

**Community Based  
Perspectives on  
Environmental Issues**

Dr. April Karen Baptiste

## **ENST 390: Community Based Study on Environmental Issues**

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**Office Hours:** TR 11.15 am to 12.05pm; 1.30 to 2.30 pm; or by appointment

**Class Location and Time:** Ho 326, MW 2.45 – 4 pm

### **Course Overview**

This project-based, interdisciplinary course examines current environmental issues in the context of community-based learning. Topics for investigation are selected by faculty, usually in conjunction with the campus sustainability coordinator, the Upstate Institute, or directly with local and regional agencies. Students get practical experience working in interdisciplinary teams to examine environmental issues with a goal of developing relevant recommendations.

### **Course Focus**

This semester the course will focus on campus sustainability initiatives and will provide students with the opportunity to critically think through 4 projects that are pertinent to the Colgate community

This course seeks to address a number of broad based questions:

1. What are the major environmental and sustainability challenges facing higher education institutions like Colgate?
2. How are these environmental challenges currently being addressed within the institutional settings?
3. What are some practical, economical and ecological solutions that can be proposed to address these environmental challenges?

### **Projects to be assessed**

The following projects will be the focus for this semester:

1. The environmental, economic and social implications of pursuing LEED certification for the Trudy Fitness Center and the current way in which this initiative is being promoted to the Colgate and Hamilton communities
2. Examination of the water conservation and efficiency of the Colgate community specifically in the residence halls. Students will examine the environmental, economic and social implications of developing a water conservation plan.
3. Engage in a campus energy analysis by comparing the environmental, social and economic implications of switching from fuel oil to natural gas
4. Develop a long-term reforestation plan for Colgate in order to meet the goals of carbon neutrality. This entails examining environmental, economic and employee related costs and benefits associated with this long-term plan.

## Required Readings

As this course is practical and project based there are a number of different readings that will be assigned throughout the semester based on the skills that would be highlighted each week.

## Course Objectives

The goal of this course is to provide students with an interdisciplinary approach to environmental and sustainability challenges by:

1. Introducing students to interdisciplinary, real world environmental challenges
2. Honing creative and critical thinking skills with respect to environmental challenges
3. Encouraging students in primary data collection and analysis skills when addressing environmental and sustainability challenges
4. Allowing students to work effectively in a group
5. Encouraging students to present clearly ideas about environmental and sustainability challenges to an audience

## Course Assignments

**This is a required course for all ENST majors and minors and as such there is a fair amount of writing and critical analysis involved.**

ALL assignments must be completed on or before the due date. **NO LATE assignments will be accepted unless in dire circumstances** in which case it is the student's responsibility to **speak with the instructor prior to the due date (at least one or 2 days ahead)** to work out whether extensions will be given. If concessions are provided it will be at the instructor's discretion so students are advised to **prepare in advance and work on assignments consistently when they are provided.**

### List of Assignments

#### *Individual Work*

Class Participation

    In Class

    Out of Class

Critical Newspaper reflections

Peer evaluations of group members

Final Exam – Writing Assignment

#### *Group Work*

Group Lecture

Project proposal

Video report (3-5 mins)

Final Report

Presentation

Peer evaluations

## Course Expectations and Assessment Requirements

### Individual Work

**Attendance policy:** Attendance is necessary in order to improve the group and learning dynamics of the class. Absences will reduce the number of opportunities for quality contributions to class participation, as such students are advised that missing **3 or more sessions** will result in a reduction of your class participation grade.

### **Class Participation:**

- a. Your class participation grade will be determined by the extent to which you are present and engaged in the class. Be prepared, on-time and take an active and critical role in the class discussions.
- b. There are several dimensions to the participation grade: presence, preparation and participation

*Presence:* Learning is a cumulative process and as such your presence is key to all the class sessions. As courtesy to all students please:

- Arrive on time
- Turn off cell phones and store them – *please note that during the class session cell phones are to be stored, they are not to be used as a clock source.*
- Avoid laptops
- No texting, twittering, facebooking or the like
- No noisy food ☺
- Be prepared to spend entire class period in the classroom

Excused Absences: I will consider these on a case-by-case basis **once an Academic Dean, Coach or appropriate administrative source, provides documentation in a written form.** Student athletes in season must provide a list of schedule and absences signed by your coach in the **1<sup>st</sup> week of the semester.** It is the student's responsibility to meet with me to discuss implications of class absences.

*Note: Please note that students who are found to consistently violate these courtesy rules, particularly in the case of cell phone, laptop use and consistent back and forth during class time will be asked to leave the class session.*

*Preparation:* You are expected to read all text prior to each session. This will allow you to be able to contribute to class discussions. When preparing for class, avoid last minute readings. One method that has worked for me in the past has been to read and discuss the material in groups prior to the class session. This has proven to be very helpful. Make notes of key points and concepts while reading. Also make note of questions of things that may not be clear for class discussions. Try to make connections between what you are reading and your class project as well as personal experiences. These are also welcomed during class discussion as it brings theory into practice.

*Participation:* We are all learners and we can learn from each other. To facilitate this, we would respectfully listen to each person's point of view and if the need arises challenge respectfully each

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other's view. We should all self evaluate and attempt to give everyone a chance to voice their opinions and concerns about the materials that are being discussed. At times, I will use my discretion to call on students to even the participation during class discussions. If a person feels he/she will have difficulty speaking in class for any reason, please see me within the first 2 weeks of classes.

### Out of class activity:

Students are required to attend at least **75 %** of the ENST Brown Bag Luncheons as this aids with critical thinking development. Each student will then submit a one to two page summary of the lecture, highlighting issues that resonated with them and why as well as at least one thing that they did not agree with and why. In writing this response ensure to incorporate citations as necessary to strengthen the argument that is provided in the summary. Please ensure that you include the dates of the ENST Brown Bags on your calendars early in the semester.

**Critical Thinking:** This is the ability to consider multiple perspectives on environmental issues/problems and think about them in ways that make connections to life experiences, theory and larger current events. It is a process of developing questions that challenge our assumptions and beliefs and avoid simplistic answers. These are important to help develop critical thinking.

### Media piece and Stimulation Questions

Each group will be responsible for leading 2 of these discussions throughout the semester, with each person working with two other persons in the group to lead one discussion. For e.g. Jane, John and Ana from group 1 will lead Online Discussion # 1 on September 5<sup>th</sup>, while Jim, Harry and Susan from group 1 will leader Online Discussion # 5 on October 25<sup>th</sup>. Students will decide whom they would like to lead with and the dates (*but they must lead with members of their group*).

Discussion leader(s) will select a media piece that is no more than one year old that relates to sustainability issues and the projects that we are evaluating this semester. This media piece will be sourced through the newspaper archives in the library electronic databases and can consist of either a news article or video clip to post to Moodle for class discussion. Leaders will then post 2-3 "stimulation questions" about the media piece for students to respond to. This media piece and stimulation questions must be submitted **by 9:00 PM of the day listed on the syllabus**. The media piece and stimulation questions will be graded on the following rubric:

Grading Criteria	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C
Media piece contains clear sustainability concerns	X	X	X	X	X	
Questions clear and concise and related to the media piece	X	X				
Media piece and questions provokes connections to personal experiences and class discussions where relevant	X		X	X		
Questions are error free	X	X	X		X	X

### Responses

Responses are then due within **27 hours i.e. 11.59 pm the next day**. Each student is required to respond to at **least 6 of the 8** media pieces and question(s) posted in **150 - 200 words**. The response can either be directly to the question or it can be in relation to a comment(s) that were made earlier in the thread. Students should remember that even though this is a discussion there should be an avoidance of making

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unsubstantiated statements by linking some of the literature where possible to support their opinions. Students should also try to tie in their responses to either personal experiences or class discussion where possible. Additionally try to be creative in your response and avoid repeating what your colleagues have mentioned before. If there is something that one of your peers mentioned that you agree with, state why you agree with the statement. Do not be afraid to show your critique and critical thinking skills in this forum, however as mentioned earlier remember to support your statements rather than just making unsubstantiated claims. Students are asked to put some thought into their responses, as these would also be graded based on the following rubric:

<b>Grading Criteria</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>C</b>
Answer question(s) clearly and concisely	X	X	X	X	X	X
Contribute innovative and creative points to the discussion board	X	X				
Make explicit connections to readings or cites appropriate supportive materials	X	X	X	X		
Make explicit connections to personal experiences and class discussions where relevant	X	X	X		X	
Be error free	X		X	X	X	X

**Peer evaluations of group work:** In this course, there is a substantial amount of group work. Group work is not meant to be a burden but rather a learning and skills development process for students. As such each group member is expected to work diligently and constantly on the project throughout the semester. Each group member will be responsible for submitting an evaluation of his or her peers at strategic points, which will form part of the final grade for each student. These evaluations are meant to hone students' assessments skills of others as you work in a team setting.

**Final Writing Exam Assignment:** This assignment will be a take home reflective piece that is based on students' knowledge and skills that were acquired throughout the semester. Details will be provided later in the semester.

### Group assignments

Each student will be assigned to a team and will be responsible for researching and presenting on one of the four projects. As a student consultant for the semester you will be responsible for the following tasks in your assigned team

- A. Engage in a research based investigation of the assigned issue
- B. Develop a guest lecture to educate the class on the broader environmental and social issues associated with your assigned issue
- C. Develop a technical and professional report on the researched issue

1. This report will take the following format
  - a. A one-page Executive Summary signed by all team members
  - b. Presentation of the methods and results obtained from the investigation
  - c. Presentation of options (at least two) that could improve the sustainability of Colgate for the researched issue including:
    - i. Estimates of the environmental benefits and costs as measured through ecological and carbon footprints
    - ii. Estimates of the economic and social benefits/costs

Models that are currently being used by other peer institutions (when appropriate and available

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- iii. Psychological data of attitudes, beliefs and concerns of students/faculty (when appropriate)
    - iv. Guidelines for possible implementation
  - d. A summary of concrete recommendations for Colgate to move forward on the researched issue
  - e. A reflection on what this assessment has revealed about sustainability at Colgate
2. All reports will be bundled and distributed to Colgate's administration
3. The reports will be disseminated in the following formats:
  - a. Full report as detailed above
  - b. 15 minute power-point presentation suitable for a general audience
  - c. 3-5 minute video summary suitable for publication on Colgate's website detailed below
  - d. 250 word abstract suitable for publication on Colgate's website

## Video Project

As we live in a digital era, it is important for us to embrace this new and dynamic way of learning in the classroom. Some students may have already created video projects as class assignments in other courses, while others have no experience using this medium. As we work together in this course, we will attempt to use this medium to produce a video narrative that will be useful for the Sustainability office at Colgate. As this is a first time experience for this course, I ask for your feedback and patience as we work together to create a positive experience in developing this resource for the Sustainability office.

This project will focus on a component of the larger research driven report that your group will be involved in for the semester. Further details about this component of the project will be provided later in the semester.

## Scheduled Updates

Each group is required to meet with both Prof. Baptiste and Mr. John Pumilio (when he is available) in scheduled meetings to discuss the progress of their projects. Students can use this time to discuss the challenges that they are facing, innovative ideas that they will like to explore, brainstorm solutions etc with the instructors of this course. These sessions can also be used as a working session from time to time, should students choose this route.

The meeting time will be set within the first week of classes and will be the set meeting time for the remainder of the semester. As such students are asked to think about their schedules ahead of time, as each group member is required to be at **90%** of these meetings for the semester.

## Grading

- i. Detailed rubrics are used for all assignments that are evaluated in this course. Please see the attached rubrics as well as see Moodle for all rubrics that are associated with each assignment. Your grade is a compilation of the following.

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### **Individual**

Class Participation	
Attendance, in-class	10%
Peer evaluations of group participation	5%
Out of class lectures (75%)	15%
Final Writing Exam	10%
Online discussions questions and responses	10%

### **Group**

Project	
Proposal	5%
Final Report	25%
Poster Presentation	5%
Video and abstract	10%
Peer evaluations	2%
Group Lecture	3%
TOTAL	100%

### **Academic Policies**

**Students with disabilities:** Students who will need special arrangements or consideration due to documented disabilities should speak with me early in the semester. They should also consult with Lynn Waldman, Director of Academic Program Support and Disability Services, 315-228-7375 in the Center for Learning, Teaching, and Research concerning disability concerns and appropriate accommodations.

**Religious Holidays:** This syllabus tries to comply with Colgate Holiday Policy. If there are any conflicts please discuss with me very early in the semester so that alternative arrangements can be made.

**Academic Honor Code:** Colgate has a very strong Academic Honor Code to which all students are subjected and will apply to all assignments both graded and ungraded. **Plagiarism is a serious offense and will not be tolerated under any circumstances** and will be reported to the fullest extent. If you are unfamiliar with the definition of plagiarism please see **pages 94 to 97** of the Student Handbook.

**Writing Center:** The Writing Center is a great resource and while some students may have acceptable writing skills there is always room for improvement particularly within the academic setting. Please use this resource as often as possible in order to improve the quality of assignments that are turned in. This will greatly improve your work and help to improve your writing skills.

**Library:** This course has a research component to it to allow students to develop and refine their research skills. Particularly with your team projects you will need to perform and report a sophisticated level of findings that goes beyond a simple Internet search. Please use the library and its staff to help in this regard. There is a large number of electronic and print media that will help in developing quality research throughout the semester.

**Written Assignments:** All writing assignments must be type written, 12 pt, Times or Times New Roman font, 1-inch margins, double-spaced. **American Psychological Association (APA) style** should be used when referencing. All written assignments that are take-home must use proper referencing. All assignments will be collected at the beginning of class – any assignment that is given after this will be considered late. **It is the student's responsibility to give in assignments at the beginning of class.**

## COURSE SCHEDULE

### Week 1

#### *Introduction:*

Syllabus Review

*Getting to know each other*

*Introduction to projects*

*Importance of teamwork*

Stockley, D. (2011). The importance of teams and teamwork. Retrieved from <http://derekstockley.com.au/newsletters-06/067-teamwork-importance.html>

Blair, G. (n.d). Groups that Work. Retrieved from <http://www.see.ed.ac.uk/~gerard/Management/art0.html>

### Week 2

#### *What is sustainability?*

UN Commission on Sustainable Development. (2007). Retrieved from [http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd15/media/backgrounder\\_brundtland.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/csd15/media/backgrounder_brundtland.pdf)

#### *Sustainability in higher education*

Cullingford, C. (2004). Sustainability and Higher Education, in J. Blewitt & C Cullingford (eds), The Sustainability curriculum: the challenge for higher education, pp. 13-23 , London: Earthscan

#### *Components of research*

Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches By John W. Creswell, 2009. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks, CA. Chapters 7

Research Design pp. 1-7. Retrieved from <http://www.deakin.edu.au/buslaw/infosys/research/students/docs/research-design.pdf>

### Week 3

#### *Components of research 2 – qualitative methods*

Creswell, J.W. (2009). Chapter 9

Interviews: face to face, email, Document analysis?

Examples of inappropriate emails and good emails

Web Center for Social Research Methods. Interviews. Retrieved from <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/interview.php>

Bessett, J. (2010). Professional emails Dos and Don'ts. Retrieved from <http://www.helium.com/items/781408-professional-email-dos-and-donts>

