

**University of Waterloo**  
**Department of Environment and Resource Studies**  
**ERS 253: The Politics of Sustainable Communities**  
**Winter 2014**  
**Dr. Sara Edge**  
**Monday 12:30-2:20 PM Room: EV2 2006**

**Please note this is a draft outline only and will be finalized after the first week of class**

**Contact Information**

**Office: EV2 2067**

**Email: [ssedge@uwaterloo.ca](mailto:ssedge@uwaterloo.ca)**

**Office Hours: Mondays 2:30pm-4:30pm or by appointment**

*Please note that while you are welcome to email me I am not always able to respond to emails between the hours of 5:00pm and 9:00am or on weekends due to family responsibilities. Please make use of my office hours or request to set up an appointment. Please also make use of the LEARN website as your primary source of information regarding requirements and expectations for this course. University policy requires that official email correspondence is to be addressed to UW userids. Emails from accounts such as Hotmail or Gmail are frequently treated as spam and never reach the recipient.*

**Course Description**

The Politics of Sustainable Communities considers a variety of contemporary issues within the context of local politics and governance. The course explores the challenges of fostering healthy communities by examining issues related to environmental /social concerns and risks, community networking and asset building, multi-stakeholder engagement and citizen participation, local institutional resources and processes of decision-making and interrelationships with land use, economic development, social policy and investments in information and communication technologies. Through your course work, you will consider the practical application of such concepts as environmental ethics, social justice, participatory democracy, rights vs. responsibilities, and sustainable community development. In this course, you are not confined to the classroom or computer. You are expected to go into your community to observe community assets and threats to sustainability first-hand, and to consider lessons learned from the course material. It is worth noting that what you experience in your community setting might diverge from what theory and literature might tell you.

The course is conceptually divided into three parts:

- i. What is a healthy and sustainable community? (Design your own perspectives drawing on the course material.)
- ii. What are the barriers and opportunities for getting there (political, social, technological, cultural, economic, bio-physical)?
- iii. What are the strategies for achieving a healthy and sustainable community and overcoming the barriers?

By the end of this course you will be able to understand and explain:

- Different perspectives and approaches to achieving sustainable communities while critically developing your own perspectives
- Basic political decision-making processes and structures as well as the social, economic and physical factors that influence sustainable communities
- How to develop defensible strategies and approaches to achieving more sustainable communities
- How to contribute actively to your community in an informed, effective manner

## Course Requirements

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| <b>Short In-Class Quiz:</b> Based on Module 1 and course readings <b>Jan. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014</b>  | 10% |
| <b>Assignment 1: Government, Democracy and Sustainable Communities:</b> An analysis of a visit to a Region of Waterloo or a City or Township Council meeting (in the Region). Details to be provided <b>Due Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014</b>   | 20% |
| <b>Assignment 2: Mapping and Assessing Community Risks, Assets &amp; Capacity:</b> Group Assignment that will involve mapping a predetermined neighbourhood boundary, orally presenting summarized findings and recommendations to the class that will role play as city council and community stakeholders, and writing a final report. Additional details to be provided. <b>Group Report &amp; Map to be Submitted March. 15<sup>th</sup>, 2014. In-class group presentations will take place on March. 10<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 2014</b> | 30% |
| <b>Participation:</b> Includes engaging in class discussions & debates, demonstrating comprehension and critical analysis of readings and course material, and asking questions & role playing as representatives of City Council or community stakeholders groups during group presentations <b>(Ongoing)</b>   | 20% |
| <b>Final In-Class Test:</b> The final test will be two hours long with a few essays questions based on the lectures and the course readings. You will have a choice of questions that will be drawn from a longer list that will be given to you before the test. The test date is the last day of the class. <b>(March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2014)</b>   | 20% |

## COURSE OUTLINE

### MODULE 1: WHAT IS A HEALTHY & SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY? (Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>, Jan. 13<sup>th</sup>)

- Course introduction
- Introduction to community sustainability
- What is a community? What is sustainability? What is a healthy community?
- What is an “ecosystem health approach” to sustainability?

- Case Example (interrelationships with land use planning, public health, economic development, etc.)
- Review examples of conflicting viewpoints and commonalities amongst different stakeholders
- How can communities become more sustainable?

#### Objectives

- Learn how to conceptualize and define sustainability in the context of local communities
- Learn how to apply sustainability criteria to assess sustainability in a community
- Gain an understanding about some of the initiatives taken locally and internationally to foster sustainability and resilience in local communities
- To gain some comparative understanding about how well local governments and communities are doing with respect to fostering sustainability initiatives

#### Readings for Module 1:

- Gibson, Robert B. (2006) Sustainability Assessment: basic components of a practical approach. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal*. 24 (3): 170-182, DOI: 10.3152/147154606781765147
- Hancock, T. (2000). Healthy Communities Must Also Be Sustainable Communities. *Public Health Reports*. Vol. 115: 151-156.
- Arya, N. et al. (2009). Time for an ecosystem approach to public health? Lessons from two infectious disease outbreaks in Canada. *Global Public Health*. 4 (1): 31-49.
- Robert Gibson et al. (1996). Putting Cities in their Place: Ecosystem Planning for Canadian Urban Regions, 1996. (On course website)

#### Activities for Module 1:

1. Read course outline, become familiar with the course LEARN website and how to access your readings
2. Watch the video clips on the course webpage containing the perspectives of community representatives and members of local organizations from across Canada as they discuss their visions of sustainable communities. Did you agree with them?
3. Do the readings above and consider related questions posted on the LEARN site for each module (**Please note the readings throughout term will be incorporated into the short quiz (Jan. 20th) and final in-class test (March 31<sup>st</sup>)**). Your understanding of this material will also be instrumental to a high participation mark given you will be expected to participate in class discussions and debates and be able to draw from readings when forming and critiquing arguments).
4. **Find and schedule a local city or regional council meeting to attend (mandatory for Assignment #1)**

#### MODULE 2: GOVERNANCE AND SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES (Jan. 20<sup>th</sup>)

- **Begin class with short half hour quiz on readings and material from module 1 (the rest of the class will be lecture and discussion on governance)**
- Democracy: a contested concept

- Changing trends and paradigms in local governance
  - Hierarchical to participatory
  - Silos to integrated systems
  - Multi-stakeholder and inter-sectoral collaboration
- Avenues of participation in local governance
  - Formal, informal, public and private spaces

#### Objectives

- Understand that there are different definitions of democracy and that there are competing ideas about what this concept should entail and how it should be applied at the local level of governance
- Recognize that democracy and sustainability are mutually dependent
- Understand interrelationships between knowledge and power
- Learn about the political, structural and institutional barriers to achieving local democracy in Canadian communities
- Consider the degree to which we govern ourselves democratically in Canadian communities

#### Readings for Module 2:

- McAllister, ML (2004), *Governing Ourselves: The Politics of Canadian Communities*, Chapter 3: “Avenues of Participation in Local Governance”(Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press) pp. 46-72
- Burris, S. et al. (2007). Emerging Strategies for Healthy Urban Governance. *Journal of Urban Health*. 84 (SUPPL. 1) , pp. i154-i163

#### Activities for Module 2:

1. **Reminder to schedule a local city or regional council meeting to attend (no later than Feb. 10<sup>th</sup> and mandatory for Assignment #1)**
2. Begin to familiarize yourself with how local government is structured and consider whether and how local government promotes inclusive democratic participation. Be able to draw on examples from the council meeting you will be attending to illustrate your point,

#### **MODULE 3: DECISION-MAKING INSTITUTIONS (Jan. 27<sup>th</sup>, Feb. 3<sup>rd</sup>)**

- Local public administration and management (Guest lecture Dr. Mary Louise McAllister)
  - Principles of public administration
  - Role of bureaucracy
  - Structure of regional government
- Intergovernmental Relations
  - Source water protection as a case example
- Sources of revenue and finance for local government (opportunities and constraints)

#### Objectives

- Acquire a basic understanding of the structure and function of local governments in Canada
- Understand some of the challenges of effectively administering local governments
- Critically assess the political role played by municipal staff

- Consider who influences and who benefits (and who does not) from local decision-processes
- Become aware of the challenges of holding local governments accountable
- Learn about the role finance and budgeting plays in local governance

*Readings for Module 3:*

- McAllister, M.L. *Governing Ourselves*, Chapter 10: “Local Public Administration” pp. 201-231, and
- And McAllister Chapter 6: “Contemporary Intergovernmental Relations” pp. 118-138 (see course website)
- Explore the Region of Waterloo, the City of Waterloo and the City of Kitchener’s Websites. (consider how they differ and how they are similar)

*Activities for Module 3:*

1. Ensure that you already have or will be attending a council meeting no later than Feb. 10<sup>th</sup> in order to give yourself enough time to write your critical reflection for Assignment 1 (due via LEARN by midnight Feb. 15<sup>th</sup>)
2. Consider the structure of local government and its role within the Canadian federation. Be aware of the jurisdictional limitations and resource constraints of local government. For example, municipal government can only pass by-laws, not legislation. As constitutional creatures of the province, local governments are constrained in many ways.

**MODULE 4: IDENTIFYING AND RESPONDING TO SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL RISKS IN COMMUNITIES (Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>, Note no lecture on Feb. 17<sup>th</sup> for reading week)**

- Overview of social and environmental health risks
  - Origins, sources of community hazards
  - Key exposures and health effects of concern
- Challenges & Opportunities for Urban Planning & Local Public Health to address environmental risks
  - Addressing risks involves intergovernmental coordination, inter-jurisdictional cooperation, and multi-stakeholder collaboration
  - Case Study: Toronto Public Health and Community Right to Know
- Environmental Justice
- Introduce Assignment #2, and assign groups, neighbourhood boundaries and presentation dates

**Objectives**

- Learn about various local initiatives to overcome challenges to sustainability and adverse environmental exposures and the differences between individualized vs. universal approaches to minimizing risks
- Learn about the challenges of addressing risks that transcend municipal scales and political boundaries
- Understand how uncertainties are dealt with and neglected within policy and decision-making
- Understand how particular citizens, groups and populations become disproportionately vulnerable

#### Readings for Module 4:

- Keil, R., Ollevier, M. & Tsang, E. (2009). Why Is There No Environmental Justice in Toronto? Or Is There? In: Julian Agyeman et al. (eds). *Speaking for Ourselves, Environmental Justice in Canada*.
- Gibson-Wood, H., et al. (2012). 'A drop of water in the pool': information and engagement of linguistic communities around a municipal pesticide bylaw to protect the public's health. *Critical Public Health*. Vol. 22 (3): 341-53.
- King, A. (2011). Secrecy is toxic--building community right-to-know in Canada's largest municipality. *New solutions : a journal of environmental and occupational health policy* : NS 21 (3) , pp. 417-431

#### Activities for Module 4:

- Take advantage of reading week to ensure you are up to date with the readings for Modules 4 & 5 as these will greatly assist you with Assignment #2 (community risk & asset mapping exercise)
- Ensure that you have been assigned a group to work with and a neighbourhood boundary for Assignment #2. Ensure you know when your presentation date is. (Consider visiting the neighbourhood site over reading week and begin your research for assignment 2)
- On Feb. 24<sup>th</sup> we will start the class by meeting at the University of Waterloo Plaza to run through a "mock" risk and asset mapping exercise. We will make our way over to the lecture room together to explore our findings and continue with lecture material there. This will be particularly helpful in gaining a good understanding of what is expected for Assignment #2.

#### **MODULE 5: IDENTIFYING ASSETS & BUILDING CAPACITY FOR POSITIVE COMMUNITY CHANGE (Lectures Feb 24<sup>th</sup> and Mar. 3<sup>rd</sup>, Group Presentations Mar. 10<sup>th</sup> & Mar. 17<sup>th</sup>)**

- Community visioning and asset mapping
- Enhancing social capacity and capital
- What is place and the importance of place?
- Place-based governance as a strategy for addressing sustainability challenges that transcend boundaries of municipal jurisdiction
- Explore factors and contexts that impede or facilitate social and institutional learning within place

#### Objectives

- Explore how all members of communities have assets to contribute for the collective good
- Understand the relationship between sense of place, green spaces and healthy communities
- Contemplate how those values might be restored and fostered in the 21st century
- Think how certain groups are marginalized and excluded from many communities of interest and government decision-making processes and how that might be turned around

#### Readings for Module 5:

- John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight. Introduction. In: *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research (1993). pp. 1-11.

- John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight. Chapter Five Asset-Based Community Development: Mobilizing an Entire Community. In: *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research (1993). pp. 345-354.
- Edge, S. & McAllister, ML. (2009). Place-based local governance and sustainable communities: lessons from Canadian biosphere reserves. *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*. Vol. 52, No. 3: 279–295.

#### Activities for Module 5:

- Ensure that you are meeting with your group regularly and planning out how to meet your group assignment requirements effectively. You map and inventory of community risks and assets should be completed by this point. You should have begun to organize and draft your group report and prepare for your group presentation that will involve summarizing your key findings and making recommendations to council (The class and I will pretend to be members of city council and other community stakeholders weighing in on your observations and conclusions). **The effort individuals put into critically engaging with presenters will count towards participation marks.**

**GROUP PRESENTATIONS WILL BE HELD PREDOMINANTLY ON MARCH 10<sup>TH</sup> WITH A COUPLE IF NEED BE ON MARCH 17<sup>TH</sup>.**

**Assignment 2 group reports and map will be due via LEARN on March. 15<sup>th</sup> by midnight for all groups regardless of presentation date.**

#### **MODULE 6: THE ROLE OF COMMUNICATION AND TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATIONS IN PROMOTING AND CONSTRAINING CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABILITY (Mar. 17<sup>th</sup>, Mar. 24<sup>th</sup>)**

- Communities, digital media, information technology and social networks
- Social Movements Across Scales (“Global Community Activism”) vs. NIMBYism
- The predominant values, objectives and goals associated with “Smart Cities” and “Intelligent Community Forum” (implications for sustainability)
- Digital Divide and Marginalized Communities

##### Objectives

- Understand the implications of investments in information and communication technologies for healthy communities
- Consider the implications of the growth of ‘virtual’ online communities and social networking for ‘real’ communities and cities
- Consider issues of inclusions and exclusion and the distribution of risks and benefits

#### Readings for Module 6:

- Hollands, RG (2008). Will the Real Smart City Please Stand Up? *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory Policy, Action*.12, 3: 303-320.

- Fredericks, J. & Foth, M. (2013). Augmenting public participation: enhancing planning outcomes through the use of social media and web 2.0. *Australian Planner*. 50 (3): 244-56.
- Gainous, J. Marlowe A.D. & Wagner, K.M. (2013). Traditional Cleavages or a New World: Does Online Social Networking Bridge the Political Participation Divide? *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*. 26:145-158.
- Take a look at the Intelligent Community Forum's website (Available at: <http://www.intelligentcommunity.org/>). Pay particular attention to the values and principles that they emphasize

#### *Activities for Module 6:*

- Ensure you are up to speed with class material and readings as they will be incorporated into the Final In-Class Test which will be held on the last day of class (March. 31<sup>st</sup>)
- The latter half of the lecture on March. 24<sup>th</sup> will be reserved for a question and answer period to review and prepare for the final test

### **ADDITIONAL IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND UNIVERSITY REQUIREMENTS**

**Unclaimed assignments:** Unclaimed assignments will be retained until one month after term grades become official in quest. After that time, they will be destroyed in compliance with UW's confidential shredding procedures.

**Academic Integrity:** In order to maintain a culture of academic integrity, members of the University of Waterloo community are expected to promote honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. [www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/](http://www.uwaterloo.ca/academicintegrity/) Students who are unsure what constitutes an academic offence are requested to visit the on-line tutorial at <http://www.lib.uwaterloo.ca/ait/>

**Note for students with disabilities:** The Office for Persons with Disabilities (OPD), located in Needles Hall, Room 1132, collaborates with all academic departments to arrange appropriate accommodations for students with disabilities without compromising the academic integrity of the curriculum. If you require academic accommodations to lessen the impact of your disability, please register with the OPD at the beginning of each academic term.

**Religious Observances:** Please inform the instructor at the beginning of term if special accommodation needs to be made for religious observances that are not otherwise accounted for in the scheduling of classes and assignments.

**Grievance:** A student who believes that a decision affecting some aspect of his/her university life has been unfair or unreasonable may have grounds for initiating a grievance. Read Policy 70 –Student Petitions and Grievances, Section 4, [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy70.htm). When in doubt please contact your Undergraduate Advisor for details.

**Discipline (as noted above under 2a):** A student is expected to know what constitutes academic integrity, to avoid committing academic offence, and to take responsibility for his/her actions. A student who is unsure whether an action constitutes an offense, or who needs help in learning how to avoid offenses (e.g., plagiarism, cheating) or about “rules” for group work/collaboration should seek guidance from the course

professor, academic advisor, or the Undergraduate Associate Dean. For information on categories of offences and types of penalties, students should refer to Policy 71, Student Discipline, [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy71.htm). For typical penalties, check Guidelines for Assessment of Penalties, [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/guidelines/penaltyguidelines.htm)

**Appeals:** A decision made or penalty imposed under Policy 70 - Student Petitions and Grievances (other than a petition) or Policy 71 – (Student Discipline) may be appealed if there is a ground. A student who believes he/she has a ground for an appeal should refer to Policy 72 (Student Appeals) [www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm](http://www.adm.uwaterloo.ca/infosec/Policies/policy72.htm)

## **APPENDIX 1: ASSIGNMENT DETAILS AND FINAL ESSAY MARKING GUIDE**

When writing your papers, make sure that you move beyond description and produce work that demonstrates creativity and analytical thinking. Use Bloom's Taxonomy as a guide. See:

<http://coun.uvic.ca/learning/exams/blooms-taxonomy.html>

Do not forget to address the strengths and weaknesses of your argument and suggest some way to overcome the barriers that may make it difficult to achieve your recommendations. Make sure that you have a firm understanding of local institutions and related readings. Be careful not to make unrealistic recommendations for a local government, i.e. avoid recommendations that are beyond the jurisdictional authority or financial capacity of the local government.

Extensions or INCs (incompletes) will not be granted except for documented health reasons or for serious personal difficulties. In these cases, it would be helpful if you obtained a letter from your family doctor or a counselor. In the absence of such exceptions, there will be late penalty of 10% per day deducted from your essay grade.

Be concise when writing the assignments. Use paragraph form, full sentences and have a brief introduction. It is always recommended that you write twice as much as you need and cut it in half. That way your piece will be carefully considered. Use formal essay style with APA citation style. The required format is the APA (American Psychological Association) style. The complete style outline can be found in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, located in the reference section in Dana Porter Library or on sale in the Book Store. You can find some other quick references at the following URLs:

- APA Crib Sheet <http://www.docstyles.com/archive/apacrib.pdf>
- Citing Electronic References – <http://www.apastyle.org/apa-style-help.aspx>
- Some students prefer to use footnotes in order not to interrupt the flow of the sentence or narrative. This alternative is acceptable as long as it follows a recognized footnoting style.

## **WHAT THE MARKS MEAN ON YOUR ASSIGNMENTS**

A-to A+ (80 or above) – This is a mark of excellence which is typically earned by a minority not a majority of students. With this mark, the student has met and exceeded the assignment requirements by undertaking

additional research or displaying creative thinking. The student has reached the top levels of Bloom's Taxonomy to synthesis and evaluation and has effectively communicated and organized his or her ideas.

B-to B+ (70-79) – This range means that the student has met assignment requirements and has analyzed the issue at hand and, perhaps, conducted some synthesis and evaluation. The assignment is well organized and presented. The majority of students generally fall into this range.

C-to C+ (60-69) – This range means that the student has not met all the assignment requirements and is low on Bloom's Taxonomy. The piece may not be well researched, it might be poorly written or organized, or it might be purely descriptive. Any of these problems would lead to a 'C' grade.

D-to D+ (50-59) - This grade reflects serious difficulties with the paper and the student is encouraged to come speak with the instructor.

A failing paper 'F' indicates that the student did not demonstrate an ability to meet the requirements of the assignment.

**The assignments will be assessed using the following broad criteria.**

- **Comprehensiveness:** Was the issue defined, thoroughly considered, investigated and researched within the boundaries of its defined scope? Did it address the main themes of the course and draw on relevant material?
- **Research:** Did the student make good use of the course materials and the government and community websites for their field work? **[Note: It will not be possible to conduct interviews to get opinions and viewpoints because of the time that it takes to get ethics approval]**
- **Organization:** Was the assignment well organized? Was the material used in the project directly relevant to the subject at hand or was material included for no apparent reason? (This is a common problem in essays and projects. Background information, for example, is often provided without context. The reader must always know why the information presented is relevant to the investigation). Make sure that all the information provides necessary support for your argument and is not simply used as padding. How well does the argument flow?
- **Quality of Information:** How accurate is the information provided particularly with respect to existing local government structures, processes, and policies? Is the information presented in a way that might lead one to some worthwhile conclusions?
- **Quality of Recommendations:** Was the argument carefully conceived and defended with evidence in a way that would be persuasive in some way to a diverse group of local decision-makers?
- **Written Presentation:** Was the assignment itself carefully and accurately presented? If the spelling and grammar are inaccurate a reader often wonders about the reliability of the information itself. Were the sources properly cited? Was the assignment concise?

**Bloom's Taxonomy: How well have you incorporated all the steps of Bloom's Taxonomy in your assignments? This will help you understand what is expected from a university assignment. See**

<http://coun.uvic.ca/learning/exams/blooms-taxonomy.html>