
SUSTAIN 4S06 A/B – LEADERSHIP IN SUSTAINABILITY

FALL 2019 - WINTER 2020

Lectures: Thursday 7:00-10:00pm
Room: CNH 223

Instructor: Kate Whalen, whalenk@mcmaster.ca
Office: KTH B110

Office Hours: By appointment using Calendly. Please select a normal in-person or phone meeting, unless you need to meet outside of the 9-5 business hours, in which case, please use the 'Community (full)' option.

Teaching Assistant: Samantha Patrick, patricksm@mcmaster.ca
Office Hours: By appointment. Please schedule via email.

COURSE OVERVIEW

With the goal to inspire in all students a desire for continued learning and inquiry through experiential education, this course will provide students with interdisciplinary, student-led, and community based opportunities related to sustainability. This course will enable students to develop essential skills to effectively tackle many of the challenging problems that face our society with emphasis on applying interdisciplinary solutions and social innovation. Some of these problems include climate change, poverty, distribution of wealth and resources, food insecurity, environmental degradation, and loss of biodiversity.

As leaders, decision makers, and engaged citizens, students are involved in these issues to varying degrees. They are consumers faced with decisions on which product or service to select, they are members of one or more communities where they play a role and choose their level of engagement, and they may also be in a leadership position on a sustainability initiative. What becomes evident as their experiences grow is that implementing sustainability initiatives does not happen in isolation. Learning how to listen, form successful collaborations, work effectively within interdisciplinary groups, recognize and consult with various stakeholders, resolve conflicts, foster engagement, and recognize achievements are skills that will be emphasized in this course. Furthermore, knowing how to apply skills in project management, organization, time management, and communication, are also integral to implementing successful sustainability initiatives.

Throughout this course, students will apply the transferrable skills they have obtained throughout much of their undergraduate career to conduct primary research and to develop and implement a real-world sustainability initiative within the McMaster and/or Hamilton community.

This course is partnering with CityLAB Hamilton to provide an opportunity for students to work with City of Hamilton staff on real City challenges. CityLAB is an innovation hub that brings together student, academic, and civic leaders to co-create a better Hamilton for all. For more information, visit our website at www.citylabhamilton.com

IMPORTANT NOTES:

Additional non-course-specific information, including events and opportunities, will be shared using MacSustain social media platforms, specifically [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#).

Avenue to Learn will be used specifically for important course-specific updates, for students to submit assignments, and for the instructor to provide assignment feedback and to record grades. It is important to visit Avenue to Learn regularly to be kept informed of any new information. Go to the website (<http://avenue.mcmaster.ca/>) to find out how to log-on to the course's home page.

COURSE STRUCTURE

While Sustain 4S06 is focused on the student-led development and implementation of a research-focused project within a community, students will be provided with support throughout the course. Support will include readings and learning resources, facilitated class discussions, and written assignments, which are aimed to assist students in the successful completion of their project and enhance their experiential learning.

A unique aspect of this course is that students will be encouraged to develop a wide range of essential skills by participating in excursions and workshops led by the instructor and/or by guest speakers, which will take place during scheduled class time.

COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES

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

- Demonstrate a deep understanding of local sustainability issues and their interconnectedness within a broader system through written assignments, discussions, and practical application
- Apply essential skills within an interdisciplinary setting, including project management, change management, problem solving, teamwork, and communication
- Generate solutions to problems and evaluate outcomes through conducting research and implementing critical thinking and interdisciplinary problem-solving skills
- Create meaning by generating connections between academic theory and action through reflection

GROUP WORK

An objective of this course is to provide students with the opportunity to develop their teamwork and interpersonal skills. Throughout the course, students will be provided with a variety of opportunities for interdisciplinary discussion and group work. If and when challenges or conflicts arise, students should utilize the opportunities to employ strategies to improve the group dynamics going forward.

To support formative assessment and feedback on group work skills, students will conduct weekly self and group assessments. Additionally, students will submit an evaluation of contribution along with the submission of each group assignment.

Students are encouraged to work as a team and seek support from the course instructor early on if challenges arise. Initial actions will include a facilitated discussion with all group members focused on listening and seeking first to understand in order to resolve the conflict and strengthen group dynamics.

CLASS ATTENDANCE, PARTICIPATION, & WEEKLY UPDATES TO PROJECT CHAMPIONS

Students are expected to attend each class and group meeting, be on time and stay for the full duration. Additionally, students are expected to be fully present, which includes removing all potential distractions, demonstrating respect for their own learning and the experience of those around them, and participating in activities and discussions.

Each week students will send a weekly update email to their project champion, copying all group members. Once it is sent, students will forward the sent update to the course instructor and TA. The update email should include: updates from the past week; next steps for the coming week; questions needing a reply (if applicable); and the agenda for the next meeting, along with the date, time and meeting location.

Grace will be permitted one time for lateness, missed attendance, lacking participation, or inappropriate or missed weekly meeting to project champion. A second instance will require meeting with the course instructor to explore the situation, learn from the experience, and develop a plan for moving forward.

ASSIGNMENT SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Format: To ensure the instructor can include detailed feedback and comments, assignments should be submitted in Word format via Avenue to Learn, unless otherwise stated.

Style: APA Style is preferred, but consistency is of utmost importance. See [OWL](#) for support.

Late Assignments: Please make arrangements for the submission of any late assignment. A reasonable timeframe would be at least 24-hours before the assignment is due. That being said, the more notice the better. If arrangements are not made, late assignments will be penalized 15% each day, including Saturday, 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, INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS, AND LEARNING RESOURCES

Consistent with the goals of the Sustainable Future Program, all readings, instructional videos, and learning resources are available via open access and can be found on Avenue to Learn. There is no required textbook for this course.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND PROCESS

Some project opportunities for this course will be offered through [City Lab](#), a collaborative initiative between the City of Hamilton and local academic institutions. In completing their project, students will engage in practical research and application through working with individuals, groups and/or organizations on campus and/or within the Hamilton community to implement their sustainability project. All students will work in groups of 2-4. Groups will be determined based on students' choice of project. Each group will work with a Community Project Champion (CPC), who works for the City of Hamilton or in the Hamilton community and who will assist in guiding students to plan and implement their project.

A variety of project opportunities will be made available to students to choose from. Summary descriptions of each project will be made available on the course website throughout August and September, with all projects posted before the second class in September. Additionally, CPCs will attend the second class to meet with students and to provide more information about the available projects.

Students are encouraged to view the list of projects online before the first class and to start thinking about which are of greatest interest. Conducting some background research on the topic and/or on the individual CPC will be useful prior to the first class. Early in the course, CPCs will be available to meet with students, provide more information, and answer any questions that students might have. Attending class prepared with specific questions will be helpful, as students will be making project selection directly following the cut-off date for the add/drop period.

Students will then rank all projects, including a brief description about why each of their first three choices is right for them. Students will submit their list of project choices to the course instructor who will formulate project groups considering students' project selection and ranking. Please note that students do not choose their group members. Student should focus on choosing a project that is most in line with their individual learning outcomes and personal interests. Based on individual project selection, groups will be formulated. The course instructor will aim to communicate projects and group members to all students within 24 hours.

Throughout term one, students will engage in working with the community to understand the issue from the community's perspective. Class time will include workshops on: community engagement, facilitation techniques, project planning, study design, quantitative and/or qualitative research methodology, and research ethics.

During term two, students will be heavily engaged in the project implementation phases of their project. Students will be able to utilize *some* scheduled class time for group meetings and to obtain support from the course instructor, but should plan to complete most of their project's implementation beyond class time. A formal class schedule has been omitted from this syllabus to encourage flexibility of what content will be discussed and when. Classes will focus on providing guidance and support for items as they arise and as requested by students. Students can expect to engage in readings and discussion on topics such as successful negotiations and moving forward in the face of resistance. These topics may change based on the progress of the projects and support required by the students. In the latter part of term two, students will focus on final project implementation, reflection, as well as the creation and submission of their final project reports.

Students will conduct weekly self and group evaluations throughout the course and will submit a formal group evaluation at the end of each term.

EVALUATION

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

Ethics Application (Group): 10%

Students will develop their qualitative research study, which will include between six and nine in-person interviews, verbatim transcription, coding and thematic analysis, reporting, and iterative development and refinement of results. To support their primary research, students will create an ethics application and all associated resources, which will be submitted to McMaster Research Ethics Board (MREB) for review and approval before students can begin participant recruitment. Students should familiarize themselves with the MREB website including the Tips and Resources available: <https://reo.mcmaster.ca/home>

Students must have their ethics application reviewed by their CPC and by the course instructor prior to formal submission on the due date below.

Due Dates: October 7, 2019

Time Due: by 9:00am

Format: Submitted via MacRem

Weekly Reflections and Teamwork Assessments (Individual): 15%

Approximately once each week, students will reflect on course readings and/or lectures as well as on their teamwork. Individual student grades will be calculated based on the quality of their weekly reflections, not the evaluation provided to self and others. This assessment is intended to foster critical reflection, generate discussion, and promote successful teamwork.

Due Dates: Between Thursday evening and the following Monday evening each week.

Time Due: between 10:00pm Thursday evening and 11:59pm the following Monday evening

Format: Any format, submitted in Avenue to Learn

Project Plan (Group): 20% (2 at 10%)

Upon choosing a project and forming a project group, all members of the group will then work together with their CPC to prepare a project plan. A good project plan will clearly explain the *why*, *how*, and *what* of the project, along with the specific actions, deliverables, roles and responsibilities, and timelines required for implementation. The project plan should provide all necessary details and information so the course instructor and CPC can effectively support the successful implementation of the project. The plan should also show evidence that the group has clearly thought through the steps required for implementation, the timeline and goals are feasible, and that expected challenges are clearly stated with a proposed method for managing any negative consequences that would impact implementation of the initiative. The plan should be continuously reviewed, revised, and updated.

The project plan is divided into two submissions to support continuous revision and enhancement as more information and clarity is obtained. Students will prepare their full project plan for the first due date, but it is recognized that many details of what is to come in term two will not yet be available. Students should still provide as much information about their plans for term two as possible, knowing that there will be another opportunity to refine their plan for term two in advance of the second submission.

Students must have their project plan reviewed by their CPC and by the course instructor prior to formal submission on the due date below.

Due Dates: October 10th, 2019 & January 16th 2020

Time Due: by 9:00am

Format: Any format, but preferably Word, submitted in Avenue to Learn

Report to Decision-makers (Group): 5%

Each group will work with their CPC and community to determine the most appropriate process, format, and individual(s) to share study results with, so that further work and action is made possible. Although it is possible for students to take advantage of the opportunity to share their results and inspire continued action, it is not

mandatory. Assessment and evaluation will be based on the identification of the process, format, and individual(s) as well as preparation of the appropriate deliverable.

Term one submission will include identification of the process, format, and individual(s). Term two will submission will include the actual deliverable.

Due Dates: November 13, 2019 and March 25, 2020

Time Due: 11:59pm

Format: As appropriate

Final Report Page (Group): 15% (one at 5%, one at 10%)

Each group will be required to prepare a one-page report to be included in the Sustain 4S06 Course Report, which will be published and posted on McMaster's Academic Sustainability Programs website. A selection of these reports will also be included within the McMaster Academic Sustainability Programs Annual Report. A report template can be found on A2L, and samples of past reports can be found online at asp.mcmaster.ca. The final report page will include the initiative title, an overview, a list of objectives, a reporting of the group's achievements, as well as acknowledgement of project collaborators. Each report should also include at least one image. Each report must be sent to each project collaborator for review prior to final submission. Evaluation will be based on ensuring that page limit is not exceeded, form and structure are followed, high-quality photos are provided as separate attachments, and all approvals have been obtained on time. Students should be prepared to undergo multiple revisions of their report within this period and to consult the Final Report Evaluation rubric for specified guidelines prior to submission.

Students will create a report page in term one, capturing their successes to date, as well as a brief overview of next steps. Students will revise their report based on successes achieved in term two, which will result in the creation of their Final Report Page.

Due Dates: November 20, 2019 and Thursday, March 18, 2020.

Time Due: 11:59pm

Format: Word format. Images as JPEG and in a separate attachment. Screen cap of approvals from all collaborators can be in any format, and ideally compiled in one document. Student release forms can be submitted in any format.

Reflections 20% (Individual, 2 at 10%)

Each student will establish both personal learning goals and a group project plan, for which they will strive to accomplish by the end of the course. Students are encouraged to utilize their weekly self-reflections or a personal journal to reflect on their experiences and learning. Students are then encouraged to pull from these personal reflections to prepare two formal reflections of academic quality. Students are encouraged to reflect on the challenges they faced, things that worked well, what they could have done differently, and how they can continue their learning. Each student will prepare two reflection papers, addressing the following:

1. Recount your experience within this course, and discuss your learning. You may choose a theme related to one of your learning goals, your project plan, or even something you did not expect to learn.
2. What contributed to your learning and how did it happen?

3. What aspects of the course (readings, lectures, workshops, trips etc.) supported your experiential learning? Make connections using three sources demonstrating how your experiences can be better understood in relation to the course material, and vice versa.
4. How will you extend your learning going forward?

For the second reflection, students can build upon the theme of their first reflection or choose to focus on a new theme that was instrumental to their learning during the second part of the course. Either way, students should ensure that each reflection is fundamentally unique and can stand on its own.

Due Dates: November 27th and March 30th

Time Due: 11:59pm

Format: Word format.

Word Limit: 2,000 words (Flexible. Do not feel pressured to reach 2000 or constrained to keep within it)

Sources: Minimum of three sources, at least one from class/readings and at least one outside source.

Rubric: Evaluation for the final reflection will be based on the information found in the Report on Guided Reflection.

Research Report (Group): 15% (5% term one. 10% term two)

Following data analysis, each group will prepare a short research report, in the format of a typical journal article – title page, abstract (200 words max), 6 keywords, introduction, methods, results, discussion, acknowledgements, references, appendices (as appropriate), table(s) with caption(s), figure(s) with caption(s).

Students will create their report using plain language, so that it can be tailored and delivered back to the research participants in the form of a follow-up focus group, presentation, or event. The initial report will be due early in term two, and students will then add to their report to include additional information obtained, which will be included within the final research report.

Each research report should be reviewed by and revised with support of the group's CPC, before it is shared publically.

Due Dates: January 24, 2020 and March 13, 2020

Time Due: 11:59pm

Format: Word format, submitted in Avenue to Learn

POLICY STATEMENTS

ACADEMIC DISHONESTY

Students 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 is committed to creating an equitable environment and encourages 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 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.

MCMASTER STUDENT ABSENCE FORM (MSAF)

If you are seeking relief for missed academic work because of an absence lasting less than three days in duration, you must use the McMaster Student Absence Form.

It is the student's responsibility to contact the course instructor as soon as possible (ideally within three days) to discuss appropriate relief. It is the prerogative of the instructor of the course to determine the appropriate relief for missed term work in his/her course.

Students should expect to have academic commitments Monday through Saturday but not on Sunday or statutory holidays.