

The Chesapeake Project
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LARC 160, Introduction to Landscape Architecture

The 2010 Chesapeake Project workshop highlighted for me the need to better incorporate sustainable practices—and sustainable thinking—in the discussion of Landscape Architecture as a professional field and a scholarly discipline. LARC 160, Introduction to Landscape Architecture, is a CORE course that engages about 280 students each year. Although the course has always addressed issues of human needs while maintaining ecological balance, the Chesapeake Project has encouraged me to bring a greater social content to the course. Within the context of historic and contemporary landscape development, I will weave into the discussion an emphasis on the ravages of unchecked consumerism, the potential for sustainable economic vitality, and need to consider sustainability in the Chesapeake Bay Region in the context of human health and environmental justice.

In addition to the lecture content, the LARC 160 course will take the opportunity to infuse issues of sustainability in three ways. First, the discussion sessions, in which students synthesize the lecture content through an expression of their personal experiences, will encourage students to reflect on their own contributions to a sustainable landscape. This will heighten the students' awareness of what can be accomplished on a personal level. Second, as they are recording their impressions of various landscapes in their Design Journals, students will be asked to address what impact these landscapes may have on the ecology and the quality of life in the Chesapeake Bay Region. Students will be encouraged to look at environmental, economic and social benefits or problems that might arise from the making, maintaining, and experiencing of such landscapes. Third, the students will design a landscape on campus that must reflect the sustainable practices that are discussed in the course. This will be a project for a centrally located site that has the potential to be a model of environmental sustainability while it serves the social and educational needs of the student population.

I have always assumed that this course makes students more aware of the environment around them, be it the beauty or the deprivation of their surroundings. By alerting students to the dangers that threaten the Chesapeake Bay and by engaging them in some of the means by which it can be saved from future devastation, I hope their interest, concern, and positive contributions will extend well beyond the semester and into their daily lives.