

**Meeting Day/Time:** Thursdays, 1:30pm-4:10pm  
**Meeting Location:** Innovation Hall 215G

**Instructor:** Dr. Jason Morris, Adjunct Professor, New Century College

**Email:** jmorrif@masonlive.gmu.edu

**Mailbox Location:** NCC Office Suite, Enterprise Hall

**Office Location:** Enterprise 440

**Office hours:** Thursdays, 12:30pm – 1:30pm and by appointment

### **Required Readings**

*Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future* by Bill McKibben (Holt Paperbacks, 2008).

The majority of readings for this class are available on the course Blackboard page.

The ecological footprint quiz you take before class on 10/1 will cost \$1.

### **Course Description**

This is designed to be a core course for George Mason University's Environmental and Sustainability Studies major and Sustainability Studies Minor. It includes 3 credits for class time and an additional 1 credit for the sustainability-related experiential learning component. This course will focus on understanding the basic issues in the natural sciences and social sciences that underlie many of the world's current environmental problems. We will also consider ethical matters, such as equity, as they pertain to global resource consumption, pollution, and climate change.

Our time in the classroom as a learning community will combine discussion of readings and current events, mini-lectures, group projects, and active, inquiry-based learning. You will earn one credit of experiential learning through a combination of service learning and field experiences.

Mason aims to improve student success through increased participation in and celebration of undergraduate research and creative activities. Scholarship is valued as a core practice of the Mason student experience. Students as Scholars is Mason's undergraduate research and creative activities initiative, organized to build students' skills in undergraduate research and creative activities. Students in the ESS BA and Sustainability Studies Minor will have increasing levels of engagement, beginning with the discovery of scholarship, moving through scholarly inquiry, and culminating with the creation of a scholarly project that promotes sustainability on campus. Sustainable World participates in the "discovery of scholarship" stage of this initiative. Assignments and course activities are designed to help you understand the scholarly field of sustainability studies and build a solid foundation of research abilities in this field.

### **Learning Objectives**

By the completion of the course, the successful student will be able to:

- Describe the major environmental problems facing the United States and the world, the causes of these problems, and potential solutions.
- Analyze the economic, social, and moral implications of global resource use.
- Define sustainability and describe methods of assessing sustainability.

- Distinguish between personal beliefs and evidence.
- Articulate how SUSTAINABILITY SCHOLARSHIP influences society.
- Evaluate the credibility of source information.
- Understand research methods used in SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES.
- Understand how knowledge is transmitted within SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES, from SUSTAINABILITY STUDIES to other disciplines, and to the public.

## **Experiential Learning**

You will earn one experiential learning credit in this class by completing 25 hours of sustainability-related service learning on campus and taking a half-day field trip off campus. You must complete the Experiential Learning requirement to earn a passing grade for this course.

Vans will be used for the half-day field trip and you will pay a modest fee to cover gas. The field trip will take place on **Saturday, November 7** from approximately **10am – 1:30pm**.

## **Required Work**

### **Sources and Destinations Essay: Global Research Project (200 points)**

In this essay, you will carefully research the source(s) of everything in some item you consume in your everyday life—for example, your breakfast cereal, your shoes, your shampoo. You will also research, as appropriate, what happens to this item after you finish with it. Your challenge will be to deal with both the ecological and social impacts of the item you study. You will receive detailed instructions for this assignment.

### **Midterm (150 points)**

The take home midterm will give you an opportunity to demonstrate your learning over the first half of the course. Learning community members will discuss the content of midterm essay questions in class on Thursday, October 15. The completed midterm will be due, on Blackboard, by 11:59pm on Sunday, October 18. You may consult your notes and course readings while writing the midterm essays.

### **Peer Teaching I: Community Sustainability Project (120 points)**

Groups of students will engage in action-based sustainability scholarship to design a project that has the potential to promote sustainability goals within our community. Each group will choose one of the course's topic areas, and pick a specific problem facing our community within that topic area. Groups will analyze the root causes of the problem, come up with a potential solution, and present a plan on how to implement it. You will receive detailed instructions for this assignment.

### **Peer Teaching II: Sustainable Living (80 points)**

At our last class meeting, you will work individually or in groups to teach other learning community members about an approach to more sustainable living that a regular person could start to practice without much prior investment of money, energy, or time. The aim of the session will be to share practical ideas for how every person in our learning community could lower his/her ecological footprint without pain (and, in some cases, with increased pleasure!). You will receive detailed instructions for this assignment.

**Informal Writing** (200 points—Directed Writing, 120; Peer Teaching Evaluations, 80)—There are two types of informal writing for the course, Directed Writing and Peer Teaching Evaluations.

- Directed Writing—Throughout the course, you will do a number of brief informal writings in response to prompts. We will discuss these prompts in class but you will be submitting your

responses via Blackboard. The prompts will ask you to reflect on issues relating to sustainability, to respond to the weekly readings and activities, and to reflect on how your service learning experiences relate to your learning in other parts of the course.

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- Peer Teaching Evaluations—You will use a laptop or smart phone to evaluate and provide feedback to groups on their Peer Teaching presentations throughout the semester. The credit you receive for these evaluations will depend on the level of effort and engagement they reflect. At the end of the semester, you will use your evaluations to support your argument for which of the projects proposed by the peer teaching groups deserves to be funded.

A note about Directed Writings: I am not looking to make sure your grammar and spelling are perfect; rather, I want to see that you're engaging course materials and experiences with a great deal of energy and thought. When you're writing about course readings, it's a very good idea to quote from those readings and refer to specific parts of the text often. In general it's a good idea to be as concrete and specific as possible, whether you're writing about something you read or something you experienced. Making connections among your readings, our class lectures and discussions, and your experiences in the field is also extremely important.

**Final Exam** (150 points)— The in-class final exam will give you an opportunity to demonstrate your learning over the whole course. Learning community members will discuss the content of the final exam essay questions during our final class meeting on Thursday, December 10. You may consult your notes and course readings while writing the final exam essays.

**Participation** (100 points)—Our class is a learning community. As members of this community, we all depend on each other not just to show up, but to be fully engaged in each and every class activity. This means coming to class on time and prepared, speaking and listening well during discussions, raising questions, and calling attention to current events that relate to this course. Participation also involves doing everything you can to make our field trip run smoothly, and representing yourself and our class well when you are engaged in service learning.

## Policies

### Grading Scale

A+	1000-970	C+	799-770
A	969-930	C	769-730
A-	929-900	C-	729-700
B+	899-870	D	699-600
B	869-830	F	599-0
B-	829-800		

### Paperless Classroom

Paper use is one of many important elements of campus sustainability. We will use the Blackboard online course management system to minimize paper use. Our aim is to collaboratively adopt policies that will balance academic needs with resource conservation concerns.

### Late Work

Papers and other assignments are to be submitted by the date/time they are due. In most cases, submissions will be made via Blackboard. Late work will be reduced one grade per day. No work will be accepted over one week late without a valid written medical excuse or notice of death in the family.

### Honor Code

When you enrolled in this course you agreed to abide by the university's Honor Code. The Honor Code does not preclude collaborative work, such as informal discussions and studying in communities. Nor

does it preclude assigned group work. The Honor Code does require that work you, as an individual, turn in ultimately be the product of your own individual synthesis or integration of ideas, and that the work a group turns in ultimately be the product of the group's collective ideas. If you are uncertain of the line between collaboration and cheating, see an instructor. As always, cite your sources. If you do not, it is plagiarism. Plagiarism means lifting someone else's ideas or words and presenting them as your own without proper attribution of the source. This includes all sources, including those found on the Internet. Use an approved citation method, specified by your instructor. Work created for previously taken classes cannot be turned in for credit in this course.

### **Diversity Statement**

New Century College is an intentionally inclusive community that celebrates diversity and strives to have faculty, staff and students that reflect the diversity of our plural society. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, class, linguistic background, religion, gender identity, sex, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, or physical ability.

### **Accommodations for Students with Disabilities**

If you are a student with a disability and you need academic accommodations, please see the instructors and contact the Disability Resource Center (DRC) at 703.993.2474. All academic accommodations must be arranged through that office.

### **Laptops and Mobile Devices**

You are welcome to bring a laptop (or other mobile device) to class and use it for class-related purposes (e.g. taking notes). During class please refrain from using your laptop for purposes not related to class (e.g. Facebook, email, surfing the Internet). Note that repeat offenders might be asked to not use their laptops in class, as this creates a distraction and diminishes the active learning community we are creating in this class.

### **Email**

GMU faculty and staff may only correspond with students through the students' GMU assigned email accounts. Emails sent from other accounts will not be answered.

### **Blackboard**

To access blackboard, type courses.gmu.edu into the URL address bar of the web browser of your choice. Enter the username and password from your GMU email account. The use of Blackboard is essential in this course, so if you have technical problems, please contact the IT department (email address can be found on Blackboard's homepage) as soon as possible.

### **Course Schedule**

#### **Week 1 – Thursday, September 3**

#### **“Defining Sustainability: History and Frameworks”**

##### **Read:**

**\*\*NOTE: Please read these three selections BEFORE you come to class on 9/3\*\***

Edwards Introduction and Ch. 1: “The Birth of Sustainability.” (**Blackboard**)

David Orr. “Four Challenges of Sustainability.” Oberlin College Lecture, April 3, 2003. (**Blackboard**)

McKibben, *Deep Economy*, “Introduction”

##### **Media (in class):**

“Use of the Term Sustainability: Native Perspectives” at  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4h6uxDQWb3U>

##### **Logistics:**

**Activities:**

Student Introductions

Sustainability Literacy Survey (Professor Andrew Wingfield, NCLC)

Service Learning Preview

Discussion of Edwards, Orr and McKibben readings

**Assignments Due:** Service Learning preferences on Blackboard by **Tuesday, September 8 at 11:59pm.** Read the menu of service learning options in the Service Learning folder on Blackboard and post your top 3 choices, in order of preference.

**Week 2 – Thursday, September 10****“Campus Sustainability”****Read:**

Christopher Uhl. “Process and Practice: Creating the Sustainable University.” From Sustainability on Campus: Stories and Strategies for Change. Ed. Bartlett & Chase. Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004.  
**(Blackboard)**

Sklarew & Wingfield. “Up the Pyramid, Around the Loop: Action Research Cultivates Sustainability Scholars to Green the Campus.” CUR Quarterly. 35:1 Fall, 2014. **(Blackboard)**

Review and be familiar with the general content of the GMU Sustainability Office website:  
<http://green.gmu.edu/>

**Logistics:**

Introduce “Peer Teaching I: Community Sustainability Project” and Begin Forming Teams

Introduce “Sources and Destinations” Essay

Receive Service Learning Assignments

**Activities:**

Guest Speaker: Giulia Manno, Mason Office of Sustainability

Discussion of Uhl and Sklarew/Wingfield readings

**Week 3 – Thursday, September 17****“Biological and Cultural Diversity”****Read:**

Pennington and Ricketts. “Conservation Biology and Biodiversity.” Encyclopedia of Life Sciences, 2011.  
**(Blackboard)**

*Bonus Read:* Mills, “Peak Nature,” Post-Carbon Reader **(Blackboard)**

**Media** (in class): “Wade Davis: Dreams from Endangered Cultures” (22 min.) and “The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour” (First Half)

**Activities:**

Discussion of readings and videos

“Where You At” (Environmental Perception of Place Assessment)

Time in class for peer teaching groups to meet and finalize membership

**Assignments Due:**

Directed Writing #1 related to “Where You At” on Blackboard by **11:59pm Sunday, September 20**

**Read:**

“Climate Change 101”, Pew Center on Global Climate Change (**Blackboard**)  
Bill McKibben. “A New World,” 2010. (**Blackboard**)  
Michael Specter. “The Climate Fixers.” The New Yorker: May 14, 2012. (**Blackboard**)

**Media** (in class):

“The 11<sup>th</sup> Hour” (second half) and “The Story of Cap & Trade: Why You Can't Solve A Problem With The Thinking That Created It”

**Activities:**

Discussion of readings and videos

**Assignments Due:**

Directed Writing #2 on Blackboard by **11:59pm Sunday, September 27**

**Week 5 – Thursday, October 1**

**“Consumption and Population Growth”**

**\*\*\*NOTE:** There's a decent amount of reading assigned for this week. Please plan ahead.\*\*\*

**Read:**

McKibben, Chapter 1: “After Growth”  
Rev. Dr. James A. Nash. “Making Moral Connections: Population, Environment, and Consumption.” Population Press Vol 3, # 3, March/April 1997. (**Blackboard**)  
The Habitable Planet, Unit 5: “Human Population Dynamics.” (**Blackboard**)  
Venetoulis and Talberth. “Refining the Ecological Footprint.” Environment, Development, and Sustainability, 10:4 2008 (**Blackboard**)

**Activities:**

Discussion of readings

**Assignments Due:**

Before class, complete the Ecological Footprint Quiz at: <http://www.myfootprint.org>. Save your results as a PDF or in some other format and bring to class.

**Week 6 – Thursday, October 8**

**“Technology and Design”**

**Read:**

Hawken, “The Next Industrial Revolution,” from *Natural Capitalism*, (**Blackboard**)  
McDonough and Braungart. “The Cradle-to-Cradle Alternative.” State of the World. Worldwatch Institute, 2004.  
(**Blackboard**)

**Media** (in class):

“Janine Benyus: Biomimicry in Action” (20 min.)  
“The Electronic Wasteland” (12 min.)  
“Chris Jordan Pictures Some Shocking Stats” (11 min.)

**Activities:**

Discussion of readings and videos

**Assignments Due:**

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Sources and Destinations Topic Exploration Due on Blackboard by **11:59 p.m., Sunday, October 11**

**Week 7 – Thursday, October 15****“Culture: The Human Dimensions of Sustainability”****Read:**

Doug McKenzie-Mohr. Introduction to *Fostering Sustainable Behavior*. (**Blackboard**)

Hoffman, “Climate Science as Culture War”, Stanford Social Innovation Review (**Blackboard**)

Noak, “Europe to America: Your love of air-conditioning is stupid” NYTimes, 7/22/15 (**Blackboard**)

*Bonus Read:* Rees, “The Human Nature of Unsustainability”, Post-Carbon Reader (**Blackboard**)

**Activities:**

Discussion of readings

Guest Speaker: Dr. Karen Akerlof, Mason Center for Climate Change Communication

Midterm Review

**Assignments Due:**

**\*\*\*\*Midterm posted on Blackboard today at 9am. Completed midterm is due on Blackboard by 11:59pm, Sunday, October 18\*\*\*\*** This is an open-book, open-note exam. You may consult all course materials as you compose your midterm essays.

**Week 8 – Thursday, October 22****“Political-Economy, Public Policy and Governance”****Read:**

Farley, “Ecological Economics”, Post-Carbon Reader, (**Blackboard**)

Selections from “Governance: Communities as Sustainability Leaders, States as Energy Leaders (and the Federal Government Catching Up?) from Dernbach, “Acting as if Tomorrow Matters: Accelerating the Transition to Sustainability,” (**Blackboard**)

**Activities:**

Discussion of readings

**Week 9 – Thursday, October 29****“Food”****Read:**

McKibben Chapter 2: “The Year of Eating Locally.”

Michael Pollan. “Power Steer.” New York Times Magazine: March 31, 2002. (**Blackboard**)

*Bonus Read:* Allen, “Growing Community Food Systems,” Post-Carbon Reader (**Blackboard**)

**Activities:**

Discussion of readings

Critiquing Pollan and McKibben

**Assignments Due:**

Directed Writing #3 related to critiques of Pollan and McKibben on Blackboard by **11:59pm Sunday, November 1**

**Week 10 – Thursday, November 5****“Water”****Read:**

Postel, “Water: Adapting to a New Normal”, Post-Carbon Reader (**Blackboard**)

Lustgarten, et. al. "California's Drought Is Part of a Much Bigger Water Crisis: Here's What You Need to Know", ProPublica, June 2015 (**Blackboard**)<sup>8</sup>

**Media** (in class):

"Last Oasis: Facing Water Scarcity"

**Activities:**

Discussion of readings and videos

**Assignments Due:**

Outline and Annotated Bibliography for Sources and Destinations Essay due on Blackboard by **11:59 p.m. Sunday, November 8**

**Week 11 – Thursday, November 12**

**"Energy"**

**Read:**

Fridley, "Nine Challenges of Alternative Energy," Post-Carbon Reader (**Blackboard**)

Brown. "North Dakota Went Boom." New York Times Magazine: January 31, 2013 (**Blackboard**)

*Bonus Read:* Morris. Chapter 3 from "Local Renewable Energy Actions in the Washington D.C. Region: Political Economy, Place, Policy and Culture" (**Blackboard**)

**Media** (in class): "300 Years of Fossil Fuels in 300 Seconds," "Kilowatt Ours," and excerpts from "Power for Patriots" (time permitting)

**Activities:**

Discussion of readings and videos

**Assignments Due:**

Directed Writing #4 on Blackboard by **11:59pm Sunday, November 15**

**Week 12 – Thursday, November 19**

**"Transportation"**

**Read:**

James Howard Kunstler. "Making Other Arrangements." Orion: January/February 2007. (**Blackboard**)

McCarthy, Woolf, and Harrison. "Revealed: The Real Cost of Air Travel." The Independent: May 27 2005. (**Blackboard**)

Stephanie Corson. "Private Transportation vs. Mass Transit: The Environmental Aspects." (**Blackboard**)

**Activities:**

Discussion of readings

**Week 13 – Thursday, November 26**

**\*\*NO CLASS\*\* \*\*THANKSGIVING BREAK\*\***

**Week 14 – Thursday, December 3**

**"Social and Economic Justice"**

**Read:**

McKibben Chapter 3: "All for One, or One for All."

Vandana Shiva. "Principles of Earth Democracy." *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace.* Cambridge: South End Press, 2006. (**Blackboard**)

**Activities:**

Discussion of readings

Begin “Peer Teaching II: Reports from the Field” presentations

**Assignments Due:** Sources and Destinations Essay due on Blackboard by **11:59 pm, Sunday, December 6**

**Week 15 – Thursday, December 10**

**“Building Sustainable Communities”**

**Read:**

McKibben Chapter 5: “The Durable Future.”

Hopkins, “What Can Communities Do?”, Post-Carbon Reader (**Blackboard**)

**Activities:**

Discussion of readings

Complete “Peer Teaching II: Reports from the Field” presentations

**Week 16 – Thursday, December 17**

**Final Exam (Please bring Blue Book(s) to class)**