWF: [Online](#)

Instructor: Laura Carnahan  
Office: Sage 4453  
Email: [carnahal@uwosh.edu](mailto:carnahal@uwosh.edu)  
Office Hours: [T 3:00pm – 5:00pm, or by appointment](#)

Course prerequisites: Successful completion of a University Studies Program Quest II course.  
Credit hours: 3

### **Course Description:**

“This course will present the fundamental concepts of sustainability from its beginnings to its establishment as a field of academic inquiry on a wide range of subjects. This class includes field trips, community projects, readings, videos, and discussions of sustainability issues to gain a better understanding and appreciation of the complexity of the interconnections between human and natural systems, and to understand both opportunities for, and challenges to sustainability locally and globally.”

Our goal in this Quest III course is to begin to appreciate the complexities of the broad topic of sustainability. We will begin by exploring the basic elements of sustainability, including the three overlapping domains that are central to the concept of sustainability: the environment, society, and the economy. These strands will be tied together in the community engagement project. Understanding how to increase sustainability in an ever-changing world is important because the increasing demand for additional resources is putting a strain on the environment and on the human population itself. Questions about access to clean air and water; the availability of food beyond that required for physiological subsistence; and the availability and type of energy resources used are ones (among many others) which students will face throughout their lifetime.

One of the goals of this course is to provide students with a number of new ways of thinking about, and critically approaching, their own life decisions and habits. Students will increase their knowledge of sustainability and improve their research skills by working with a group and undertaking a substantial community engagement project which enables them to conduct research in the field. This course will also provide students with an opportunity to develop the analytical skills that are at the core of a liberal education (which will help them assess both their life decisions and analyze sustainability problems and proposed solutions).

### **Liberal Education:**

Liberal Education is an approach to learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. It provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g. science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in a specific area of interest. A liberal education helps students develop a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical and problem-solving skills, and a demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.

### **USP and the Signature Questions:**

The University Studies Program (USP) is your gateway to a 21st century college education at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. This Quest III course is the last in a series of courses you will take to introduce you to the campus and all it has to offer, the vibrant Oshkosh community, and the challenges and opportunities of academic life as you pursue a liberal education. In the first year of your Quest, you addressed two of the three “Signature Questions” that are central to a UW Oshkosh education:

- How do people understand and engage in community life?
- How do people understand and create a more sustainable world?
- How do people understand and bridge cultural differences?

In this course you are addressing the last of the Signature Questions. Upon completion of Quest III, you will be ready to enroll in Connect, in which you will synthesize the three Signature Questions.

“Knowledge of sustainability and its applications is the ability to understand local and global earth systems; the qualities of ecological integrity and the means to restore and preserve it; and the interconnection of ecological integrity, social justice, and economic well-being.” (UW-Oshkosh Essential Learning Outcomes)

Sustainability is about working towards a future in which all human beings can enjoy decent quality of life – good health, economic security, membership in strong and inclusive communities, the list goes on – while ensuring that we do not endanger the natural resources and environments upon which we depend. At its core, sustainability is about helping us live up to our fullest potential, as individuals and as a society. Making our way towards sustainability will involve addressing some very big and complicated problems – problems that will not have just single answers, or answers generated by single perspectives.

### **Student Learning Outcomes:**

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

- Understand interconnections between the environmental, social and economic aspects (the three pillars) of sustainability
- State and explain a definition of sustainability
- Explain how sustainability issues are addressed at a variety of scales (local, national, etc.)
- Analyze their connection, as individuals and households, with larger sustainability issues
- Conduct field work to collect data related to sustainability
- Understand US Census data
- Use spreadsheets to analyze data and create graphs to analyze data, both secondary data from the US Census Bureau and primary data collected
- Work cooperatively in a team environment to allocate work assignments, analyze data, and develop a group paper and presentation addressing sustainability in Oshkosh
- Present findings to fellow students, and representatives of the community

**Grades:**

Course grades will be based on the following percentage scale:

A ≥ 93%	A- ≥ 90%	
B+ ≥ 88%	B ≥ 83%	B- ≥ 80%
C+ ≥ 78%	C ≥ 73%	C- ≥ 70%
D+ ≥ 68%	D ≥ 63%	D- ≥ 60%
F < 60%		

<b>Item</b>	<b>Potential Points</b>
Student Introduction Online Form	10
Assignments	80
Quiz 1	10
Quiz 2	10
Quiz 3	10
Quiz 4	10
Quiz 5	10
Attendance/Participation	10
Community Experience Project Draft Project Plan*	20
Community Experience Project Final Project Plan*	20
Community Experience Project Report (AKA Term Paper)*	100
Group Presentation Document (Power Point slides)*	50
Student Presentation	50
Community Experience Project Reflection	10
<b>Total (Denominator for calculating course grade)</b>	<b>400</b>
<b>Extra Credit</b>	
Attendance at Geography Dept. Open House	10
<b>Total Possible Individual Points in the Course (percent)</b>	<b>210 (52.5%)</b>
<b>Total Possible Group Points in the Course (percent)*</b>	<b>190 (47.5%)</b>

\* denotes a grade item that the group submits

**Course Requirements:****Individual Requirements:**

Students are expected to read the syllabus and refer to it if they have questions about assignments, due dates, or other course administration topics.

**Quizzes:**

There will be **six** unannounced quizzes during the semester. Students missing a quiz for any reason will not be able to make it up.

**Class Participation:**

Students are expected to complete all reading and assignments prior to the applicable class and to *actively participate* in class discussions. In order to ensure your classmates have the opportunity to gain from your perspective and experience, class attendance is mandatory. Class attendance

will be part of your grade. ~~If you miss more than 8 classes, you will fail the course.~~ Participation points will be awarded by completing tasks “in class”. (Points from previous on-campus activities and attendance will be combined with points for any future online activities to determine the final attendance and participation score.)

Community Experience Project Reflection:

Each student will write a 250-500 word reflection on his/her community experience. What did you learn about sustainability ~~in the city of Oshkosh~~ through this project? What new skills did you learn and what existing skills did you enhance? What impact did the project have on you? How well did your group work together? What would you do differently next time you work with a group that would make the group work better together?

**Group Requirements:**

Early in the semester students will be assigned to a group. Each group will work as a team throughout the entire term. Each group will be responsible for several assignments during the course. The instructor retains the right to rebalance groups to ensure that students dropping the course do not adversely impact their group’s ability to complete course assignments. Students registering for the course late will be assigned to groups with fewest members.

Quest III Community Experience Conduct and Process Expectations:

Students are expected to abide by the UW Oshkosh Student Academic and Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedures during their Quest III Community Experience. Other policies that maybe relevant to the Community Experience in this course are described in the online Quest III Handbook available on the USP website (<https://usp.uwosh.edu/community-engagement/>). Students are cautioned that taking sole credit for group projects is a violation of Chapter UWS 14 (paragraph 14.03 “Academic misconduct subject to disciplinary action”) of the Wisconsin Administrative Code on plagiarism (see information provided below about plagiarism).

Community Experience Deliverables:

Students will work in groups of five for their community project. Each student group is required to submit several documents to the instructor. Each document will be typed (double-spaced when appropriate), checked for spelling and grammar. They will also include photographs, maps, graphs, charts when appropriate. It is strongly suggested that the group edit or review each document before it is submitted. Since it is a group paper it is expected that the format, font, and other elements of the paper will be consistent throughout. Writing effectively is extremely important to your professional career, so it is also important in this course.

Each group will assign each group member a role, including team leader, editor, and communications manager; it is expected that some group members will have more than one role. The communications manager will be the sole person authorized to communicate with the group’s community partner.

Each group will develop a detailed project plan that includes all project tasks, the person assigned to complete that task, and the date the task needs to be completed by.

In addition to the PowerPoint Presentations (and spreadsheets as necessary) each group submits, each group will also submit a report (term paper) describing their findings. The report will

provide more detail than the presentation each group submits and will reference course materials, as appropriate. There is no minimum page limit for the written report, but it should include all necessary maps, graphs, photographs and tables, as well as a “Table of Contents” page, and a “Works Cited” section. Papers AND presentations should answer two questions:

1. How does this project relate to sustainability?
2. How does this project relate to the idea of how people interact with their environment?

**Electronic copies of the final Community Experience Project Report (AKA Term Paper) must be submitted via Canvas. ~~A paper copy and~~ An electronic copy of the Group Presentation Document (Power Point slides) should be submitted via Canvas prior to your group’s presentation.**

#### Student Presentation:

Each student group will make a 10 to 15 minute presentation discussing their project and findings. Students are expected to illustrate their presentations with maps, graphs, charts, and other appropriate illustrations. Students will be graded on their individual performance, however consideration will be given to the overall coordination of the presentations. **Presentations will be completed using Collaborate Ultra and recording the session. The recording of each group’s presentation will be made available to the class to watch.**

#### Campus Resources

The university provides a number of resources to help students be successful. Listed below are a few of the resources available to students. Students in the University Studies Program are especially encouraged to take advantage of these resources to help them succeed.

**Center for Academic Resources:** The Center for Academic Resources (CAR) provides free, confidential tutoring for students in most undergraduate classes on campus. Check the Tutor List page on CAR’s website ([www.uwosh.edu/car](http://www.uwosh.edu/car)) for a list of tutors. If your course is not listed, click on a link to request one, email CAR or call 424-2290. To schedule a tutoring session, simply email the tutor, let him/her know what class you are seeking assistance in, and schedule a time to meet.

**Writing Center:** The Writing Center helps students of all ability levels improve their writing. Trained peer consultants help writers understand an assignment, envision possibilities for a draft, and improve their writing process. They even help writers learn to identify their own proofreading errors. Students can make a free appointment. For more information, view their website (<http://www.uwosh.edu/wcenter>), or email [wcenter@uwosh.edu](mailto:wcenter@uwosh.edu).

**Reading Study Center:** The Reading Study Center is an all-university service whose mission is to facilitate the development of efficient college-level learning strategies in students of all abilities. The center offers strategies for improved textbook study, time management, note-taking, test preparation, and test-taking. For more information, email [readingstudy@uwosh.edu](mailto:readingstudy@uwosh.edu), or view the website (<http://www.uwosh.edu/readingstudycenter>).

**Polk Library/Information Literacy:** You have been introduced to Information Literacy in your Quest Speaking and Writing courses. As a reminder, Polk Library offers many professional librarians who can help you find library resources for your research. Specifically, Ted Mulvey, the Information Literacy Librarian, is available to assist you as you access, evaluate, and use information in University Studies Program classes. Email: mulveyt@uwosh.edu. You may also set up a research advisory session with a librarian at: rap@uwosh.edu.

**Accommodations will be made for students with disabilities:** Please contact Disability Services (424.3100 [voice] or 424.1319 [TTY]). You can visit their web site (<http://www.uwosh.edu/deanofstudents/disabilityservices/studentresources>) for UWO's accommodation request form and documentation requirements. Information related to an individual's accommodation request will be kept confidential.

**Class Attendance and Financial Aid:** Attendance records will be kept. Federal regulations require attendance records to be kept on students receiving financial aid to reduce fraudulent payments; in order not to identify students receiving such aid, all students will be asked to sign a daily attendance sheet so that I can comply with any and all legally binding information requests that I might receive regarding your attendance.

“Students are advised to see the following URL for disclosures about essential consumer protection items required by the Students Right to Know Act of 1990:  
[https://uwosh.edu/financialaid/consumer-information/.](https://uwosh.edu/financialaid/consumer-information/)”

**Plagiarism:** Students are reminded that plagiarism is a violation of Chapter UWS 14 (paragraph 14.03 “Academic misconduct subject to disciplinary action”) of the Wisconsin Administrative Code. Violation of this section will result in failing grade in this course.

**List of Due Dates:**

All assignments due **by beginning of class (9:10am)** on the following dates, unless otherwise specified.

- Feb. 5 – introduction form due
- Feb. 24 – draft group plan due
- Mar. 4 – final project plan due
- Apr. 6 – Quiz #3
- Apr. 13 – Assignment #2
- Apr. 20 – Quiz #4
- Apr. 20 – Assignment #3
- May 4 – Quiz #5
- May 11 – Quiz #6
- May 8 – final paper due
- May 11 – presentation slides due
- May 15 – project reflection due

Other assignments and quizzes will be due throughout the semester, but their due date is either not set yet. So, make sure you are “coming to” class (aka keeping up with communications) to stay current with the assignments!

### Tentative Lecture Schedule

I retain the option to modify the schedule provided below. Any assignments or readings due on a certain date are expected to be completed prior to the start of class on that date, unless otherwise specified.

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Feb. 3	Intro
Feb. 5	What is Geography?
Feb. 7	US Census Data
Feb. 10	Spreadsheets and Graphs
Feb. 12	Assignment work day
Feb. 14	Intro to Sustainability
Feb. 17	Population
Feb. 19	Population
Feb. 21	<i>Community Experience Field Day</i>
Feb. 24	Climate Change
Feb. 26	Climate Change
Feb. 28	Climate Change
Mar. 2	Climate Change
Mar. 4	Climate Change
Mar. 6	“The Commons”
Mar. 9	“The Commons”
Mar. 11	Environmental Ethics
Mar. 13	Environmental Ethics
Mar. 16	<a href="#">Risks and Hazards</a>
Mar. 18	<a href="#">Risks and Hazards</a>
Mar. 20	<i>Community Experience Field Day</i>
Mar. 23	No class – spring break
Mar. 25	No class – spring break
Mar. 27	No class – spring break

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>
Week of Mar. 30 – Apr. 3	Review of “The Commons” and ethics; Risks and Hazards
Week of Apr. 6 – Apr. 10	Water
Week of Apr. 13 – Apr. 17	Food
Week of Apr. 20 – Apr. 24	Housing/Lawns
Week of Apr. 27 – May 1	City Planning
Week of May 4 – May 8	Energy and Individual Impact
Week of May 11 – May 15	Student Presentations