Gallatin School, New York University

First-Year Research Seminar: Innovation and Sustainability (*FIRST-UG723 FYRS*)

Spring 2013 - Monday & Wednesday 11:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. Gallatin- Room 501  
Professor - José Perillán  
Email – *jgp10@nyu.edu*  
Office Hours – By Appt. M & W 2 – 3 p.m.; T 11:20 a.m. – 12:20 p.m.; & R 3 – 4 p.m.  
Office - 411 Lafayette St., Rm. 302

**Course Description -**

How was the concept of environmental sustainability born? How did the idea of sustainability transform into the goal of sustainable development? Is innovation helping or hindering achieving the aims of sustainable development? These are some of the questions we address in this course. While working to define sustainability within various contexts, students explore how the complexity of a particular system can complicate the task of sustaining it. Building off of a diverse set of texts, we examine the concept of sustainability from many different perspectives including agriculture, economic development, health care, international law, urban planning, engineering, and religion. Readings may include texts by Henry David Thoreau, Richard Muller, Elinor Ostrom, John Young, Ann Thorpe, Richard Norgaard, Sharachchandra Lélé, David Pearce, Janis Birkeland, and David MacKay. Students write several critical essays throughout the semester culminating in a final research paper.

**General Expectations -**

In this course we will focus on developing strong strategies for thinking, reading, and writing critically. Using a variety of readings, we will learn to deconstruct an author’s argument and subsequently evaluate its effectiveness. By extension we will also learn to construct strong arguments of our own by thoroughly researching a topic and presenting ample evidence in support of a concrete thesis. I look forward to animated yet respectful discussions of the topics covered.

**Attendance -**

On time attendance is expected. In the event of an unavoidable absence, please notify me by e-mail as soon as possible, and I will make arrangements with you to catch up on the work you missed. Class participation is a significant portion of your grade, so please come to class on
time, with your assignments completed, and prepared to engage the rest of the class in lively discussion.

Readings –

The following texts are required reading for this course. Books will be available for purchase through the NYU bookstore and all assigned readings that are essays, papers, or excerpts will be made available for copy or download via Blackboard.

Books –

Required -


Reading & Writing Assignments –

Students will be assigned both reading and writing assignments every week. The writing will include informal in-class writing, weekly responses to the assigned readings, and multiple revisions of the formal assignments. Formal assignments will include three shorter essays in addition to a research paper.

Formal Assignment 1: Critical Essay: Deconstructing an Argument (4 – 5 pages)

Formal Assignment 2: Expository Essay: Defining Sustainability (4 – 5 pages)

Formal Assignment 3: Research Paper (10 pages)

Formal Assignment 4: Developing a Project Proposal (4 – 5 pages + PPT)
All written assignments should be double-spaced, stapled, in 12-point font, paginated, and with 1-inch margins on all sides. Students are encouraged to use the Gallatin Writing Center. To make an appointment please visit:  http://nyu.edu/gallatin/writingschedule

**Late Assignments** -

Because we use class time to review our assignment drafts and discuss these, **all homework should be done on time**. Late drafts will not only bring down your ‘Class Participation’ grade, but will also diminish the review experience for your fellow students. Final drafts will be downgraded for every day they are late. If there are extenuating circumstances, please **notify me in advance** of the due date so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

**Grading** -

- Formal Assignment 1: Short Essay 15%
- Formal Assignment 2: Short Essay 15%
- Formal Assignment 3: Research Paper 30%
- Formal Assignment 4: Project Proposal 20%
- Response Papers 10%
- Class Participation 10%

**Academic Honesty** -

Plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty are very serious offenses and will not be tolerated in this course. Any act, deliberate or otherwise, will be reported immediately to the Gallatin administration for disciplinary action. More information about Gallatin’s expectations for academic integrity can be found in your NYU Gallatin Bulletin, page 110. You can download the bulletin at: http://www.nyu.edu/gallatin/pdf/GallatinBulletin.pdf.
Tentative Syllabus -

Students are assigned weekly readings and regular 1-2 page reading response papers that will be collected as part of an e-journal to ensure active participation in class discussions.

Week 1 – January 28 & 30

- Introduction to course
- CICI communication – overview

Week 2 – February 4 & 6

- Reading critically – deconstructing arguments
- 1-2 page reading response due
- Reading assignment: Physics for Future Presidents p. 247 - 346

Week 3 – February 11 & 13

- Thinking critically – constructing arguments
- 1-2 page reading response due
- Reading assignment: Something New Under the Sun Prologue + Intro & Conclusions to all chapters in Part One + All of Part II

Week 4 – February 18 & 20

- February 18th – Presidents’ Day
- Reviewing and editing techniques
- Draft for formal assignment #1 due February 20th
- February 20th: peer review workshop – draft of formal assignment #1
- Reading assignment: Rethinking Sustainability Intro & Ch. 1, 2, & 4; The Designers Atlas of Sustainability Part 1

Week 5 – February 25 & 27

- What are you writing about? - The importance of defining terms
- Formal assignment #1 due February 25th
- Reading assignment: Rethinking Sustainability Ch. 5 - 8

Week 6 – March 4 & 6

- Managing multiple perspectives
• Draft for formal assignment #2 due March 4th
• March 4th: peer review workshop – draft of formal assignment #2
• Reading assignment: The Designer’s Atlas of Sustainability Parts 2 - 5

Week 7 – March 11 & 13

• Finding your voice
• Formal assignment #2 due March 11th
• Reading assignment: Rethinking Sustainability Ch. 9 – 10 + Blackboard Reading Assignment

Week 8 – March 18 & 20

• SPRING BREAK

Week 9 – March 25 & 27

• Introduction to Library Research- Building a Bibliography
• Asking the “right” questions

Week 10 - April 1 & 3

• Thesis Development
• Annotated Bibliography Due April 1st
• Reading assignment: Blackboard Reading Assignment

Week 11 - April 8 & 10

• Thesis development Continued
• Draft for formal assignment #3 due April 8th
• April 8th: peer review workshop – draft of formal assignment #3

Week 12 - April 15 & 17

• Jumpstarting the writing process
• Formal assignment #3 due April 15th
• Reading assignment: Individual Library Research

Week 13 - April 22 & 24

• Applying your research locally
• Reading assignment: See Blackboard

Week 14 - April 29 & May 1

• Draft of formal assignment #4 due April 29th
• April 29th: peer review workshop – draft of formal assignment 4
• Reading assignment: Peer review outside of class

Week 15 – May 6 & 8

• Bringing it all together
• Formal assignment #4 due May 8th