

GEOG498S: Sustainability and the City: Washington, DC's Green Landscape

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Summer 2016; T/Th 9:00am – 12:30pm

Course Description

Geographers have long studied human-environment interactions at the urban scale. As spaces of human-environment interaction, cities are sites of economic production, cultural maintenance, and environmental change. Given expanding urban populations and high levels of consumption, it is critical to evaluate the sustainability of urban life. This class will explore sustainability initiatives at the urban scale, with a specific focus of those in Washington, DC. We will define what it means to be “sustainable,” and how that definition applies to 21st century cities. Students will learn about processes, systems, and policies that both enable and restrain urban sustainability, as well as several sectors of urban greening, including water, land, and energy use, food access, and environmental justice. Applying class content, students will critically evaluate whether “green” initiatives in Washington, DC enhance the city’s sustainability.

Geographers are uniquely positioned across the natural and social sciences, and thus contribute a holistic understanding of sustainability. In this class we will analyze urban landscapes with that holistic mentality, as we constantly question whether and how components of the urban system are sustainable. Whether or not you apply your understanding of sustainability to a traditionally geographic career, it is my goal that you leave the course with a more thorough understanding of sustainability, and a skill set to enhance sustainability in your career paths and personal lives.

Learning Outcomes

After completing this course, students will be able to:

1. Define sustainability across the triple bottom line, and analyze urban policies and processes that enable and restrain sustainability.
2. Identify how human-environment interaction as alter cultural landscapes.
3. Recognize urban human-environment interactions as part of larger socio-ecological systems.
4. Understand features of urban systems that influence resiliency and adaptive capacity of those systems.
5. Apply class concepts to case studies in Washington, DC to critically evaluate the sustainability of the city’s “green” landscape.

Assignments:

1 Syllabus quiz: 5 points

2 Visioning exercises: (10 points each) 20 points

1 Reading presentation and group discussion facilitation: 50 points

5 Group discussions participation: (10 points each) 50 points

5 Group discussions reflections: (10 points each) 50 points

1 Term paper outline: 25 points

1 Term paper: 75 points

1 Term paper presentation: 25 points

Total: 300 points

Reading presentation and group discussion

Students will be divided into groups before class begins. Each group will be responsible for presenting on one day’s assigned readings, and facilitating a class discussion amongst peers. The group leading the discussion will come to class prepared with several questions to facilitate discussion. Discussion leaders will be evaluated by me and their peers on preparation, content, and facilitation and communication. Students leading the discussion will submit a reading presentation and discussion questions to me via Canvas before class begins.

Group discussion participation

Students who are not leading are expected to attend and actively participate in group discussion. This includes responding to questions, contributing to the conversation, and remaining engaged.

Group discussion reflection

Students who are not leading will submit a discussion reflection at the end of the class. Reflections include a summary of your understanding of the material following the discussion, as well as your evaluation of the group facilitating.

Term paper

You are required to write a 12 page term paper on one of the following urban resources: water, food, energy, or green space. The purpose of the paper is to assess the sustainability of that resource in Washington, DC, and determine how efforts towards the “greening” of that resource impact the surrounding cultural landscape. You will research the resource’s historical use in the city, and will also assess contemporary sustainability efforts for that resource based on Washington, DC’s sustainability plan. You may write your paper with one other student from class or you may choose to write alone.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. You are expected to take an active part in all class exercises. For the purposes of this course, attendance means arrive at the proper time, participate when asked, and stay until class is dismissed. The philosophy of this course is based on learning by doing, so be prepared to participate, learn, and think.

In the event that a class must be missed due to an illness, the policy in this class is as follows:

1. For every medically necessary absence from class, a reasonable effort should be made to notify me in advance of the class. When returning to class, students must bring a note identifying the date of and reason for the absence, and acknowledging that the information in the note is accurate.
2. If a student is absent more than 1 time, he/she is required to bring documentation signed by a health care professional.
3. If a student is absent on days when assignments are scheduled he/she is required to notify me in advance, and upon returning to class, bring documentation of the illness, signed by a health care professional.

For more information on the UMD attendance policies, see <http://faculty.umd.edu/teach/attendance.html>.

Students who are absent due to religious observances are responsible for notifying me of projected absences within **the first week** of the semester.

Notification of Disability

Any student with a documented disability (physical or cognitive) who requires academic accommodations should contact the Disability Resource Center as soon as possible to request an official letter outlining authorized accommodations. Students should then present said letter to me by the first week of class.

Sexual and Racial Harassment

It is the policy of the University of the Maryland that sexual harassment and racial harassment of students, staff and applicants for admission to the University are prohibited. For further details see the UMD student handbook.

Academic Integrity

Academic dishonesty is a serious offence that can result in suspension or expulsion from the University of Maryland. Please refer to the following website to determine how the University of Maryland defines plagiarism and academic dishonesty -- <http://www.testudo.umd.edu/soc/dishonesty.html>. All assignments must be cited properly, especially when using direct quotations, paraphrasing, or using ideas that are not your own and come from another author (Including websites!!!!).

Disruptive Students

Students are expected to treat each other with respect. Disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated. Students who are unable to show civility with one another, or myself will be subject to being referred to the Office of Student Conduct or to Campus Police. You are expected to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct.

Schedule:

Date	Topic	Readings (complete before class)	In class assignments	Due before class
7/14	Defining sustainability	GEOG498S Syllabus Zencey 2010 Mebratu 1998 Theis and Tomkin 2012 Kollmus and Agyeman 2002	Syllabus quiz Visioning exercise #1	
7/16	Urban landscapes Discussion and presentation tips	Lewis 1983 Schein 1997 Cosgrove 1987 O'Donnell 2008		
7/21	Urban sustainability	Campbell 1996 McGranahan and Satterthwaite 2003 Pickett et al 2010 Pickett et al 2013 Childers et al 2014 Bayulken and Huisigh 2015	Group 1 presentation Groups 2 – 6 reflections	Group 1 materials
7/23	Cities as ecosystems	Chelleri 2012 Ahern 2013 Pickett et al 2014 Colding and Barthel 2013 Andersson et al 2014	Group 2 presentation Groups 1, 3-6 reflections	Group 2 materials
7/28	Water	UN 2009 Braga 2001 Brown and Farrelly 2009 Bowman and Thompson 2009 Daigger 2011 Rosenbloom et al 2013 NRDC 2013 Woolman 2013	Group 3 presentation Groups 1-2, 4-6 reflections	Group 3 materials
7/30	Food	Golden 2013 Tomaghi 2013 Corrigan 2011 Saldivar-Tanaka & Krasny 2004 Baker 2004 Hu et al 2014 Milburn and Vail 2010 Spross 2014 Newkirk 2014	Group 4 presentation Groups 1-3, 5-6 reflections	Group 4 materials
8/4	Energy	Kennedy et al 2009 Marshall 2008 Rickwood et al 2008 Madlener and Sunak 2011 Evans and Fox-Penner 2014 Kenton 2013 Mooney 2015	Group 5 presentation Groups 1-4, 6 reflections	Group 5 materials
8/6	Green space and environmental justice	Pincetl and Gearin 2005 Nowak and Dwyer 2007 Wolch et al 2014 Jennings et al 2012 Mathey et al 2011 Mock 2015 Gowen and Mellnick 2013	Group 6 presentation Groups 1-5 reflections	Group 6 materials
8/11	Paper expectations		Paper assigned, work day	
8/13	Meetings		Instructor/group meetings	Outline
8/18	Presentations		Presentations	Presentation
8/20	Presentations		Presentations Visioning exercise #2	Paper