What we are doing this semester

During the semester, we will be reading and writing about issues of sustainability and climate change. These are compelling issues which affect all of us and which are the topic of a great deal of activity here at USF. And they are issues that lend themselves to a wide variety of communication genres and media. As you’ll see in the material below, the course is organized in two parts. The first part contains a set of common readings and assignments on sustainability and climate change. The purpose of this part is to introduce you all to basic materials on these issues, and to teach you how to synthesize materials into analytic writing. The precise content and form of the second part will be negotiated between me and each of you. I want you to continue writing about the general issues of sustainability or climate change, but you can focus this in a way that suits your interests and you can define the types of documents you will produce. You will turn in a formal written proposal defining your work for this second part of the course (due Wednesday October 27) and meet with me individually to negotiate the agreement (Monday, November 1). A more thorough description of the assignments and options appears below in the “Assignments” section.

Policies

Disability Accommodation. If you have a disability that affects your ability to do the assigned work in this course, please contact the Student Disability Services office at 974-4309 or sa-sds-information@usf.edu. After SDS has evaluated your request, they will tell me how I can best accommodate you. You must, however, go through this university office in order to request an official accommodation. I will keep all such matters confidential and do whatever I can to accommodate your needs. If you have a condition that would affect your ability to leave the building in case of fire or any other emergency, please let me know.

Deadlines. When you have draft due for group conferences, you absolutely must have a draft ready to circulate on time. The drafting conferences are scheduled and are a crucial part of the learning process. If you don’t have a conference draft when it is due, I will lower the final grade on the assignment by a whole letter grade. I will accept final, revised papers due to me for grading late without penalty if you speak to me at least 24 hours ahead of time (and that includes email) and you turn in a formal written request for an
extension on the day the assignment is due. This request for extension should identify the assignment, tell me why it is late and when I will get it. We all have complicated lives, and I will accommodate your schedules to the extent I can. I will also accommodate unexpected emergencies, but I will again, require the formal request for an extension.

**Attendance** and promptness are expected. The material we will be reading is difficult; you cannot do well without attending. I will take roll electronically every day. Among other things, that helps me learn your names. And please be on time. Walking in late disrupts the class. I take attendance at the beginning of class; if you walk in late, you may be marked absent and it is your responsibility to check with me after class to insure that you are not incorrectly marked absent.

**Academic honesty** is expected. Plagiarism—representing others’ work as your own—will be grounds for failing the assignment and the course. Pulling material off the internet and handing it in without citation is also plagiarism. Submitting a paper for two courses or submitting a paper you wrote in a previous course without prior permission of all instructors involved, will also be grounds for failing the course. Proper documentation is covered in First Year writing courses, and I assume that you all know how to document and note quotations and paraphrases. If you have any questions or doubts, ask me. I will use the “Safe Assign” option for submitting papers on Blackboard; this program compares your paper with the entire content of the internet. If you are caught plagiarizing, you will fail the course.

**Withdrawing and dropping** the class in case of excessive absences or conflicts is your responsibility.

**S/U grading.** If you are taking the course on the S/U grade scale, you will need a “C” average (not a “C-“) in order to get an “S.”

**Cell Phones.** Please turn off all cell phones.

**Assignments**

**Part I: Basic issues**

Paper 1: What is “sustainability”? And what are the biggest challenges to sustainability? This is a term that is both very powerful, and means many things to many people. It gets used and misused everywhere. You should define both the general concept of sustainability and how it applies to specific contexts such as agriculture, ecology, energy, economics, and urban development. You do not need to address each of these applications of the concept, but you should explore the way sustainability is developed in at least two contexts, preferably ones in which you are interested. The challenges to sustainability will be clearer in specific contexts. You should use our readings, the sources referenced in our readings, and other sources you locate through research. Melanie Griffin from the USF library will be the
“embedded librarian” in our class and will assist us all in research strategies and locating materials. This should be a 7 to 9 page paper double-spaced with proper documentation and references. You will need to provide a definition of the sustainability, explain what the crucial terms or ideas in the definition mean, why “sustainability” is important, give examples of sustainability in at least two contexts e.g. agriculture, ecology, development, etc., and, importantly, identify and explain what sustainability is and what the challenges to sustainability are in those two areas. Grade Value: 20%

Paper 2: What is global climate change? What is the evidence for its existence, and how certain is this evidence? What are the consequences of global climate change, globally and locally? You will write this assignment as groups and it should be 7-10 pages double-spaced with proper documentation and references. This assignment will require that you do independent research, that you incorporate data and visual displays of information, e.g. graphs, charts, pictures, and that you address a large complex issue in a relatively short piece. And, with all due respect, this is not an assignment that asks for your personal opinion, but for an analysis and presentation of the best available information and data from authoritative sources, i.e. not talk radio or entertainment sources. Grade Value: 20% (paper) 5% (PowerPoint)

Part II Local Issues

For this second part of the course, I want you to explore the issue of sustainability and/or climate change in your community. And you may interpret this topic broadly. (In many cases, you’ll find that the two topics are closely connected.) That community might be the state of Florida, the city of Tampa, or your specific neighborhood. While I won’t force you to write about a very local topic, I suggest that you be as specific as you can in defining this context; the more abstract your topic, the harder it will be to pursue. This is an opportunity for you to get involved in the community if you want to. There are, for example, groups working on sustainability issues of various kinds on the USF campus with whom you might collaborate. (get started ASAP.) It also allows you to define a topic in which you are particularly interested. Florida faces serious challenges to sustainable water use, real estate development, marine and coastal ecology, gulf biology and ecology (remember BP?). As climate change progresses, Florida and cities like Tampa will face new and unexpected changes, e.g. rising water levels, altered storm and rainfall patterns, possibly increased heat, disease vector change, population migration, biodiversity loss, loss of drinking water.

By Wednesday, October 27, I want each of you to give me a substantial written proposal that defines your project(s) for the second part of the course. You’ll need to decide on a topic, a strategy for investigating it, the range and types of documents you propose to produce, and whether some or all of it will be done collaboratively. This proposal should tell me, specifically, 1) what issue you plan to do research and
write about; 2) why this is important or compelling and what your interest in it is;
3) how you plan to do the work, e.g. traditional library research, interviews,
empirical data gathering; 4) what you plan to produce and when. (Grade value
30%)

Whatever you propose to produce, I have three requirements for the project:

1.) at least one of the products of this project must be a substantial piece of
prose 2000+ words;
2.) another required piece of this assignment is a rhetorical analysis of the genre
in which you are going to write this substantial piece, e.g. personal essay,
policy white paper, non-fiction essay, technical report, etc. We will discuss
rhetorical analysis in class, and I will provide a written description of the
rhetorical analysis; (grade value 5%)
3.) You will have to make a formal presentation of the project to the class at the
end of the semester. (grade value 5%)

You can produce many types of writing: posters, fliers, wikis, web files, even videos.
I can imagine conventional research papers, policy white papers, editorials for the
newspaper, even dystopian non-fiction such as *Silent Spring*. These are serious and
pressing issues. What you write about and what forms it takes are restricted by
your imagination and your ability to write a persuasive proposal. I urge you to
begin thinking about this project immediately.

Class time will be spent discussing reading assignments; working on compositional
strategies such as organization, coherence, transitions, editing, genre and style; and
writing in class either individually or in groups.

Grades

Paper 1: 20%
Paper 2: 20%
Powerpoint presentation: 5%
Project:
   Rhetorical analysis: 5%
   Project documents: 30%
   Final presentation: 5%
Participation:
   Class discussion: 5%
   Group work: 10%
Schedule

Week 1
M. 8/23 Introduction
W. 8/25 Kidd, “Evolution of Sustainability”

Week 2
M. 8/30 Melanie Griffin, librarian; Diamond, “Prologue” (1-23)
W. 9/1 Diamond, “World as Polder” (486-525)

Week 3
M. 9/6 Labor Day
W. 9/8 Norton, “Epistemology and Adaptive Management” (required 88-113; recommended 114-129)

Week 4
M. 9/13 DUE: definition of “sustainability” for paper #1 (in class conferences on definition)
W. 9/15 Pollan, Omnivore’s Dilemma (1-64)

Week 5
M. 9/20 Pollan, Omnivore’s Dilemma (65-122)
W. 9/22 “Food Inc.”

Week 6
M. 9/27 DUE complete drafts of paper 1; “Food Inc.”
W. 9/29 in class group conferences on paper 1

Week 7
M. 10/2 DUE paper 1; “Inconvenient Truth”
W. 10/6 “Inconvenient Truth”; Cicerone “Finding Climate Change”

Week 8
M. 10/9 IPCC “Synthesis Report”
W. 10/11 IPCC working group I “Synthesis Report”

Week 9
M. 10/18 No Class
W. 10/20 in-class collaboration

Week 10
M. 10/25 in-class collaboration
W. 10/27 DUE proposals for part II;
    DUE group power point presentations on paper 2
Week 11
M. 11/1 **DUE** Paper 2; Individual conferences with me on proposals
W. 11/3 Rhetorical analysis

Week 12
TBA Because of the individual nature of the second part of the course, the schedule from here on out is uncertain. You will negotiate assignments and due dates as part of your proposal. Obviously, all documents are due no later than the final exam date. I hope to be more specific as we approach this point in the semester.

M. 11/8
W. 11/10

Week 13
M. 11/15
W. 11/17

Week 14
M. 11/22
W. 11/24

Week 15
M. 11/29
W. 12/1 Class presentations on Part II project

Final exam period: Class presentations on Part II project