

Syllabus – Winter 2025: Monday, 12/30/24 – Saturday, 1/18/25

Excluding materials for purchase, syllabus information may be subject to change. The most up-to-date syllabus is located within the course in HuskyCT.

Course and Instructor Information

Course Title: Introduction to Sustainable Cities

Credits: 3

Format: Online

Prerequisites: None

Professor: Dr. Carol Atkinson-Palombo

Email: carol.atkinson-palombo@uconn.edu (Preferred method of contact)

Office Hours/Availability: Please expect a response to emails **within 24 hours**. If you would like to set up an appointment to meet electronically (either by phone or Webex), please email me with some days and times that work for you (noting if you are in a different time zone to Storrs), and we can set up an appointment.

Course Materials

Required Materials: There is no textbook for this course.

Course readings and media are available within HuskyCT, through either an Internet link or Library Resources

Course Description

Catalog Entry: Pathways to make cities more sustainable from social, economic, and environmental perspectives. Topics include sustainable transportation, renewable energy, recycling of waste, and green infrastructure in contemporary metropolitan areas in developed and developing nations. **CA 2. CA 4-INT. E.** (Note: E denotes that the course satisfies the Environmental Literacy requirement that was instituted for students as of Fall 2019.)

Our Course: Throughout history and in all parts of the world societies need to decide how and where they arrange themselves on the physical landscape. Cities are becoming increasingly important for several reasons. A majority of the world's population now resides in cities, and urbanization is expected to continue. Ongoing population expansion is expected to create a world with around nine billion inhabitants in the next few decades. This course has been designed to introduce students to the notion of a Sustainable City and how initiatives intended to promote cities that are sustainable can help to provide solutions to some of the world's most pressing problems, including global climate change.

The course begins with a discussion of the Anthropocene – the Age of Man – a label that reflects the extent to which human activity is changing the global environment, and recent material on Global Climate Change. This contextualizes the urgency and vital importance of the topic of Sustainable Cities. As this is a 2000-level General Education course with no prerequisites, Module 2 is intended to orient students who may be from a wide range of disciplines across the University to some foundational concepts that are essential to the course content. The core material contained in Modules 3 through 6 is organized according to four overlapping themes: Cities as Economic Engines; Urban Metabolism; Rights to the City; and Cities of the Future. The first three themes map approximately to the domains of Economics, Environment, and Society that are so prevalent in the literature on Sustainability. The fourth theme reflects the forward-looking orientation of sustainability approaches, and the foundational premise that futures can be shaped by intentional decisions made by society. As the complex interactions between public sentiment, the media, and politics is therefore crucial to understand, I have included material on current events. Finally, because community engagement and communication are important skills to have in order to work in the field of Sustainable Cities, three of your assignments will involve putting together Video Presentations to communicate complex issues in a succinct and clear format.

Course Objectives

By the end of the semester, students should be able to:

1. Critically evaluate the impacts of human activity on the environment, the wide range of initiatives needed to limit the catastrophic effects on humans as well as plant and animal species of those impacts—especially global climate change—and barriers that need to be overcome in order to implement those initiatives.
2. Critically evaluate how to promote Sustainable Cities in a context-specific manner around the globe—using appropriate technologies—despite the highly polarized political landscape in the United States.
3. Critically evaluate the concept of Development, how Sustainable Development and Sustainability have emerged as approaches to minimize the prioritization by some of economic growth over environmental and social issues, and why the ideals of promoting social and environmental outcomes continue to be controversial.
4. Critically evaluate the ongoing pandemic Covid-19, the centrality of human health to Sustainable Cities, and the way that emerging perceptions about density in cities and on public transit may reshape human settlement patterns.
5. Explain how and why five different types of equity—inter-generational, intra-generational, geographic, procedural, and inter-species—are fundamental to the concept of Sustainable Cities, how those inequities are visible in contemporary cities around the globe, and how they can be reduced, considering your individual responsibilities towards this goal.
6. Demonstrate competencies in five key areas associated with Sustainability: systems thinking, anticipatory, interpersonal, strategic, and normative.

Course Outline (and Calendar if Applicable)

Module 1: Introduction
Module 2: Foundational Concepts
Module 3: Cities as Economic Engines
Module 4: Urban Metabolism
Module 5: Rights to the City
Module 6: Cities of the Future
Module 7: Course Project & Wrap-Up

Course Requirements and Grading

Summary of Course Grading:

The two tables below show how the course is graded in two different ways – by Module, and then by Assignment Type. You will notice that the work contained in Module 7—which is the Course Project as well as the Reflective Journal entry for the entire course—is worth 27% of your overall grade. I strongly recommend that you begin thinking about your Course Project very early on, and will be checking in with you about your topic selection on a regular basis. **If at any point you need feedback or guidance in selecting a topic, please email me to set up a time to meet via Webex or phone.** It is important that you do not leave this to the last week to get started on your topic. If you are interested in a topic covered a bit later in our course, you may skip ahead to look at that material. I have opened all of the content on Day 1 to enable you to do this.

Course Components	Weight
Module 1	6%
Module 2	15%
Module 3	20%
Module 4	14%
Module 5	9%
Module 6	9%
Module 7	27%

Here is the breakdown of course deliverables by Assignment Type. A few things are worth noting. First, there are no exams. The evaluation of your learning is entirely based on assignments. As a result, you will have a lot of items to submit—in fact a total of 34—so you will need to stay very organized. Again, because all of the course material is open ahead of time, you have some flexibility in how you organize your time during this compact Winter Intersession. The one Assignment Type that is dependent upon other people getting their submissions in are the Discussion Board posts, because you will need to make an initial post and a response. Please make a note of these and do your best to stay on top of the due dates.

Assignment Type	#	Weight
Quizzes	8	8%
Reflective Journal Entries	11	20%
Discussion Board Posts	7	20%
Video Presentations	3	27%
Worksheets	5	25%
TOTAL	34	100%

Grading Scale

Grade	Letter Grade	GPA
93-100	A	4.0
90-92	A-	3.7
87-89	B+	3.3
83-86	B	3.0
80-82	B-	2.7
77-79	C+	2.3
73-76	C	2.0
70-72	C-	1.7
67-69	D+	1.3
63-66	D	1.0
60-62	D-	0.7
<60	F	0.0

Due Dates and Late Policy

All course due dates are identified in the Course Outline. Deadlines are based on Eastern Time; if you are in a different time zone, please adjust your submittal times accordingly. *The instructor reserves the right to change dates accordingly as the semester progresses. All changes will be communicated in an appropriate manner.*

Because we have to get through a lot of material, and to incentivize you to stay on track, a penalty of 20% per day will be given to late submissions. Again, I encourage you to work ahead, something that is helped by the course material all being open to you at once.

Feedback and Grades

I will make every effort to provide feedback and grades **within 48 hours of the submission deadline**. To keep track of your performance in the course, refer to My Grades in HuskyCT.

Student Responsibilities and Resources

As a member of the University of Connecticut student community, you are held to certain standards and academic policies. In addition, there are numerous resources available to help you succeed in your academic work. Review these important [standards, policies and resources](#), which include:

- The Student Code
 - Academic Integrity
 - Resources on Avoiding Cheating and Plagiarism
- Copyrighted Materials
- Netiquette and Communication
- Adding or Dropping a Course
- Academic Calendar
- Policy Against Discrimination, Harassment and Inappropriate Romantic Relationships
- Sexual Assault Reporting Policy

Students with Disabilities

The University of Connecticut is committed to protecting the rights of individuals with disabilities and assuring that the learning environment is accessible. If you anticipate or experience physical or academic barriers based on disability or pregnancy, please let me know immediately so that we can discuss options. Students who require accommodations should contact the Center for Students with Disabilities, Wilbur Cross Building Room 204, (860) 486-2020 or <http://csd.uconn.edu/>.

Blackboard measures and evaluates accessibility using two sets of standards: the WCAG 2.0 standards issued by the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) and Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act issued in the United States federal government." (Retrieved March 24, 2013 from [Blackboard's website](#))

Software/Technical Requirements (with Accessibility and Privacy Information)

The software/technical requirements for this course include:

- HuskyCT/Blackboard ([HuskyCT/ Blackboard Accessibility Statement](#), [HuskyCT/ Blackboard Privacy Policy](#))
- Adobe Acrobat Reader ([Adobe Reader Accessibility Statement](#), [Adobe Reader Privacy Policy](#))
- Google Apps ([Google Apps @ UConn Accessibility](#), [Google for Education Privacy Policy](#))
- Microsoft Office (free to UConn students through uconn.onthehub.com) ([Microsoft Accessibility Statement](#), [Microsoft Privacy Statement](#))
- Dedicated access to high-speed internet with a minimum speed of 1.5 Mbps (4 Mbps or higher is recommended).
- Kaltura ([Accessibility Statement](#), [Privacy Policy](#))
- Optional Scanning Apps: Camscanner ([CamScanner Privacy Policy](#)); Adobe Scan ([Adobe Accessibility Compliance](#), [Adobe Privacy Policy](#))

NOTE: This course has NOT been designed for use with mobile devices.

Help

[Technical and Academic Help](#) provides a guide to technical and academic assistance.

This course is completely facilitated online using the learning management platform, [HuskyCT](#). If you have difficulty accessing HuskyCT, you have access to the in person/live person support options available during regular business hours through the [Help Center](#). You also have [24x7 Course Support](#) including access to live chat, phone, and support documents.

Minimum Technical Skills

To be successful in this course, you will need the following technical skills:

- Use electronic mail with attachments.
- Save files in commonly used word processing program formats.
- Copy and paste text, graphics or hyperlinks.
- Work within two or more browser windows simultaneously.
- Open and access PDF files.
- Ability to create Video Presentations either using narrated powerpoints, Kaltura presentations (through HuskyCT) or videos using other software programs such as imovie.

University students are expected to demonstrate competency in Computer Technology. Explore the [Computer Technology Competencies](#) page for more information.

Evaluation of the Course

Students will be provided an opportunity to evaluate instruction in this course using the University's standard procedures, which are administered by the [Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness](#) (OIRE).

Additional informal formative surveys may also be administered within the course as an optional evaluation tool.

GEOG 2400: Intro to Sustainable Cities - Winter Intersession 2025

Unless otherwise specified, all assignments are due at 11:59 PM ET.

Module & Dates	Course Material	Assessments (Due dates)
Orientation	Course Orientation <ul style="list-style-type: none">Course SyllabusInstructor's informationComputer settingsCourse organization and toolsAcademic policiesDiscussion Board guidelines	Syllabus Quiz (+/- Mon., 12/30) Submit Practice Assignment (+/- Mon., 12/30) Class Introductions Discussion Board (+/- Tue, 12/31)
1:	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">"IPCC Climate Change Reports: Why They Matters to Everyone on the Planet," NRDC, 2022. News Articles <ul style="list-style-type: none">"What is the Anthropocene and Are We In It?" Smithsonian Institute, 2013. Videos and Video Clips <ul style="list-style-type: none">Earth at Night: Lights of Human Activity, NASA.CO2 emissions, NASAWhy Climate Change Denialism Still Exists in the US Information on Course Project <ul style="list-style-type: none">Folder: Project IdeasFolder: Project Examples	Quiz 1.1 (Thurs., 1/2/25) Quiz 1.2 (Thurs., 1/2/25) DB 1.1 (Initial Post: Thurs., 1/2/25.; Replies: Fri., 1/3/25) Reflective Journal 1.1 (Thu., 1/2/25) Reflective Journal 1.2 (Thu., 1/2/25)
2:	Instructor Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none">2.1: What is a City?2.2: A Brief History of Cities2.3: Global Population Trends2.4: Development Paradigms2.5: Geography & Sustainable Cities Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none">Wiek (Annotated) News Articles <ul style="list-style-type: none">Citylab University: The Who's Who of Urbanism, Schneider, 2018. Documentaries <ul style="list-style-type: none">Slumming It	Quiz 2.1 Fri., 1/3/25) Quiz 2.2 (Fri., 1/3/25) Reflective Journal 2.1 (Fri., 1/3/25) Quiz 2.3 (Fri., 1/3/25) Worksheet 2 (Sat., 1/4/25) DB 2.1 (Initial Post: Mon., 1/6.; Replies: Tues., 1/7) Reflective Journal 2.2 (Mon., 1/6)
3:	Instructor Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none">3.1: Colonialism--Old & New3.2: Globalization and the Redistribution of Jobs	Worksheet 3 Tues., 1/7 Video Presentation Wed., 1/8 DB 3.1 (Initial Post:

	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities and the Creative Class, Florida, City & Community, 2003. • Amenities Drive Urban Growth, Clark et al., Journal of Urban Affairs, 24 (5), 493-515, 2002. • Cities and Competitiveness, Begg, Urban Studies 36(5), 795-805, 1999. <p>News Articles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • American Attitudes to Poverty and the Poor, Population Reference Bureau, 2002. • Why Poor People Stay Poor, Tirado, Slate Magazine, 2014. <p>Video Clips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wealth Inequality in the US • Bangalore <p>Documentaries</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requiem for Detroit 	<p>Wed., 1/8; Replies: Thu., 1/9) Reflective Journal 3.1 (Thu., 1/9) Reflective Journal 3.2 (Fri., 1/10)</p>
4:	<p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Metabolism, Wolman, 1965. • Dragons of Inaction, Gifford, 2011 (Annotated). <p>Websites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brownfields: An Overview, EPA Website. • What Are Stranded Assets? London School of Economics Website. <p>News Articles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concrete: the most destructive material on Earth, Watts, The Guardian, 2019. • We Recycle Bottles. Why Don't We Recycle Buildings? Mahan and Kluytenaar, Medium, 2018. • EPA: Don't Make New Brownfields, Sullivan, CityLab, 2017. • How the Inflation Reduction Act and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law work together to advance climate action. <p>Video Clips</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban Metabolism • Social Traps <p>Interactive Maps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surging Seas Risk Zone Map 	<p>Worksheet 4 (Sat., 1/11) Quiz 4.1 (Sat., 1/11) Quiz 4.2 (Sat., 1/11) Reflective Journal 4.1 (Sat., 1/11) Reflective Journal 4.2 (Mon., 1/13) Video Presentation (Tues., 1/14) DB 4.1 (Initial Post: Tues., 1/14; Replies: Wed., 1/15)</p>
5:	<p>Instructor Presentations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5.1: Environmental Justice <p>Readings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Right to the City, New Left Review (53), September, Harvey, 2008 (Annotated). <p>https://www.yesmagazine.org/social-</p>	<p>Worksheet 5 (Tues., 1/14) Reflective Journal 5.1 (Wed., 1/15) DB 5.1 (Initial Post: Tues., 1/14; Replies: Wed, 1/15)</p>

	justice/2020/07/31/urban-planning-segregation-white-supremacy Websites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women's March Website • People's Climate Movement Website Video Clips <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupy Wall Street • Black Lives Matter • Segregation • Gentrification • Flint, Michigan Interactive Maps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racial Dot Maps, University of Virginia Website 	
6:	Readings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From Low- to Net-Zero Carbon Cities: The Next Global Agenda, Annual Review of Environment and Resources, Seto et al, 2021. Websites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scenario Planning, American Planning Association Website. News Articles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Africa's Not So Magic Roundabout, Chambers, The Guardian, 2009. • Big but affordable effort needed for America to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, Princeton study shows, Molly Seltzer, Andlinger Center for Energy and the Environment, 2020. Video Clips <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Songdo • Smart Cities • Play Pumps • Troubled Water, PBS 	Worksheet 6 (Wed, 1/15) Quiz 6.1 (Thurs., 1/11) Reflective Journal 6.1 (Thurs., 1/16) DB 6.1 (Initial Post: Thurs., 1/16; Replies: Fri., 1/17)
7:	No new material. Discussion will be based upon Course Projects created by students.	Topic and Outline for Course Project: (Thu, 1/16) Final Project Presentation (Fri, 1/17) DB 7.1 (Initial Post: Fri., 1/17; Replies: Sat., 1/18) Reflective Journal 7.1 (Sat, 1/18) Summative Survey (Sat., 1/18)