

Writing 105S: Writing about Sustainability

Prerequisites: Writing 2 or 2E or 2LK; upper-division standing.

Catalog Description: Analysis and practice of various forms of writing that address sustainability in interdisciplinary contexts. Students research, write, and reflect on concepts and practices of sustainability, examining the role of words and images in communicating sustainability ideas to diverse audiences.

Course Description: Writing 105S explores various forms of writing as a means for communicating about sustainability in diverse interdisciplinary contexts, including historical, political, social, scientific, economic, and literary disciplines. Students research, analyze, write, and reflect on the concepts and practices of sustainability, and will examine the rhetorical role of words and images in communicating environmental ideas. Since sustainability involves addressing not only environmental problems, but also social and economic challenges, the course will examine how sustainability is being communicated through multiple social perspectives and disciplines, making it appropriate for students from all majors. Assignments include both short and long papers, including independent research using both primary and secondary sources as well as collaborative projects and presentations. Designed for upper-division students, the course enables students to integrate skills and knowledge from multiple sources and experiences, and apply their understanding to personal, professional, and civic life.

Curricular Premises:

The focus of assignments and activities in Writing 105S is on writing, with writing assignments accounting for the majority of the grade. Writing 105S encourages students to focus on the audiences, purposes, and strategies of writing effectively about sustainability. For many students, this course marks the first time they have engaged with arguments about sustainability from more than just an academic perspective. Students will be prompted to engage the requirements of such writing in both academic and professional contexts, and in print, electronic, and multimodal genres. Students will identify and characterize appropriate audiences; define primary and secondary purposes; and analyze the rhetorical strategies and organizational modes for creating concise, effective sustainability writing.

While most commonly discussed in relation to the environment, sustainability extends far beyond being a purely environmental issue. The concept of sustainability provides an integrated approach to solving problems that cannot be resolved by one discipline. The course creates an opportunity to look at how myriad issues such as ethics and social responsibility are being discussed across the arts and humanities as well as in the natural and social sciences. Course projects encourage students to use writing to participate in conversations about sustainability in ways that move toward solutions and actions.

Course Requirements:

Texts: Texts commonly include articles from popular media—including newspapers and magazines--about the environment and sustainability. Academic studies, personal narratives, and samples of nature writing also frequently have a role in this course.

Assignments: Writing 105S assignments are designed to provide instruction and practice in critical thinking and effective communication. Potential writing assignments include short papers such as reading responses, personal reflections, and op-ed pieces; longer pieces such as interviews, surveys, and ethnographies; researched analytical pieces such as literature reviews and annotated bibliographies, and communications analyses; and collaborative projects such as group presentations. Students participate in small group and whole class discussions as they conduct independent research. Conferences, writing workshops, and revision sessions are scheduled during the process for each writing project, providing students with guided opportunities to draft, review, and revise their work.

Outcomes:

- understand and apply genres common across disciplines, and differing across disciplines, and their organizational strategies and specialized terminology
- effectively interpret texts and other representations written in a variety of disciplines and media channels, including blogs, websites, articles, and documentaries
- conduct an independent research project, relying on traditional library sources, as well as on other primary sources available through interviews and observation.
- use primary and secondary source materials from a wide range of resources, including professional journals and databases, websites, popular literature, and personal experience
- attribute sources in a manner attentive to the broad variety of styles common to writing about sustainability
- deploy a mature style of writing that exhibits awareness of the complexities of cross/interdisciplinary approaches, and practice effective collaborative writing strategies
- tailor writing to meet the requirements of lay, professional, and/or specialized audiences
- understand sustainability as inherently interdisciplinary in nature