

E511 SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT
Spring 2025
O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs
Indiana University - Bloomington

Lecture: T/Th, 3:55-5:10, SPEA rm 273

Instructor: Jon Eldon, jeldon@iu.edu

Office Hours: By appointment

Course Description:

This course will introduce students to the wide variety of ways in which sustainability can be rigorously assessed, calculated, and communicated. This will include conceptual strategies, such as supply chain and life cycle analysis, specific techniques, such as greenhouse gas inventories and energy audits, and associated certification and reporting frameworks, such as LEED and Fair Trade. The emphasis will be on real-world questions and situations, and students will work with sustainability professionals and local organizations to prepare sustainability reports for common consumer goods and services. There are no prerequisites for this course, but students will be expected to have—or to obtain quickly—a working level of comfort with quantitative analysis and presentation, interpersonal and communications skills, and a variety of scientific concepts.

Learning Outcomes:

In this course, students will:

- 1) Develop a critical understanding of the concepts and tools that allow for the assessment of social, economic, and environmental aspects of sustainability
- 2) Conduct and communicate novel sustainability assessments of common consumer goods and services, with recognition of a diversity of values and perspectives
- 3) Actively prepare for a sustainability-related career that integrates individual goals and characteristics with a critical understanding of theoretical and practical considerations

Course Materials:

There is no textbook for this course, but you will be expected to read academic publications, industry publications, and anything else that might be relevant. These will be posted to Canvas.

Course Requirements: (% of final grade)

1) Weekly Assignments – (30%)

These will include readings, quantitative problem sets, and other assignments, often related to field trips and guest lectures.

2) Job preparation (25%)

Students will select a specific “sustainability analyst” or similar job, and produce a cover letter, detailed interview notes, and a more formal report on certifications, reporting standards, and key issues facing the associated industry or issue.

3) Consumer Sustainability Reports (25%)

Students will work in small groups to develop reports about the sustainability options related to common consumer goods and services—houses, cars, meat and dairy products, clothes, restaurants, etc—in association with local businesses that represent these products or topics.

4) Participation – (20%)

Attendance is necessary but not sufficient—active participation in class discussion and group work is critical for this course (just as it will be for any job you will have after this course...)

Grading scale

A+ = 97-100%, A = 93-96.9%, A- = 90-92.9%, etc.

Class Policies:

Class Conduct

I like to maintain a relatively informal atmosphere throughout this class, but I insist that you be respectful to your classmates and any guests (I can fend for myself if you want to test me). Failure to do so will be reflected in your participation grade and could lead to further action.

Attendance

I will not be calling your name at the beginning of each class, but you can expect significant costs to your learning and your final grade if you skip a significant number of classes. Sometimes, however, coming to class is not the best use of your time due to mental health, physical health, mercury in retrograde, etc. A missed class or two will not significantly impact your grade, but talk to me if you start falling further behind.

Late Assignments

In general, every day an assignment is late will result in a 10% penalty (the equivalent of a full letter grade), with a maximum penalty of 50%. This is obviously not an option for some things, such as tests, presentations, and in-class response assignments.

Incompletes and Late Withdrawals

If we get well into the semester and “*dire circumstances relating to extended illness or equivalent distress*” (IU Enrollment and Student Academic Information Bulletin) prevent you from finishing the class, you have the option to request either an incomplete (I) or a late withdrawal. “*An ‘I’ may be given to a student who, in the judgment of the instructor, has performed at a satisfactory level during a majority of the course but has not completed all the required work by the end of the term due to hardship or other good cause that the instructor deems would make it unjust to penalize that student for not completing the required work on time. After the auto-W deadline, withdrawal will be significantly limited, and you will need permission to withdraw and must meet requirements established by O’Neill.*”

Both of these require a formal petition and a better explanation than simply you were doing poorly in the class. More information is available in the Student Academic Information bulletin and at

<https://policies.iu.edu/policies/aca-67-incompletes/index.html>.

Academic Integrity:

Read through the following documents to get a sense of what is expected of you. I have very little tolerance for cheating and other forms of misconduct, which include selling your class notes, posting my lectures online, having an AI program write your assignments, etc.

IU Student Rights, Responsibilities, and Conduct: <http://www.iu.edu/~code>

SPEA student honor code: https://spea.indiana.edu/doc/undergraduate/ugrd_student_honorcode.pdf

Regarding plagiarism and use of AI:

I am not interested in how other people would answer the assignments. You should certainly draw from other sources and use whatever tools available to find them, but the final submission should be your own. “Borrowing” passages from another text without proper citation is considered plagiarism, and asking someone or something else to generate the text is not much different.

Note Selling

“Several commercial services have approached students regarding selling class notes/study guides to their classmates. Selling the instructor’s notes/study guides in this course is not permitted. Violations of this policy will be reported to the Dean of Students as academic misconduct (violation of course rules). Sanctions for academic misconduct may include a failing grade on the assignment for which the notes/study guides are being sold, a reduction in your final course grade, or a failing grade in the course, among other possibilities. Additionally, you should know that selling a faculty member’s notes/study guides individually or on behalf of one of these services using IU email, or via Canvas may also constitute a violation of IU information technology and IU intellectual property policies; additional consequences may result.”

Online Course Materials

“The faculty member teaching this course holds the exclusive right to distribute, modify, post, and reproduce course materials, including all written materials, study guides, lectures, assignments, exercises, and exams. While you are permitted to take notes on the online materials and lectures posted for this course for your personal use, you are not permitted to re-post in another forum, distribute, or reproduce content from this course without the express written permission of the faculty member. Any violation of this course rule will be reported to the appropriate university offices and officials, including to the Dean of Students as academic misconduct.”

Other Official Information

Counseling and Psychological Services

For information about services offered to students by CAPS:

<http://healthcenter.indiana.edu/counseling/index.shtml>

TimelyCare

Indiana students have free, 24/7 access to virtual mental health care services with TimelyCare. Students do not need insurance to access TimelyCare services. <https://www.iu.edu/mental-health/find-resources/timely-care.html#0>

Religious Observation

In accordance with the Office of the Dean of Faculties, any student who wishes to receive an excused absence from class must submit a request form available from the Dean of Faculties for each day to be absent. This form must be presented to the course instructor by the end of the second week of this semester. A separate form must be submitted for each day. The instructor will fill in the bottom section of the form and then return the original to the student. Information about the policy on religious observation can be found at the following website: <https://policies.iu.edu/policies/aca-59-accommodation-religious-observances/index.html>

Disability Services for Students

Securing accommodations for a student with disabilities is a responsibility shared by the student, the instructor and the AES Office. For information about support services or accommodations available to students with disabilities, and for the procedures to be followed by students and instructors: <https://studentlife.indiana.edu/care-advocacy/iub-aes/index.html>

Sexual Harassment

As your instructor, one of my responsibilities is to help create a safe learning environment on our campus. Title IX and our own Sexual Misconduct policy prohibit sexual misconduct. If you have experienced sexual misconduct, or know someone who has, the University can help.

If you are seeking help and would like to talk to someone confidentially, you can make an appointment with:

- i. The Sexual Assault Crisis Service (SACS) at 812-855-8900
- ii. Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) at 812-855-5711
- iii. Confidential Victim Advocates (CVA) at 812-856-2469
- iv. IU Health Center at 812-855-4011

For more information about available resources:

<http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/help/index.html>. It is also important to know that federal regulations and University policy require me to promptly convey any information about potential sexual misconduct known to me to our campus' Deputy Title IX Coordinator or IU's Title IX Coordinator. In that event, they will work with a small number of others on campus to ensure that appropriate measures are taken and resources are made available to the student who may have been harmed. Protecting a student's privacy is of utmost concern, and all involved will only share information with those that need to know to ensure the University can respond and assist. I encourage you to visit <http://stopsexualviolence.iu.edu/help/index.html> to learn more.