

### COM410 Special Topics: Communicating Climate Change

**Syllabus**

Professor Norbert Mundorf

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class Meets:</th>
<th>Sakai: Sunday Chats are scheduled monthly in Sakai Chat unless announced otherwise</th>
<th><a href="http://sakai.uri.edu">http://sakai.uri.edu</a></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office Hours:</td>
<td>Sundays, 7pm-10pm and By Appointment</td>
<td>Sakai Chat Room</td>
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<tr>
<td>Contact:</td>
<td>Email: COM410 Sakai--Private Messages</td>
<td>Office: 874-4725</td>
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*Go to Digital, click on e-chapters. Then View. Select these. Cost for 4 paid chapters will be about $26.

eChapter 1: (free download)
eChapter 6: The Human Population and Its Impact
eChapter 13: Water Resources
eChapter 16: Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy
eChapter 19: Climate Disruption and Ozone Depletion

### Course Description

Environmental threats impact the quality of life in numerous ways. How we act as human beings can improve environmental conditions and benefit the health of individuals, families, and society. Many scientists consider Climate Change one of the greatest challenges of the 21st Century.

The scientific consensus is that we are responsible for a vast share of current and future global climate change, and that changes in human behavior could help prevent environmental dangers to the quality of our lives. While technology will provide some improvements, behavior change is the key to reducing carbon emissions, pollution, and the dependence of our society on fossil fuels. We can change the way we act and the choices we make now. This can help create a world, which is ‘sustainable’ for future generations, and at the same time improve our own health and quality of life. The science of Behavior Change has given us tools to target different audiences and move them along from a state of ignorance or indifference towards changing personally, and becoming actively involved.

This course addresses threats to sustainability both at a global and a local level. Environmental sustainability, the economy, and social justice are increasingly interconnected. All are subject to long-term change processes and principles. Translating scientific insights into human behavior has been a challenge for many years. We will explore recent scientific information about climate change and other environmental impacts, and discuss ways to communicate this information to a variety of constituencies. This includes a range of media, such as written text, visuals, conventional mass media, and social networking.

We will investigate individual and mediated environmental messages; analyze and experiment with ways communication affects environmental knowledge, attitudes, and behavior; design communication campaigns to effect resource use and ecological responsibility.

**Student Learning Outcomes:** Successful participation in this class means that you will be able to…
- Demonstrate an understanding of Climate Change and related environmental threats.
- Understand scientific research related to Climate Change, and be able to communicate it to different audiences using appropriate media channels.
- Analyze your personal impact on the environment.
- Ask questions, which help others understand the challenges and opportunities of changing behavior.
- Appreciate the connection of environmental and health behavior.
- Discuss the relationships between poverty, inequality, and security and understand the concept of environmental justice.
- Communicate with audiences who are unwilling or unable to change.
- Recognize the connection of local and global effects of climate change, especially as far as sea-level rise and increased storminess.
- Apply readings and class discussions to changes in transportation, energy use, and resource conservation.
- Work effectively in virtual teams.

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<tr>
<th>EVALUATION</th>
<th>GRADE POLICY</th>
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<tr>
<td>4 Online Quizzes</td>
<td>=20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Exam</td>
<td>=20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Postings and Chat Participation</td>
<td>=10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Video/Interview Assignment</td>
<td>=10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Project</td>
<td>=20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Online Debate with German Students</td>
<td>=20%</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A = Superior work</td>
<td>95 – 99 =A</td>
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<tr>
<td>B = Above average work</td>
<td>87 – 89 =B+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C = Average work</td>
<td>77 – 79 =C+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D = Below average work</td>
<td>67 – 69 =D+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F = Unacceptable work</td>
<td>60 – 66 =D</td>
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**Course Policies**

**PARTICIPATION:** The class will be entirely online. Several Synchronous Chats are scheduled for Sunday nights. You are expected to complete all assigned readings and exercises. Participation also means: active involvement in discussion postings, individual and group activities.

**SAKAI:** An important component of the course is our virtual classroom. I post your grades here throughout the semester. You have up to ONE WEEK from the time that I post a grade to discuss it with me. It is your responsibility to check in Sakai regularly.

**GRADING AND DEADLINES:** Assignments turned in after the due date will receive a grade penalty.

**WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS:** It is essential that your work be well written, grammatically correct, and free of typographical errors and misspellings.

**GROUP WORK:** You will be working in virtual groups for much of the class. Group discussion and communication will take place within Sakai. Please note that I will have access to your discussions and other work. You must participate actively in your group to receive a passing grade in the Group Assignment. No face to face group meetings are required.

**ACADEMIC HONESTY:** In an online environment it is imperative that you assign proper credit to work that is not your own. Plagiarism is a serious offense. In addition, when working in groups you have a moral and social responsibility to contribute consistently and to the best of your abilities. Be sure to communicate with your group members to be sure that credit is properly assigned.
4 ONLINE QUIZZES (5 points each = 20%) (Sakai Tool: Tests & Quizzes):
There will be 4 quizzes (see the course calendar). Quizzes will focus on textbook and other readings. Quizzes will require you to apply key concepts learned in this class to solving a behavior change and communication problem, related to sustainability and health. Demonstrate that you can correctly identify Stages of Change, and incorporate appropriate sustainability concepts. Adhere to the timeframe for the quizzes - no make-ups.

MIDTERM EXAM (20%) (Sakai Tool: Discussion):
Design a Personal Sustainability Plan for: The next Month - The next Year - The next 5 Years. Based on the No Impact Man reading, you will outline and discuss effective ways to ‘make a difference’ in terms of environmental sustainability for yourself, your friends, family, workplace, apartment/house, transportation (due in SAKAI). Consider things you can do immediately, in the short run, and in the long term. Also, think about what you can do to make these changes last, and to promote them among others.

POSTINGS AND CHAT PARTICIPATION (10%) (Sakai Tools: Discussion and Chat Room):
During the early part of the semester you will conduct several types of observations related to transportation and sustainability in your community. The results will be posted in Sakai, but they should also feed into the assignments below.

VIDEO/DOCUMENTARY/ INTERVIEWS (10%) (Sakai Tool: Assignments):
Design, conduct, and record several brief interviews related to sustainable transportation and ‘green’ culture around your community, your commute, your work or campus with people representing a range of demographic characteristics and environmental attitudes (i.e. readiness for change). Use text, video, audio, and pictures, choosing the most appropriate combination of media. Be sure to present your materials in a meaningful order, and provide proper analysis.

GLOBAL ONLINE DEBATE (20%) (Sakai Tool: Wiki):
We will be participating in an online debate with students at the University of Braunschweig, Germany. Due to the German semester schedule, the debate will begin mid-October. Details and debate topics will be forthcoming.

FINAL PROJECT (20%) (Sakai Tool: Discussion):
Sustainable Transportation and Community in RI or other topic related to Sustainability. One way to improve environment and quality of life is to promote sustainable transportation and community planning. Of particular interest is promotion of walking, biking, transit use, and carpool instead of Single Occupancy Vehicle transportation. But there are broader issues, such as the design of communities for walk-ability and bike-ability, and at the same time creating a culture of sustainability in a given community. You may also choose other topic areas, such as Waste Reduction/Recycling, Energy Conservation, and Local/Sustainable Food.

The final project is designed to ‘make a difference’ by documenting your findings throughout the semester and at the same time applying the behavior change principles to a hands-on project. You will assemble the information, pictures, videos, and interviews collected throughout the semester and create an alternative transportation project that might contribute to improving transportation at URI, in the community, or at your workplace. Be sure to incorporate Communication and Behavior Change (5D) principles. This project incorporates the work you have done throughout the semester.

You will create and implement a project encouraging environmentally responsible behavior. The components of the assignment are:

1. Design/Target: identify literature and collect background information; consider decision makers and community members; research environmental groups, interested religious and political groups, etc. This step will help clarify the issue and address your target audience.
2. Change: Create and implement a plan to change the behavior of a group within the community
3. Promote: create media, social media, and interpersonal messages to advertise and promote the project.

COURSE SCHEDULE

Week 1
**Readings:** Humans and Sustainability Spoolman Ch. 1; Beavan, Colin. No Impact Man (NIM): Read Preview in Google Books (through p. 17)

Sept. 5 – Course Introduction; “Record your Trash” Assignment: Record and document any trash that you and your roommates generate this week. Choose 3 pieces of trash and talk about its production, use, disposal, and after-life. Find ways to reduce the amount of trash you generate.

Post in SAKAI by Sunday 10 pm. Include pictures if possible. Ungraded.

Read: Humans and Sustainability Spoolman Ch. 1

[View: National Geographic: Six Degrees Could Change the World
You Tube]

**Week 2 Trash Talk: Cut down on Waste**

**Readings:** NIM Ch. 2-3

Sept. 9 – Testing and communicating scientific results

Video/picture observation assigned: Transportation and traffic in your community/your commute.

Assignment: Post in SAKAI by Sunday 10 pm.

**Week 3 Turn it off: Conserving Energy**

**Readings:** Spoolman Ch. 16; NIM Ch. 4, 8

Sept. 16 - Energy and Energy Balance

Choose a piece of electronics/electrical equipment and discuss its purpose and energy consumption; find ways to reduce your Energy Consumption. Post response in SAKAI by Sunday 10 pm. Ungraded.

**Week 4 Transportation CHAT Sunday 8 pm**

**Readings:** Spoolman Ch. 19

Sept. 26 – Transportation and Climate Change;

View The End of Suburbia: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3uvzCY2Xug

Assignment: Transportation Alternatives Video Documentation: Alternative Transportation in your Community; post in SAKAI by Sunday 10 pm

**Week 5 Food and Human Population; Local Food**

**Readings:** Spoolman Ch. 6

Population Sustainability and Food Supply

Community Activity --Video Documentation: Transportation, local food and Community Design

**Week 6 Sustainability; Water**

**Readings:** Doppelt Ch. 1, 2; Spoolman Ch. 13

Oct. 7 – Sustainability and Behavior Change

Video Assignment: Interview Carpoollers and Transit (RIPTA) users or conduct Local Food related interview

Post in Discussions by Sunday 10 pm

**Week 7 Online Quiz 1 Sunday Oct. 14 ONLINE DEBATE BEGINS (due dates TBA)**

**Readings:** Doppelt Ch. 3


Video Assignment: Interview Transportation Planners and Decision Makers/Restaurant; Store (local food)

Post Interviews in Discussions by Sunday 10 pm

**Week 8 Midterm due in SAKAI Sunday Oct. 21, 10 pm**

**Readings:** Doppelt Ch. 5, 6

Oct. 24 – Communication & Behavior Change

**Week 9 Online Quiz 2 Sunday Oct. 28 CHAT Sunday 8 pm DEBATE: ELECTRONIC HANDSHAKE**

**Readings:** Doppelt Ch. 7

Oct. 30 (chat topic)- Self-Efficacy and Change; Designing a Community Campaign

**Week 10 Online Quiz 3 Sunday Nov. 4**

**Readings:** The Six Americas

Nov. 7 –Changing Sustainability Behavior--Target Audience Characteristics for your Campaign
### Week 11  Designing your Campaign  **CHAT** Sunday Nov. 11 8 pm

*Readings:*  *The Psychology of Global Warming; Why Isn’t the Brain Green?*

Nov. 14 – Increasing Campaign Effectiveness

### Week 12  Online Quiz 4 Sunday Nov. 18  **EMAIL DEBATE:** ARGUMENTS EXCHANGED THIS WEEK

*Readings:*  *Tom Friedman, Hot Flat and Crowded*

Nov. 23 - Exchange of Global Debate Position Papers

Nov. 24 - **Thanksgiving Break**  
   Report on 3 Conversations/Observations re: Sustainability/Environment by Monday 8 pm in SAKAI

### Week 13  Happy Thanksgiving

*Readings:*  *TBA*

Nov. 28 – Work on Campaign

### Week 14  Dec. 4: 8 pm CHAT: Present your Project Findings  **DEBATE REBUTTAL**

Dec. 5 - Exchange of Rebuttal Arguments

Complete Your Final Project Report

### Week 15  Sustainability Beyond This Class  **DEBATE ELECTRONIC HANDSHAKE**

Dec. 12 – Course Wrap-up: What can we do to make a difference in the future? Post comments in SAKAI

Dec. 16 - Electronic Handshake Farewell

Dec. 18 - Final Report due in SAKAI Discussions