The University Of Texas At Austin Course Number: UGS 302 Unique Number: 64785

Spring 2014

Monday 2-5 pm ART 3.433



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Office Hours: W 12–2pm Appointments: bit.ly/1bh8NiS

UGS 302: Difficult Dialogues: Framing Sustainability

Overview

The word 'sustainability' is a word that has been over-used—perhaps even depleted of meaning. However, the idea of sustainability can be an emotionally charged trigger, particularly during times of economic and strained times. This Difficult Dialogues course seeks to explore the framing and values surrounding sustainability, as well looking at the variety of sustainability research that is conducted on this campus.

The course will open with a focus on the meaning of the word and through the various different ways that have been used to define sustainability. Our course discussion of sustainability will be based on the assumption that humans wish to survive on this planet. The teaching format will consist of experiential exercises, lectures, guest speakers, community visits, dialogue and discussions, and audiovisual media to help students understand and integrate their own beliefs into the course material.

This class is designated as both a Signature Course and a Difficult Dialogues Course. As such, this course includes special activities—introduction to a University Gem, attendance at a campus-wide university lecture, and oral presentation activities—and these have been incorporated into the syllabus.

Signature Courses

Signature Courses are designed to expose entering UT students to the broad goals and possibilities of a university education, while promoting a greater sense of intellectual community among undergraduates. Signature Courses are designed to make students aware of the high standards necessary for college-level academic work and help students cultivate skills to meet those standards.

Difficult Dialogues

Based on a Ford Foundation Program (www.difficultdialogues.org), Difficult Dialogues courses are designed to promote open scholarly inquiry, academic freedom, and respect for different cultures and beliefs on the campus of the University of Texas at Austin. The development of the Difficult Dialogues courses was partially funded through a grant from the Ford Foundation to the University of Texas at Austin. The Difficult Dialogues project is now sponsored by the Humanities Institute, which has been organizing Public Forums and other programming that can reach the wider university community. This course is thus part of a larger project to promote respectful dialogue, innovative teaching, and academic freedom at UT.

Learning Objectives

- 1. Develop awareness of continual balancing among the three pillars of sustainability: economics, environment and equity, as encountered both through daily design practice and through case studies.
- 2. Become familiar with the breadth of 'research' related to sustainable practice at UT and the City of Austin
- 3. Examine and locate one's own beliefs and practices by mapping actions across urgency and values and time frame
- 4. Develop the various framing around sustainability and their effectiveness and weaknesses

Signature course objectives

- 1. Library Literacy
- 2. Written Communication
- 3. Oral presentation

Difficult Dialogues objectives

- 1. Active listening, appreciative inquiry
- 2. Respectful discussion techniques
- 3. Self-reflection and identification of personal blind spots

Course Structure

There are three different aspects in this course: Class discussions and presentations, field trips and a university-wide forum and/or lecture.

Discussions and Presentations

Class will consist of discussions of the readings and exercises that may have been assigned or presented during class. To best facilitate class discussion, you will be asked to post questions regarding the readings, or a reflection on the experience by **Friday at 9pm** before the next class. Films are scheduled during class.

Readings

Readings will be available in CANVAS, under the course section 'Files.' Additional course materials (syllabus, rubrics, announcements, grades) also will be available at this site.

Field Trips

As part of a Signature Course requirement, you need to become introduced to one of the university's 'gems.' This will occur during scheduled class time, and getting to the preferred 'gem' for this course is dependent upon the availability of cars and drivers. This will be a group field trip; during our second class meeting, we will spend sometime organizing and seeing what is possible in terms of personal cars and drivers.

You also have one assigned individual field trip as preparation for a film screening—Barton Springs in Zilker Park. You may reach it via car, public transportation, ZIP care, car2go, bicycling or walking.

While the 'gem' needn't directly relate to the content of the course, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center is perfectly aligned with both the content and the goal of this requirement.

University Lecture Series and/or Office of Sustainability Lecture

As part of a Signature Course requirement, you need to attend a lecture. As part of the Difficult Dialogues requirement, you will need to a Public Conversation. These can be one and the same. While there are several options, these events all occur outside of scheduled class time. The dates for some of these events were not available at the time of printing this syllabus; I will update you with dates as soon as possible.

University Lecture Series puts first-year students in front of nationally renowned scholars, scientists, and civic leaders.

Humanities Institute Public Forums focus on current controversial topics to engage a broader public. The Office of Sustainability

Spring Sustainability Lecture perfectly aligns with the course content.

Course Assignments

There are two general projects: the Writing Portfolio and a Group Project. The writing portfolio consists of many small pieces of writing; the Group project is a chance to explore both the city of Austin and the university.

Writing Portfolio (40% of course grade)

All writing will be considered to be part of the writing portfolio, and will be evaluated not only for the quality of the individual assignments but also for your cumulative efforts over the course of the semester. Your portfolio will include hard copies of all of you discussion questions, reflection assignments, and short papers. You will hand it both at mid-term (March 3, 2013) and at the end of the semester (April 28, 2013) and I will have individual conferences with you at mid-term to discuss your progress.

There are four different types of writing contained in the portfolio:

1 Short Papers (75% of writing portfolio)

Printed out, these are 500-750 word papers:

- Personal Narrative, due 2/10/13 in class
- Personal frames and relationship with 'nature,' due 3/3/13 in class (with mid-term writing portfolio)
- an interview with a sustainability researcher or actor, due 4/28/13 in class (with final writing portfolio)

2. Reflection assignments (15% of writing portfolio)

Posted to Canvas, these are brief (300-500 words) assignments:

- a considered reflection on the experience of tracking trash;
- a considered reflection on community versus individual tensions;
- a considered reflection on a 'quantified self' exercise.

3 Discussion questions (10% of writing portfolio)

Posted to Canvas, these questions will be evaluated as part of your writing portfolio grade; timeliness will be part of your participation grade. These questions about the readings and materials for the next week will be due by **Friday at 9pm** before the next class. I will open up a Discussion thread for each

Short Paper Formatting

Each paper should be typed, double-spaced with 10-point font and one-inch margins on all sides. Please give your paper a title, and include your name and course number.

Short Paper Assessment

I'll be looking for the following in papers:

- Personal critical reflection (how much critical self-reflection about your own past experiences, future visions, concerns, hopes, and so on, are evident in the paper).
- Integration of critical thought, experiences, class discussions, and readings blended together (demonstration of ability to integrate critical thought, experiences, and class material).
- Integration of self with class material (how well do you demonstrate that you have struggled with the integration of your personal characteristics [e.g., values, ethical dilemmas, personality traits, etc.] with key concepts covered in class readings and discussions).
- The quality of the writing as well as the content. Holistic grading criteria will be used, which focuses upon development and organization, language and word choice, mechanics and style.

NOTE: To complete some of these papers, you will need to state your own views. You

reading assignment that is due.

4 Personal goals and course integration assessments (completion only)

Printed out and delivered to my office, this is to help me in guiding and working

- Initial statement of your goals for the semester (due 1/24),

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- your mid-term progress report (to be handed in with the portfolio, due 3/3)
- your final self-assessment (both posted to CANVAS and handed in with the portfolio, due 4/28).

Group Presentation (30% of course grade)

Towards the middle the semester, you will begin work on a group presentation. The goal will be to work as a group on a topic and to lead a discussion. You are welcome to use PowerPoint, film, performance, web-based materials etc. to facilitate the discussion. Each group member will receive the same grade, so make sure that you work together. Groups will consist of three people.

As a group, you pick a context (UT or the City of Austin) and a sustainability theme. You will then research a project that has been or is being worked/researched within your selected context and relates to the theme you have selected. You will research the issue in regards to the balance among the three pillars of sustainability (economics, environment and equity), analyze the intended audience, and propose suggestions as to how to augment that audience. What considerations need to be examined? What values and beliefs do you hold that lead you to take a specific position? Research relevant laws, regulations, definitions or parameters surrounding the ethical and political aspects of the perceived solution; the goal will be to uncover the positions and values that may be playing out in the world today.

The fifteen minute presentation which will focus upon project, will end with one or two thought-provoking proposals. You will then lead the class in a 10-15 minute discussion of their reactions and thoughts, making sure to stay open and respectful of multiple views on the subject and the proposals.

There will be no final exam.

Attendance and Participation Policy (30% of course grade)

As the title 'Difficult Dialogues" suggests, discussion is central to this class and will be a significant part of your grade. The skills you will learn and practice during this class include listening carefully and actively; stating your thoughts and feelings; summarizing ideas and discussions from groups; and find respectful ways to provide feedback or articulate disagreements. Additionally, as this class meets once a week, every absence can be seen as significant. Thus, attendance and participation, critical for this course, will comprise 30% of your total grade. If you have an excused absence, note that on the weekly class sign-in sheet; if you feel you should be allowed an absence, please come talk with me.

Attendance, weighted as 15% of course grade, is based on the following: 0 absences = A; 1 absence = B; 2 absences = C; 3 absence = D; 2 late's = 1 absence.

Participation, weighted as 15% of course grade, is evident in both the timeliness and quality of your CANVAS posts, as well as small group and classroom discussions. As long as you are both present and committed in our class discussions (virtual and real-time), you will earn at least a B for your participation. Finally, a high participation grade can favorably influence your final grade upward if the final grade is borderline.

may talk about yourself or your experiences. But these papers should not be solely about you and your feelings, nor is that my intent. Be sure to connect your experiences to the larger questions and frameworks discussed in class. If you draw on evidence or arguments from other sources, make sure you properly cite your references.

Research Activities

Library Research: Context City/Campus history, statistics, Policies and master plans

Library Research: Media News feed, 2 items per team member minimum that you use in your project

Library Research: Preparatory work for interviewing

Field Research: Volunteering/observations and formal interviewing

Grading and Grading Scale

40% Writing Portfolio

30% Group Presentation

30% Attendance and Participation

A = 100 - 94

A - = 93 - 90

B+ = 89 - 87

B = 86 - 84

B - = 83 - 80

C + = 79 - 77

C = 76 - 74

C - = 73 - 70

D + = 69 - 67

D = 66 - 64

D = 63 - 60

F = 59 and below

Appointments: bit.ly/1bh8NiS 4/6

Resources

Online Guides and Research Tips

These online guides are available at the UT library website at all times:

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Choose a topic: Not sure what to write about?

Find Articles: Which database is best for your research?

Find Background Information: Are you an expert on your topic?

Find Books: Find books and e-books in the catalog

Generate keywords: A tool for building a keyword strategy

Find Opinions, Editorials & Opposing Viewpoints: What are people arguing about?

www.lib.utexas.edu/students/ Researching, citing sources and writing Find books, movies, music and more Wireless, laptop checkout and more

Ask a Librarian

While the UT Library is the nation's fifth largest academic library, containing over 8 million volumes, more impressive is the range of support that the University Librarians offer. You can contact a librarian to ask a question pertaining to University of Texas resources, the academic research process, and other related topics through the Ask a Librarian service. Librarians will provide answers, source suggestions, search strategies, and referrals to appropriate agencies via IM, email or phone. You can always make an appointment to visit in person, take a guided tour or attend a library class.

www.lib.utexas.edu/services/reference

The Undergraduate Writing Center

The Writing Center offers free, individualized, expert help with writing by appointment or on a drop-in basis. Their goal is to help you develop strategies to improve your writing. Any currently enrolled undergraduate at UT can visit the UWC for assistance with any academic and non-academic—writing project.

Example for sessions:

- deciding on a topic
- clarifying and organizing ideas
- researching, drafting, and revising
- improving grammar, punctuation and usage
- citing sources properly

General University Policies

Absences due to Religious Holidays

By UT Austin policy, you must notify me of your pending absence at least fourteen days prior to the date of observance of a religious holy day. If you must miss a class, a work assignment, or a project in order to observe a religious holy day, you will be given an opportunity to complete the missed work within a reasonable time after the absence.

Communication expectations

The University's official email student notification policy states that is you need to keep the University informed to your email address changes, and expects you to check your email on a frequent and regular basis in order to stay current with University-related communications, recognizing that certain communications may be time critical. The University recommends that you check your email daily (and at a minimum twice a week.) The complete text of this policy and instructions for updating your email address are available at www.utexas.edu/cio/policies/.

Academic Integrity

Per the General Information catalog, "the value

of a university degree depends on the absolute integrity of the work done by each student for that degree, a student should maintain a high standard of individual honor in his or her scholastic work" (page 98). Students who violate University rules on scholastic dishonesty are subject to disciplinary penalties, including the possibility of failure in the course and/or dismissal from the University. Since such dishonesty harms the individual, all students, and the integrity of the University, policies on scholastic dishonesty will be strictly enforced. Academic policies can be found in the University Catalogues available through the Office of the Registrar and online at: www.utexas.edu/student/registrar/. Be sure to review the University policy on scholastic dishonesty:

deanofstudents.utexas.edu/sjs/acadint_whatis.

Special Accommodations

If you require special accommodations, you must obtain a letter that documents your disability from the Services for Students with Disabilities (471-6259 voice, or 471-4641 TTY for users who are deaf or hard of hearing). Present this letter to me at the beginning of the semester so we can discuss your need.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line (BCAL)

If you are worried about someone who is acting differently, you may phone the BCAL to discuss your concerns. This service is a partnership among the Office of the Dean of Students, the Counseling and Mental Health Center, the Employee Assistance Program and The UTPD. Call 512-232-5050 or visit www.utexas.edu/safety/bcal.

Emergency Evacuation Policy

Occupants of UT Austin campus buildings are required to evacuate and assemble outside when a fire alarm is activated or an announcement is made. Please be aware of the following policies regarding evacuations:

- Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of the classroom and building.
- If you require assistance to evacuate, inform me in writing during the first week of class.
- In the event of an evacuation, follow my instructions.

Course Schedule

Please note that the schedule is subject to change based on the needs of guest lecturers and the readings listed may be adjusted. Please check CANVAS regularly for any updates and announcements.

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1/13 1 Introduction Introduction to course **Definitions of Sustainability** Homework: -Take the Six Americas' quiz on Climate Change: http://uw.kqed.org/climatesurvey/index-kqed.php -Reflection Assignment #1, Part 1: Tracking trash exercise MLK 2 By Friday 1/24: HOLIDAY -Turn in to my office a printed statement of goals for the course paper -Post an introduction to Canvas -Post Reflection assignment #1, Part 2: Write about the previous week' activity 1/27 3 **Typology of Sustainability** Readings: Chapters 1, 2 and 8 from Pragmatic Sustainability -Discussion of exercise, and discussion of readings -Introduction to Group Project Homework: -Paper 1: Write a narrative about how you come (or don't come to sustainability); draft due 2/3 -Field Trip Assignment: Visit Barton Springs, and the exhibit SPLASH! by Monday 2/3. 02/3 4 **Local Case Study** Reading: Chapter 12, Pragmatic Sustainability -Workshop Paper #1 -Film screening: The Unforeseen Homework: -Reflection Assignment #2: Community, group and individual—and your personal experience of it. 2/10 5 Metaphors, values and (political) communication Reading: articles by Lakhoff, Luntz, Nisbett, et al, and excerpts from The Bet. DUE: Paper #1 -Discussion of readings -Introduce Paper 3: Interview related to your group's theme -Library tutorial for submitting some work on researching local information on government Homework: -Paper 2: Write a narrative about your frames; draft due 2/24 -Group Project: Start collecting visual/designed communication (for review on 3/3 in class) 2/17 -Film screening: Biophilic Design: The Architecture of Life -On-campus field trip: Visit the SAC and CLA -Reflection Assignment #3, Part 1: An exercise in recording and quantifying where you spend your time. 2/24 **Work Session** DEADLINE for interview subjects, for coordination among classmates -Library session on researching local information on government: 2-4pm, PCL 1.339 -Workshop Paper #2 Homework: -Reflection Assignment #3, Part 2: Write about the previous week' activity. 03/3 8 **Work Session** DUE: Paper #2, with mid-term Writing portfolio and mid-term self-assessment. -Review Visual collections from each group.

3/17	10	Field trip: Wildflower Center
3/24	11	Field trip: Center for Maximum Potential Building Field Trip
3/31	12	Field trip: Foundation Community
04/7	13	City of Austin Guest Speakers DUE: Paper #3 Draft; workshop Paper #3 DUE: Upload presentations (per schedule) at least 24 hours prior to Presentation Date
4/14	14	Presentations
4/21	15	Presentations
4/28	16	Presentations DUE: Paper #3, with final self-assessment and portfolio due