

**Environment and Sustainability Colloquium**  
**ENST 400 - Fall 2023**

**Instructor:** Dr. Shannon Gibson  
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Environmental Studies Program  
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**Class Details:**  
Day/time: Tuesday 10:00 - 11:00  
Classroom: ZHS 130  
Office Hours: Monday 2-4 pm

**Course Overview:**

My goal for this speaker series is to increase our collective knowledge and awareness of interdisciplinary and applied approaches to sustainability. In curating our speakers' schedule, I have sought folks from a variety of academic disciplines, from private and public organizations, and individuals focusing on local, national and international sustainability analysis, campaigns, and policy implementation.

As part of this 1-unit course, you will have the opportunity and responsibility to critically engage with scholars from USC, and beyond, on their own work related to global environmental issues. Over the course of 15 weeks, and approximately 10 talks, we will cover a wide variety of topics from traditional knowledge in climate science, the impact of Amazon on local communities, to energy inequality in Los Angeles, just to name a few.

**Learning Objectives:**

Through participating in this class, you will:

- 1.1. Describe key problems in research and professional practice in environmental studies.
- 1.2. Recognize and evaluate methods for addressing these problems.
- 1.3. Summarize research findings from synthesis of complex information.
- 1.4. Critique research results and identify unanswered questions.

*These skills will be honed through note-taking on lectures and readings, and they will be refined via oral discussions. They will be assessed through oral and written contributions.*

- 2.1. Evaluate written and oral presentation.
- 2.2. Practice written and oral communication.
- 2.3. Contribute to academic discourse.

*These skills will be honed through posing written questions and writing reflections, and through oral participation in discussions. They will be assessed through the pre-lecture question submissions and end-of-semester reflections, and by participation in discussions.*

## **Course Mechanics:**

### **Course Modality:**

For enrolled students, in-person attendance is expected. While some talks may be offered on Zoom, out of respect for our speakers' time and in order to ensure lively discussion and reflection, it is discouraged for registered students to attend those talks via Zoom, unless there is a valid reason, such as a university-sanctioned event, unexpected emergency or illness.

### **Course Expectations:**

Students are expected to:

- Complete pre-assigned readings recommended by the speaker.
- Attend each week's Tuesday session in person.
- Serve as an active participant and listener for each session (i.e., taking notes, asking extemporaneous questions, not being distracted or on electronic devices).
- Be an 'on call discussant' for several weeks, in which you will be expected to ask more detailed questions of the speaker based on pre-class research into that speaker's work.
- Write a series of reflection essays based on what you learned from the speaker.

## **Grading Breakdown**

### **Class Participation (10%):**

Participation, including active listening, speaking and reflection, is the cornerstone of this course. The goal is not just to be a passive recipient of these talks, but to reflexively engage with your own experiences, preconceptions, and understandings of sustainability education and practice, as well as interact with those of your fellow classmates. As such, you should review and embrace the following resources so that you can effectively participate in this course:

[Active Listening: The Secret to Effective Communication](#), [Video - 20 mins] Knowable  
[Guidelines for Class Participation](#), University of Michigan  
[What is Reflective Thinking?](#), OpenLearn

### **Discussant Questions (5 x 5% = 25%):**

Students will sign up for 5 talks that they are responsible for providing comments / questions for the speaker based on pre-class research of their work. Questions will be graded on effort, thoughtfulness, relatedness to the speaker / reading material and originality. Rubric to be provided.

### **Written Reflections (3 x 15% = 45%):**

Students will choose any 3 talks (you do not need to sign up ahead of time, so pick which interests you most or fits your schedule) to write a 1500 word reflection essay on. These essays should address new knowledge you obtained from the talk, questions that emerged from the presentation and conversation and thoughts about how the perspective or policies discussed

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relate to your own work and education. These essays may be published on Medium or the Gibson Climate Justice Lab blog with your permission. Rubric to be provided.

**Final Summative Class Reflection (20%):**

Students will complete a final 3,000 word summative reflection on their experience in the class. In doing so, you must identify 3 themes that emerged across our series of talks, referencing different ways each of the speakers contributed to or challenged your identified theme. The paper will conclude with your personal reflection of what you learned and how this experience will impact your future engagement in sustainability education and practice. Rubric to be provided.

**Weighted Grade Summary:**

Participation	10%
Discussant Questions	25%
Reflections	45%
Summative Reflection	20%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Grading Scale:**

<b>A</b>	<b>A-</b>	<b>B+</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>B-</b>	<b>C+</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>C-</b>	<b>D+</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>D-</b>	<b>F</b>
100-93	92-90	89-87	86-83	82-80	79-77	76-73	72-70	69-67	66-63	62-50	< 50

**Course Policies:**

**Email Communication:** Email is the best way to contact me!!! When emailing, please make sure to address it properly, include your course number and section, and be clear in your request. All emails will be responded to within 48 hours, but please do not expect responses after 5 pm or on weekends / holidays.

**In-class Communication:** I respectfully ask that you not line up to ask me questions after class. It's not that I don't want to help you or discuss your concerns, but I must leave immediately after class to eat lunch and prepare for my next class.

**Grading:** I am always happy to discuss with you how you can improve your work, but I will not "regrade work" or consider grade revisions that have nothing to do with your actual submitted work (i.e., scholarship eligibility, GPA needs, grad applications and things of that nature.) If you do have a grade objection, that should be emailed to me with a written explanation of what you feel was graded incorrectly accompanied by supporting information (i.e., referencing the textbook or slides), within 1 week.

**Extra Credit:** There is no extra credit for this course.

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**Deadlines:** Deadlines are an important part of life and we should make every effort to meet them. Late work will be deducted ½ a letter grade at the due time and then per 24 hours late. That being said, I realize there is a lot going on in the world, so if something legitimate comes up, please reach out to me as early as possible to discuss options. Please note, if I feel like my lenience is being taken advantage of, I may have to reconsider some of the flexibility being offered.

**Statement for Students with Disabilities:** USC welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. The Office of Student Accessibility Services (OSAS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter disability-related barriers and for approving and generating a Letter of Accommodation (LOA). The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. You may contact OSAS at (213) 740-0776 or via email at [osasfrontdesk@usc.edu](mailto:osasfrontdesk@usc.edu)

**Statement on Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism – presenting someone else's ideas as your own, either verbatim or recast in your own words – is a serious academic offense with serious consequences. The full student handbook section on Academic Integrity is available in the [Student Handbook, pgs. 11-13](#).

**Diversity and Inclusivity:** It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well-served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed both in and out of class, and that the diversity that the students bring to this class be viewed as a resource, strength and benefit. As such, I hope to present materials and activities that are respectful of diversity: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture. I might not always succeed, but this is my desire. If you have suggestions on materials, readings or topics, they are always welcome. I encourage you to let me know ways to improve the effectiveness of the course for you personally, or for other students or student groups.

**Flexibility & Compassion:** Even though we are emerging from the pandemic, I understand that things don't always go the way we expect, for you and for me. There are mental health stresses, childcare issues, things that pop up to hinder our work that don't easily fit in the "sickness or documented emergency" box that the university lays out. If you are struggling, come talk to me (preferably with an idea of what you need from me to get you through whatever assignment or deliverable you are struggling with). Together we will work something out. Vice versa, I kindly ask that you extend the same courtesy to me should I need to reschedule office hours, need a bit more time to respond to an email and so on.

**Should you need additional support, please consult these resources:**

Student Counseling Services (SCS) - (213) 740-7711 – 24/7 on call Free and confidential mental health treatment for students, including short-term psychotherapy, group counseling, stress fitness workshops, and crisis intervention. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/counseling/>

Relationship & Sexual Violence Prevention Services (RSVP) - (213) 740-4900 - 24/7 on call Free and confidential therapy services, workshops, and training for situations related to genderbased harm. <https://engemannshc.usc.edu/rsvp/>

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Office of Equity and Diversity (OED)/Title IX compliance – (213) 740-5086 Works with faculty, staff, visitors, applicants, and students around issues of protected class. <https://equity.usc.edu/>

Bias Assessment Response and Support SOWK 637 – Wellness, Recovery, and Integrated Care 23 Incidents of bias, hate crimes and microaggressions need to be reported allowing for appropriate investigation and response.

<https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/bias-assessment-response-support/>

Student Support & Advocacy – (213) 821-4710 Assists students and families in resolving complex issues adversely affecting their success as a student EX: personal, financial, and academic. <https://studentaffairs.usc.edu/ssa>

Diversity at USC – <https://diversity.usc.edu/> Tabs for Events, Programs and Training, Task Force (including representatives for each school), Chronology, Participate, Resources for Students

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**Course Schedule**

***\*\* Talks still being confirmed, schedule subject to change***

<b>Date</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>General Topic</b>
August 22	<i>Organizational meeting with class</i>	
August 29	Kelly Towmey Sanders, USC, Engineering	A/C Inequality in LA, SDG 7
September 5	Indigenous Environmental Network	Carbon Offsetting and IEN Campaigns in California
September 12		
September 19	Summer Gray, UCSB, Sociology and Environmental Studies	Coastal justice, Eco-resilience
September 26	Global Justice Ecology Project	The “Stop GE Trees in Brazil” Campaign
October 3		
October 10	<i>Asynchronous Assignment - Fall Break</i>	
October 17	Pamela Chasek, Manhattan U, Political Science	Science-Policy Nexus, Convention to Combat Desertification
October 24		
October 31	Josh Goldstein, USC, History	Divestment and Fossil Free Research
November 7	Juliann Emonns Alison, UC Riverside, Gender Studies	Amazon’s Impact on Local Communities
November 14	David Thomas, Keurig Co.	Corporate Sustainability
November 21	<i>Asynchronous Assignment - Thanksgiving</i>	
November 28	<i>Final reflection discussion</i>	

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