

Sustainability
GEOG 3200 – Fall 2026 Course Syllabus
ENV 120 MW 2:25-3:45 PM

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Office hours: M & W 11-noon, or by appointment via Zoom (<https://unt.zoom.us/j/83108273872>)

COURSE DESCRIPTION

Sustainability is a broad discipline that involves the integration of environmental health, economic vitality, and social equity – meeting the needs of today without compromising the needs of the future. This course is designed as an introduction to sustainability from a variety of perspectives: as a conceptual framework, scientific field of study, growing industry, social movement, etc. We will investigate the ecological and political dimensions of sustainability projects, as well as the industries that are developing to support them and the implications for a variety of stakeholders. Each week we will explore topics such as renewable energy, food and agriculture, environmental justice, urban infrastructure, water, waste, etc. We will examine the integrated environmental-economic-equity dimensions of these issues at the local, state, national, and global scales. Students will also conduct research projects for a campus sustainability project, drawing upon concepts, analytical tools, and strategies surveyed throughout the course.

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND LEARNING OUTCOMES

- **Examine** ecological, economic, and equity dimensions of sustainability in a variety of environmental and political contexts from the local to the global.
- **Explore** the metrics and methods used to study, implement, and evaluate sustainability-related projects, initiatives, and developments in government agencies, industry, research, etc.
- **Engage** sustainability issues through research of scholarly literature, policy documents, business proposals, media, and case studies.
- **Apply** analytical tools in the collaborative development, design, and proposal of a sustainability research project.
- **Demonstrate** critical thinking and writing, teamwork, presentation, and outreach skills in the production of a UNT campus sustainability initiative.

GRADING

In-class activities & quizzes	35%
Discussion (7)	15%
Field Trip Reflection	10%
Final Essay	10%
Group Project	30%

- Grades are calculated as follows:

A	90-100
B	80-89.4
C	70-79.4
D	60-69.4
F	<59.5

In-class activities: These activities, including reading quizzes, will be conducted on a weekly basis in order to assess your understanding of the main themes and/or arguments of the week's readings, films, or other materials, to reinforce topics or concepts discussed in class, or to reflect on other elements of the course (e.g. a guest speaker or virtual tour).

Discussion (and Responses!): Student engagement is one of the most critical elements of a productive and enjoyable classroom experience. Additional forms of communication between students and faculty will improve any course as a whole. To that end, we will be using the Discussion function in Canvas to provide an online platform for this Sustainability course. I will post a general topic or jumping off point each week a discussion is assigned, reflecting material from the readings, lecture, or other sources (including your ideas!), you will be required to submit a brief post and respond to one of your fellow classmates' submissions.

Field Trip Reflection: Students will submit a reflection following the one of our field trips this semester. I will provide prompts for this reflection, or will allow you to write on your own proposed topic, with approval required. This paper should be at least 2 pages in length, double-spaced, with one-inch margins and 12-point font. This paper will be evaluated on engagement with the provided questions, as well as evidence provided that both supports opinions or claims made in the paper and demonstrates active participation in the experiential field learning (e.g. specific examples of information provided by hosts/staff/faculty, insights gained through group activities, etc.).

Final Essay (Letter): You will submit a final essay (in the form of a letter) on the Monday of Finals Week. This letter may be addressed to any particular person (familiar, friendly, famous – or infamous) and can focus on a singular weekly topic (e.g. Air), or combine topics from a variety of weeks, or you may propose your own topic. These letters are not intended to be summarizations of the readings, but rather to reflect your engagement with the texts and other materials discussed in class. These letters need not address all texts read for class, but may serve as an opportunity to thoughtfully consider ideas, films, writings, etc. that had a particular resonance for you – and how you might share the knowledge you've gained with someone, open a dialogue with a researcher whose work you encountered, or voice your concerns to someone in a position of power, etc. I am open to format and approach, and will discuss possibilities with you later in the semester. Letters should be 2-3 pages in length, double-spaced, with one-inch margins and 12-point font. These papers will be evaluated on demonstrated critical thinking, as well as writing style and grammar.

Research project: The research project will be a collaborative effort, drawing upon analysis of a specific issue related to sustainability on campus. Drawing upon the concepts and tools explored in class, the groups will develop, design, evaluate, and present this project to UNT as the project "client." There will be several steps within the project development throughout the semester, and each component will constitute part of the project grade. *See Canvas for details and rubrics.*

REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS

- *Sustainability: A Comprehensive Foundation.* Available on Canvas.
- All other readings will be posted to Canvas in the module for each week's lecture.

POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS

- Condensed PowerPoints will be available on Canvas *after* we cover the material in class.

CLASS POLICIES

Rule #1: Be on time and do not leave early. If there is an exceptional circumstance, let me know before or after class and make sure to close the door quietly and sit as close to the exit as possible.

Rule #2: Silence your phones when you come to class and refrain from using them during lecture. Do not sleep or whisper to neighbors during class.

Rule #3: Be courteous. The classroom remains a space of possibility, but we must take care to be thoughtful and open in our interactions with each other.

Laptops/Touch Screen Policy: Students using laptops must sit in the last two rows of the lecture hall or at the very end of a row. Only tabs directly related to the lecture should be open during class. Students who do not follow this rule will lose their privilege to use the laptop in class. Phones and other devices should not be used in the classroom.

Make-up Policy: If you must be absent from an assignment in class to attend a religious holiday, or due to a family obligation, please contact me ***at least one (1) week in advance*** of the class or due date. If you are ill, you must let me know by e-mail or phone in advance of the due date. If you do not tell me until the due date has passed, **you will lose a letter grade for each day that you are late in giving me notice.**

Extra Credit: The Geography Department **does not allow** extra credit (work not specified on this syllabus).

ADA Accommodations: UNT makes reasonable academic accommodation for students with disabilities. Students seeking accommodation must first register with the Office of Disability Accommodation (ODA) to verify their eligibility. If a disability is verified, the ODA will provide a student with an accommodation letter to be delivered to faculty to begin a private discussion regarding one's specific course needs. Students may request accommodations at any time, however, ODA notices of accommodation should be provided as early as possible in the semester to avoid any delay in implementation. Note that students must obtain a new letter of accommodation for every semester and must meet with each faculty member prior to implementation in each class. For additional information see the ODA website at disability.unt.edu.

Academic Integrity Standards and Consequences: According to UNT Policy 06.003, Student Academic Integrity, academic dishonesty occurs when students engage in behaviors including, but not limited to cheating, fabrication, facilitating academic dishonesty, forgery, plagiarism, and sabotage. A finding of academic dishonesty may result in a range of academic penalties or sanctions ranging from admonition to expulsion from the University.

Students caught cheating or plagiarizing will receive a "0" for that particular assignment or exam. Additionally, the incident will be reported to the Office of Student Rights and Responsibilities for further penalty. Remember that you have agreed to follow the UNT Code of Student Conduct.

“Student behavior that interferes with an instructor’s ability to conduct a class or other students’ opportunity to learn is unacceptable and disruptive and will not be tolerated in any instructional forum at UNT. *Students engaging in unacceptable behavior will be directed to leave the classroom and the instructor may refer the student to the Center for Student Rights and Responsibilities to consider whether the student’s conduct violated the Code of Student Conduct.* The university’s expectations for student conduct apply to all instructional forums, including university and electronic classroom, labs, discussion groups, field trips, etc.”

- The Code of Student Conduct can be found at: <https://studentaffairs.unt.edu/dean-of-students/conduct/index.html>

According to UNT’s webpage on [AI, Plagiarism, and Academic Integrity](#):

- AI ***should not be*** used to assist in writing papers, searching for sources, or creating citations. Some citations provided by AI are not reliable.
- AI ***can be*** used to help students develop an outline for a paper, generate ideas, and learn a citation style.

The "Plagiarism Review" feature in Canvas will be enabled for all essays and project reports. This will automatically generate both the similarity and AI detection rate for each submission. If either the similarity or AI rate is high (above 30%), the flagged sections will be reviewed to determine whether (1) the student should be asked to rewrite and resubmit the assignment, or (2) further action is needed.

Emergency Notification & Procedures: UNT uses a system called Eagle Alert to quickly notify students with critical information in the event of an emergency (i.e., severe weather, campus closing, and health and public safety emergencies like chemical spills, fires, or violence). In the event of a university closure, please refer to the UNT Learning Management System (LMS) for contingency plans for covering course materials.

Tentative Course Schedule**

**Lecture order is subject to change. Reading corresponds to that day's lecture.

Date	Topic	Reading	Assignment Due
M Aug 17	Course Introduction		
W Aug 19	What is Sustainability?	Theis & Tomkin: Parts 1.1-1.3, 1.5, 10.4; UN (2025)	
M Aug 24	Production, Growth, Resiliency	Theis & Tomkin: Parts 1.4 and 10.2-10.3.4; Robbins (2012)	Wicked Problems Activity
W Aug 26	Production, Growth, Resiliency	Hardin (1968); Ostrom (2009)	Finalize Research Groups 8/26
M Aug 31	Climate Change	Theis & Tomkin: Parts 3.1 & 3.5; Vox (2021); Texas Monthly (2021)	Climate Change Activity
W Sep 2	Land	Theis & Tomkin: Part 4.4; WRI (2019); <i>Texas Monthly</i> (2016); <i>Guardian</i> (2016, 2020)	• Land Activity • Research Question due 9/2
M Sep 7	** Labor Day – NO CLASS **		
W Sep 9	Water	Theis & Tomkin: Parts 5.1 & 5.2; <i>Texas Tribune</i> (2017); <i>Wired</i> (2019)	• Water Activity • Land Discussion due 9/9
M Sep 14	Food	FAO (2018); Leopold (1949); <i>Guardian</i> (2019)	
W Sep 16	Agriculture	<i>Texas Monthly</i> (2020); <i>New York Times</i> (2021)	• Food & Ag Activity • Preliminary Proposal due 9/16
M Sep 21	Environmental Justice	Theis & Tomkin: Parts 10.8; Bullard (2000)	
W Sep 23	Environmental Justice	Pulido (2017); <i>New York Times</i> (2019); <i>Uniontown</i> (2020); <i>Detroit Hives</i> (2019)	• EJ Activity • Food & Ag Discussion due 9/23
M Sep 28	Air	<i>Detroit Metro News</i> (2020); <i>Texas Tribune</i> (2019); UNEP (2019)	Air Pollution Activity
W Sep 30	Energy	Theis & Tomkin: Parts 8.1, 8.2, 8.4.1.4; UN (2021); <i>New York Times</i> (2019, 2023); <i>Texas Monthly</i> (2020, 2023)	• Energy Activity • EJ Discussion due 9/30 • Final Methodology due 9/30
M Oct 5	Energy	Theis & Tomkin: Parts 8.4.1-8.4.1.1.5	

W Oct 7	Building	Theis & Tomkin: Parts 10.8	Building Activity
M Oct 12	Sustainability @ UNT	TBD	Energy Discussion due 10/12
W Oct 14	Sustainability @ UNT	TBD	
M Oct 19	Dixon Water Foundation	Roche et al. (2021); Park et al. (2021); <i>Civil Eats</i> (2021); <i>New York Times</i> (2021)	Building Discussion due 10/19
W Oct 21	Dixon Water Foundation		
M Oct 26	<i>The True Cost</i>		Sustainability @ UNT Discussion due 10/26
W Oct 28	Fast Fashion	TBD	• Fast Fashion Activity • Dixon Reflection due 10/28
M Nov 2	Recycling	TBD	
W Nov 4	Waste/Landfills	<i>Bloomberg</i> (2019); <i>New Yorker</i> (2020)	
M Nov 9	Pratt Industries		Waste on Campus Activity due 11/9
W Nov 11	(Sub)urban Infrastructure: Water Redux	UN (2021); <i>Wired</i> (2015); <i>Texas Tribune</i> (2018)	Preliminary Results due 11/11
M Nov 16	(Sub)urban Infrastructure: Creating Sustainable Communities & Societies	<i>Guardian</i> (2015); <i>THIS</i> (2020)	• Sustainable Cities Activity • Pratt Industries Discussion due 11/16
W Nov 18	Group Presentations		
Nov 23 & 25	** Thanksgiving Break – NO CLASSES **		
M Nov 30	Group Presentations		
W Dec 2	Group Presentations		Group Presentations & White Papers due 12/2
M Dec 7			Final Essay