

SUSTAINABILITY AND THE CAMPUS

Macalester College, Fall, 2024

3:00-4:30 PM, 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

All reading materials will be available via the course Moodle website

Optional Texts

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

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:

- Semester-Long Project: 40%
- Class, campus and community participation activities: 30%
- Homework: 30%

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:

- Presentation 1: This presentation 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
- Presentation 2: For this presentation you will propose a solution based upon interviews and desk research
- Final Proposal: 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
- Final Presentation: 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.

Tentative Course Outline

Week	Dates	
1	September 5th	Introductions
2	September 12 th	Grounds, Gardens and Food
3	September 19 th	Grounds, Gardens and Food: Hands-on Activity
4	September 26 th	Problem Presentations & Stakeholder Engagement
5	October 3rd	Introduction to Decarbonization & Solar Tour
6	October 10 th	Project Drawdown
7	October 17 th	Fall Break
8	October 24 th	Sustainable Transit
9	October 31 st	Solutions Presentations Creating a Proposal
10	November 7	Zero Waste Goals
11	November 14	Reuse and Reduction Activity
12	November 21st	Waste Diversion Activity
13	November 28 th	Thanksgiving Break
14	December 5 th	Final Presentations
15	December 13 th	Final Proposal

*See moodle for more detailed homework/reading schedule

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