

**SUSTAIN 1S03 – Introduction to Sustainability**  
**Instructor: Greg Zilberbrant**

**Fall 2019**

**Lectures:** Monday 19:00-21:00

**Room:** TBD

**INSTRUCTOR:** [zilberg@mcmaster.ca](mailto:zilberg@mcmaster.ca)

**Office Hours:** by appointment only

**Office:** KTH B110

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**Tutorials**

L01 TBD

L02 TBD

L03 TBD

L04 TBD

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**COURSE OVERVIEW**

An introduction to sustainability from an interdisciplinary perspective, which examines the historical and societal lenses through which sustainability is viewed. Students will learn terminology, theories and concepts to effectively communicate across disciplines and on various topics of sustainability.

**Important Notes:**

Avenue to Learn: This course uses Avenue to Learn to post assignments, rubrics, readings, and other notices. It is important to visit Avenue to Learn regularly to be kept informed of any new information. Most course assignments will be submitted via Avenue to Learn. Go to website (<http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/>) to find out how to log-on to the course's home page.

**COURSE STRUCTURE**

Sustain 1S03 is made up of readings, videos, lectures, and tutorials, all of which are *mandatory*.

- Readings, video *must* be completed prior to each class.
- Lecture time will be used to help guide students through the readings and will expand upon key ideas by exploring case studies, current events, and by making connections to general course themes.

- Tutorial time will be used to offer information, guidance and support for class assignments, which will include personal reflection and experiential learning. Tutorials will facilitate and support the practical application of course material (lectures and readings).

## **Course Learning Objectives**

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

1. Understand various perspectives of sustainability.
2. Understand the meanings underlying sustainability theories.
3. Retrieve relevant knowledge on general themes and major points from course content.
4. Plan and carry out experiential learning activities.
5. Create meaning by generating connections between academic theory and action through reflection.

## **Group Work**

Throughout the course, students will be provided with a variety of opportunities for interdisciplinary discussion and group work. All group members will receive the same mark for group assignments. Part of this course is to provide students with the opportunity to develop their teamwork skills. If and when challenges arise, utilize the opportunity to employ strategies to better the group dynamics going forward. You are encouraged to seek support from course TAs and/or Instructor.

In extreme circumstances, and once group members have attempted to address the situation as a team, they may approach the Course Instructor to proceed with further action. In such an instance, the group will be requested to submit documentation of the situation. After an initial warning, and if no significant improvement is made, the course Instructor reserves the right to adjust any individuals' assignment mark up to 50% of the group grade.

## **Assignment Submission Guidelines**

All assignments should be submitted in Word doc. format via Avenue to Learn. See assignment-specific criteria for instructions.

Late assignments will be penalized 5% each day, including Saturday and Sunday, starting at 12:01 am the following day. A maximum of three days will be permitted for late assignments, after which the assignment will receive a grade of zero.

## **Required Readings:**

Consistent with the goals of the Sustainable Future Program, all Required Readings are available via open access, and can be found on Avenue to Learn.

## **COURSE EVALUATION**

Please note that detailed guidelines and marking rubrics for each assignment can be found on Avenue to Learn.

## Evaluation Breakdown

Experiential Learning Projects: 30% total (3 at 10% each)

Online Quizzes: 35% total

Lecture, Tutorial Participation, and CSR Presentation: 15%

Assignment: 20%

### Experiential Learning Project 30% total (3 at 10% each)

In line with the overall goals of the Sustainable Future Program, students will have the opportunity to take part in self-directed, community-based, and experiential education related to their personal passions and interests in sustainability. In order to achieve these goals, as part of their Experiential Learning Projects, students will complete three community-based, experiential learning activities of their choosing throughout the course. Examples include visiting a local farmers market, attending a sustainability conference, volunteering in the community. After taking part in each of their three chosen activities, students will document their experiences through the creation of personal reflections. To support interdisciplinary learning and reflection learning, students will share findings from their experiences with their classmates. Students will complete each experiential learning project, which will include research, taking part in the experiential activity, preparing a reflection, and engaging in group discussion within tutorial.

Please refer to the **Avenue to Learn** for full details, including links to resources and rubrics.

### Due Dates

Reflection #1: Due by midnight **October 6**

Reflection #2: Due by midnight **November 3**

Reflection #3: Due by midnight **December 1**

### Online Quizzes: 35%

Students will take an online quiz approximately once each week throughout the term (approximately 10 quizzes). The material covered will include lecture content, assigned readings, and assigned TED Talks and/or other related media. Students are expected to monitor A2L for assigned quizzes and announcements.

Due: unless otherwise directed by the instructor, quizzes will be due on midnight each Friday

### Lecture, Tutorial Participation, and CSR Presentation: 15%

Students are expected to attend each lecture and tutorial having completed all identified tasks, including homework assignments and readings.

Students are required to contribute during class and tutorial discussions/activities. Students who provide meaningful contribution, via active participation, in all tutorials will receive full marks for tutorial participation.

Note that tutorials are designed to encourage participation through various means including one-on-one peer discussions, small group tasks, activities, and large class discussions.

*Overview on how to receive an A+ on Attendance and Participation:*

- ✓ *Attend and participate in all lectures*
- ✓ *Attend and participate in all tutorials*
- ✓ *Come prepared to each lecture and tutorial with all assignments and tasks fully complete*
- ✓ *Contribute to discussions*
- ✓ ***Contribute to groups CSR presentation***

## **GROUP ASSIGNMENT 20%**

Students will complete a group assignment in an interdisciplinary group format. The assignment requires students to reflect on the lecture topics and conduct additional research to address current issues in sustainability.

In groups of 4 or 5 (selected by the course instructor), you will be required to define the term “sustainability”. You must define one term that resonates with all of your group members. It must be concise and powerful – invoking a sense of responsibility, action, while being timeless. Based on the group's definition - each student must provide an explanation as to how this definition fits with their interpretation. Relate the definition to your culture background and how it resonates with your past as well as how you can see it being part of your lifestyle and career path in the future.

Please refer to Avenue to Learn for full assignment details, including links to resources and rubrics.

The group assignment will be due electronically in Word via Avenue to Learn by midnight on **December 8**

## **POLICY STATEMENTS**

Please read the following carefully:

### **Academic Dishonesty**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that result or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at

<http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

1. Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
2. Improper collaboration in group work.
3. Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## Inclusivity

The Instructor, TAs and Senior Manager, Academic Sustainability Programs are committed to creating an equitable environment and encourage openness to multiple perspectives and points of view. Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. If you have a disability or health consideration that may require accommodations, please feel free to approach one of the instructors and/or Student Accessibility Services (<http://sas.mcmaster.ca/>) as soon as possible.

## A note about the use of Avenue to Learn

This course uses Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with a course instructor.

## Course modifications

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

## COMPREHENSIVE CLASS AND TUTORIAL SCHEDULE

### ⤴ **Class #1**

- Introduction, Course Outline, and Assignment Review.

### ⤴ Tutorial #1

NO TUTORIALS

### ⤴ **Class #2**

- Sustainability and sustainable development are solidified terms in our business, engineering, and social lexicon yet their meanings have morphed over many years as leaders in these fields attempt to capture attention, instill importance, and inspire action. The week's lecture and discussion will focus on the evolution and use of these terms throughout time.

### ⤴ Tutorial #2

- Introductory tutorial; groups; assignment review; tutorial expectations

### ⤴ **Class #3**

- Economy vs Environment. Until 2008, environment was one of the top issues for many individuals in Canada. Post the 2008 recession, job creation and the economic concerns have taken hold not

only in the minds of Canadians but of citizens and governments around the world. This trend continues today with environmental and economic views conflicting in politics and media. Companies claim economic hardships when environmental regulations are put forward. We look closely at concepts such as industrial ecology that attempt to bridge this gap.

⤴ **Tutorial #3**

- Discussion: Is sustainability a journey or a destination? Are we evolving or just making new mistakes to cover old ones? Are we making the right changes now (or are we changing at all)?

⤴ **Class #4**

- How does policy fit in? During this lecture we explore the changing roles of government and corporation in a sustainability context. Specific focus is given to public, corporate and industry-wide policies. We look at specific examples of successful public and private policy approaches as well as international treaties.

⤴ **Tutorial #4**

- Preparing your Learning Goals and Introduction Reflections and Experiential Learning.
  - **Preparation:** Students are to come prepared to tutorial with a list of 3-5 learning goals you hope to achieve through this course. These could be specific skills, knowledge, or experiences.
  - **Readings:**
    - ⤴ Report on guided reflection: A tutorial for students and evaluators.

⤴ **Class #5**

- In order to make good decision, we need good data. In this week's lecture, we will discuss how sustainability is measured. What metrics are used in public policy and the private sector? We examine whether these metrics truly represent sustainability – whether we are measuring and, in turn, managing to become more sustainable.

⤴ **Tutorial #5**

- Peer Discussion: Reflection Activities

⤴ **Class #6**

- Where governments and corporations leave a gap, the third sector, fills it. The third sector refers to not-for-profit or charitable organizations. These organizations play a vital role in the social sustainability of our society but have, in recent years, evolved into what is commonly referred to as “social enterprise”. During this week's lecture and discussion, we review the concept of social enterprise through examples of how such organization are not only addressing the social gap but also becoming economically sustainable.

⤴ **Tutorial #6**

- Working Session: CSR Presentations (Q&A with TAs)

⤴ **Class #7**

- Undoubtedly the biggest subtopic on sustainability is climate change. The scientific community is in general agreement that the effects of climate change are having an impact on the weather patterns around the world and that manmade greenhouse gas emissions are the culprit. We look at the greenhouse gas issue through the environmental, economic, and social lens focusing on the impact

of different industrial, commercial, and individual citizen contributions as well as the political complexity of international environmental regulations.

⤴ Tutorial #7

- Discussion: Climate change policy, is the world doing enough (is Canada)? Is climate change adaptation part of the plan?

⤴ **Class #8**

- Presentation of Corporate Social Responsibility reports by student groups

⤴ Tutorial #8

- Follow-up discussion: Reflections

⤴ **Class #9**

- Presentation of Corporate Social Responsibility reports by student groups

⤴ Tutorial #9

- CSR presentation discussion. In a world run by large institutions/organizations – are you reassured or more concerned based on the in-class CSR presentation? Would you change anything in your life based on what you know now?

⤴ **Class #10**

- Presentation of Corporate Social Responsibility reports by student groups

⤴ Tutorial #10

Working Session: Group Assignment

⤴ **Class #11**

- Sustainability as a goal. In this lecture, we discuss the important of context – focusing on population, technology, and the Tragedy of the Commons. We also evaluate the role of CSR (and good corporate management) to achieve desired results.

⤴ Tutorial #11

Discussion: Where should our sustainability efforts be applied? Are we looking at the right issues or are we missing some?

⤴ **Class #12**

- Emerging issues in sustainability. Sustainability is an evolving subject as we are continuously trying to balance the social, environmental, and economic needs of communities. In this lecture, we explore the key initiatives in the public and private sector in addressing major sustainability challenges in 2019.

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⤴ Tutorial #12

- No tutorial

⤴ **Class #13**

- Final Lecture