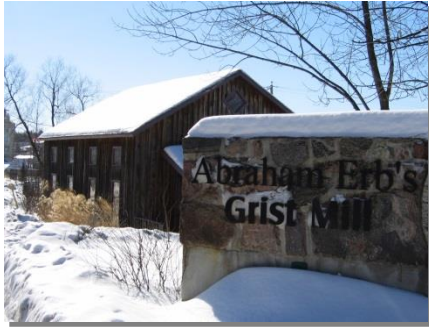


DRAFT ONLY

THE DETAILED COURSE OUTLINE WILL BE AVAILABLE ON THE COURSE WEBSITE THE FIRST DAY OF CLASSES – **NOTE THAT THE CONTENTS AND REQUIREMENTS MAY BE SUBJECT TO SOME ADJUSTMENTS BEFORE TERM COMMENCES**



Environment and
Resource Studies,
University of Waterloo
The Politics of
Sustainable
Communities: ERS 253

WINTER 2015

DATE AND TIME: THURSDAYS 12:30-02:20 QNC 1507

The Politics of Sustainable Communities is a course that considers a variety of contemporary issues and challenges focusing on the City of Waterloo. Topics include local environmental politics, public participation, local government structures, political accountability, and the quest for a healthy community. 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.

This is an experiential course. Your work is not confined to the classroom or computer but will involve field trips into the community, particularly the City of Waterloo to consider lessons learned from the course material. You will learn about how decisions are made and how to influence local politics and policy-making and, in the process, how to foster sustainable communities. Guest speakers from the City of Waterloo and elsewhere will also discuss and illustrate the 'real' world of politics and engagement.

This course is recognized as a PACS Content Course that fulfills requirements in the interdisciplinary Peace and Conflict Studies plan.

The Course Structure is conceptually divided into three parts.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

**THIS IS A BLENDED
COURSE USING THE
UW LEARN WEBSITE
WHICH MEANS
THAT INSTRUCTION
WILL BE ONLINE AS
WELL AS IN THE
CLASS AND OUT IN
THE COMMUNITY**

The course requires careful reading of all requirements and material placed on the website including this syllabus. If you are not prepared to read and to actively engage in the class and in the community around you, this is not the course for you. Users can login to LEARN via:

<http://learn.uwaterloo.ca>

Use your WatIAM/Quest username and password.

Instructor: ML McAllister
Email: mlmcalli@uwaterloo
Office: EV3 4253
Office hours: Wednesdays
2-4 pm
Phone: 519-888-4567 ext.
35614

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- What are the key characteristics of a sustainable community? (Design your own perspectives drawing on the course material.)
- What are the political and government barriers and opportunities for getting there?
- What are the political strategies for achieving a sustainable community and overcoming the barriers?

By the end of this course you will know, understand and explain

- Basic political decision-making processes and structures as well as the social, economic and physical factors that influence sustainable communities
- How to influence governing processes in order to foster sustainable communities
- How to contribute actively to your municipality in an informed, effective manner

Each of the modules contains information about the course and expectations for the week. You should use the website as your primary source of information regarding requirements and expectations for this course.

Course Requirements: See the course website for a detailed description of assignment requirements and expectations.

Who does what? Short quiz on local governance	10%
Assignment 1: Environmental or social policy recommendation presented to local city officials	25%
Assignment 2: Essay or project building on Assignment 1 OR choose your own topic	30%
Final In-Class Test Date: Tues March 31 - Using all the course material including lectures, videos and readings.	20%
Course participation based on contributions and knowledge of readings	15%

*note all assignments are to be submitted through the LEARN drop boxes

Students will participate in developing policy proposals for the city for its consideration on current topics under discussion across the country. Topics may include issues such as the following:

- Graffiti: Street art or vandalism? How should street art be dealt with by the City of Waterloo?
- Making room for cars and walkable communities: What are the necessary trade-offs?
- Heritage By-law: a) heritage tree by-law or b) heritage houses on private property: Individual property rights vs. the common good

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- A ban on impromptu street parties such as those held in university student areas on St. Patrick Day? What are the considerations involved?
- Should the City of Waterloo permit the keeping of chickens in residential backyards?
- A junk food and bottled water ban in publicly-owned buildings. A good idea?
- Controlling control the use of bicycles in unpaved, forested areas? Whose rights are being protected?
- **ABBREVIATED SUMMARY OF COURSE – DRAFT VERSION**

Module 1: What is a Sustainable Democratic Community?

Weeks one and two: Jan.6 and Jan. 13

- Course introduction
- Introduction to community sustainability
- What is a community? What is sustainability?
- How can communities become more sustainable?
- What is a healthy Community?

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 policy initiatives taken locally to foster sustainability and resilience in local communities
- To gain some understanding about how well local governments and communities are doing with respect to fostering sustainability initiatives

Module 2: Governance and Sustainable Communities

Weeks three and four: Jan. 20 and Jan. 27

- Democracy: a contested concept
- The evolution of local governance
- Avenues of participation in local governance
- Public and private spaces: Speaker's Corner, Gated Communities, Shopping Centres
- Intergovernmental Relations

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 and mutually dependent
- 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

Module 3: Decision-making Institutions

Weeks five and six: Feb. 3 and Feb. 10

- Local public administration and management
- The business of government: finance

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
- Learn about the role finance and budgeting plays in local governance
- Critically assess the political role played by municipal staff
- Consider who influence and who benefits from local decision-processes
- Become aware of the challenges of holding local governments accountable

Note: No class on Tuesday, Feb. 17 (Reading Week)

Module 4: The Physical Environment, Green Infrastructure

Weeks seven and eight: Feb. 24 and Mar. 3

- Planning for a sustainable community
- Environmental challenges
- Urban Agriculture
- Smart Cities
- Smart Grid

Objectives

- Learn about various initiatives to overcome challenges to sustainability
- Consider how 'Smart' initiatives are being used to try to plan more efficient use of physical resources and reduce urban sprawl
- Learn about how some initiatives such as urban agriculture are fostered in order to foster sustainability.

Module 5: Sense of Place and Community capacity-building

Weeks nine and ten: Mar. 10 and Mar. 17

March Field Trip to the Working Centre

Look at the Working Centre's website and the Waterloo School for Community Development.

http://www.theworkingcentre.org/wscd/wscd_main.htmlResources for Learning

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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
- Consider some of social and ecological values that have been lost to rapid development
- 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 how that might be turned around

March 24, 2014 Policy presentations to City of Waterloo Officials

Final in-class Test (25%) on Tuesday March 31 (see details in “course requirements”)