

SUSTAINABILITY AND THE CAMPUS

Macalester College, Fall, 2023

8:00-9:30AM Wednesdays, Olin Rice 243

About Your Professor

Dr. Megan Butler

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Office Hours: 9:30-12:00 Wednesdays or by Appointment¹

Course Description

The goal of this course is to enable future environmental professionals to research and engage with pressing environmental and social problems and to craft effective and sustainable solutions to these problems. During this course, we will discuss global environmental challenges at a variety of scales from the international to the local level. This interdisciplinary class will make direct connections between global environmental issues, such as climate change, and life on an urban campus. With Macalester College as our case study, we will explore how the daily activities on a campus (energy use, food, transportation, water use, etc.) translate into issues such as greenhouse gas emissions, solid waste, and urban stormwater. This class will also give participants opportunities to contribute to hands-on projects here at Macalester.

The class will begin with an introduction to sustainability and sustainability issues at Macalester College. Next, we will explore specific sustainability topics such as: climate change, food, health, biodiversity, waste, water, and energy. In addition, a major goal of this course is to provide you with the knowledge and skillset necessary to enact change. You will learn how to engage with campus stakeholders, research and define environmental problems, and develop a proposal aimed at solving the problems you identify. You will also work on a semester-long campus sustainability project either as an individual or, preferably, as part of a small group. As part of the project, you will identify a sustainability issue, investigate that issue, develop a plan to address the issue and present your findings.

Course Objectives

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

- Describe how social, environmental, and economic systems contribute to sustainability problems and solutions.
- Connect local actions on campus and in the surrounding community with global sustainability issues.

¹ Please use google calendar to schedule appointments. Here's how: 1) Log in to your Macalester email account. 2) Go to your calendar page 3) Put mbutler2 in the left "other calendars" box 3) Click on a time when you and I are free and to create an "event" 4) Edit the event details 5) "Invite" me to the meeting by adding my email to the box on the right.

- Describe the connection between campus energy and resource flows and college culture
- Complete a real-world project

Required Texts

Farrell, James. *The Nature of College: How a new understanding of campus life can change the world*, Milkweed Editions, 2010.

All other reading materials will be available via the course Moodle website

Optional Texts

Hawkin, Paul (Ed). *Drawdown: The Most Comprehensive Plan Ever Proposed To Reverse Global Warming*. Project Drawdown, 2017

Course Assignments and Grading

Your grade for the course will be calculated as follows:

- Group Project: 50%
- Class, campus and community participation activities: 25%
- Homework: 25%

Late assignments will be marked down one full letter grade per 24 hours late. Brief descriptions of each of these activities and assignments are described below. Complete descriptions of all assignments will be provided in class and are also on Moodle.

Sustainability Activity

Over the course of the semester, I would like you to attend three sustainability-related events. These can be events costed by a campus department, the sustainability office, a campus club or student group or an off-campus organization. After attending the event submit a short reflection describing the event and discussing anything you learned or connected to material we are discussing in class. Please also submit a photo of the event. There will be opportunities to engage in more than three activities for extra credit.

Homework and in-class Activities: Throughout the semester we will have a series of in-class discussions and assignments and small homework assignments meant to help you practice and reflect upon key concepts. Many of these activities will be completed during class time while others will be completed as homework.

Sustainability Project

The purpose of this project is to have you apply your sustainability knowledge to a real-world project. This semester instead of having a midterm or final exam, you will use the knowledge gained in this class for a group project. Throughout the semester will work to identify an environmental problem and come up with a proposal to address that problem on campus. You will be required to turn in several deliverables related to this project throughout the semester:

- Memo 1: This memo will focus upon describing and defining a sustainability project

- Interviews: You will be required to interview campus stakeholders that are involved with the sustainability project you are interested in working on
- Memo 2: For this memo you will propose a solution based upon interviews and desk research
- Final Paper: This final proposal will explain your proposed solution to the sustainability problem. It will either be in the form of a paper or an actual funding proposal
- Presentations: you will be asked to give a final presentation about your project proposal

Academic Integrity

All students will be required to abide by the Macalester College academic integrity guidelines found at <https://www.macalester.edu/academicprograms/academicpolicies/academicintegrity/>. Instances of suspected academic dishonesty (cheating, plagiarism, and using the same paper in more than one course) will be handled as outlined in the guidelines.

Accommodations

My goal is that every student in this class can participate fully and be successful. If at any point you need guidance from me or information on where to go for additional help, please don't hesitate to talk to me. There are also several additional resources you have at your disposal here at Macalester:

The Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center (x6121; Kagin Commons) is here to help you do your best at Macalester in meeting your own goals and highest standards. Through academic enrichment and support services, ranging from workshops to individual assistance, the MAX Center can help you excel in your academics. Professional counselors and peer tutors in writing, mathematics, science, and study skills provide personal assistance in: writing for any college course, from brainstorming through final editing, content areas such as calculus, statistics, organic chemistry, or cellular biology, or sharpening study and time management skills

The disability services office can help students obtain accommodation that will allow them to be successful at Macalester. If you have a temporary or permanent condition that requires accommodation please contact the Disability Services office at disabilityservices@macalester.edu, or call 651-696-6948 to schedule an appointment to discuss your individual needs.

Land Acknowledgement: Macalester is located in Saint Paul, Minnesota in the ancestral homeland of the Dakota people who were forcibly exiled from the land because of aggressive and persistent settler colonialism. We make this acknowledgment to honor the Dakota people, ancestors, and descendants, as well as the land itself.

Thank you for reading this syllabus. Reach out if you have questions. Also: if you send me a photo of a frog wearing a hat during the first week of class I will give you extra credit for reading the syllabus and noticing this note.

Tentative Course Outline

Week	Dates	
1	September 6th	Introductions
2	September 13 th	Sustainability Problems
3	September 20 th	Sustainability Solutions
4	September 27 th	Campus Grounds Tour
5	October 4 th	Sustainable Landscape Management
6	October 11 th	Sustainable Food Systems
7	October 18 th	Strategic Planning and Stakeholder Engagement
8	October 25 th	Zero Waste
9	November 1	Carbon Neutrality
10	November 8	Climate Change Mitigation
11	November 15	Transportation
12	November 22 nd	Thanksgiving Break
13	November 29 th	Climate Resilience
14	December 6 th	Topic TBD based upon class interest
15	December 13 th	Final Presentations
		Final Exam Week

*See moodle for more detailed homework/reading schedule

** This schedule will change based upon the availability of guest speakers