

## **Policy, Law, & Ethics**

### **Course Overview and Policies**

Welcome to Professor Mike Bryson's Spring 2016 SUST 340 seminar, which addresses the relationship of sustainability to environmental policy, law, and ethics. This document provides an overview of the course's theme, goals, format, activities, and general requirements. For more detailed information, including our weekly schedule, key assignments and participation guidelines, and required readings, consult the [Syllabus](#) section of our course Blackboard (Bb) site. SUST 340 is an upper-level elective course in the Sustainability Studies major that may be taken as a social science general education requirement. Pre-requisite: ENG 102.

This course investigates some of the political, legal, and ethical dimensions of sustainability in the U.S. and around the world, featuring case studies in public policy, environmental law, and community activism. We will assess the impact of policies and laws upon communities, especially in urban areas, and the relevance of environmental policy and ethics to the critical imperatives of climate change, biodiversity loss, and toxic pollution. As we familiarize ourselves with the policy and ethical debates framing these vexing challenges, we will stress the critical analysis of texts, scientific data, legal frameworks, policy proposals, and ethical arguments. In the process, the principles of environmental justice and goals of sustainable development will serve as our foundational critical perspective.

### **Learning Objectives for SUST 340**

- Understand the complex relationships among environmental policy, law, and ethics -- and how, in turn, they function within the broad analytic framework of sustainability.
- Gain in-depth knowledge about impediments to and strategies for important international sustainable development goals such as climate change mitigation, wilderness preservation, regulation of toxins, and biodiversity conservation.
- Analyze the relevance of scale -- from local to regional to national to global -- in developing environmental policy in response to sustainability imperatives.
- Apply principles of environmental justice and social equity to the critique of environmental policies and regulations.
- Articulate the characteristics and causes of environmental racism with respect to global climate change, toxic contamination, and political structures.
- Hone skills in critical interpretation of texts, data compilation and analysis, writing and revising documents for academic and public audiences, public communication and presentation, and team-based sustainability project planning/implementation.
- Understand the relevance of policy and ethics within Roosevelt's Strategic Sustainability Plan and STARS Report and their potential to advance sustainability literacy and a conservation culture at the university.
- Work collaboratively and creatively to develop a "teach-in" activity designed to raise environmental awareness and inspire student engagement during RU's Earth Week 2016.
- Increase one's level of personal and ethical engagement with environmental policy issues of current and future relevance.

## Tentative Weekly Schedule at a Glance

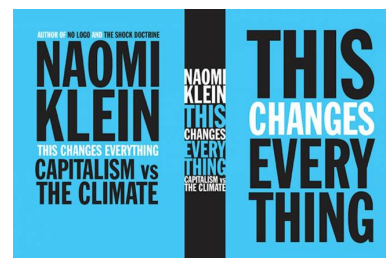
Subject to revision as needed

Week	Discussion Topic	Assignment Due	Special Event / Class Activity
1 -- Jan 26	Introduction to SUST 340		
2 -- Feb 2	Env Justice & Sustainable Dvlpmt	Start Weekly DB Posts	
Part One -- Climate Change: Science, Policy, and the Search for Global Justice			
3 -- Feb 9	What Happened in Paris		
4 -- Feb 16	Climate Change I	Organization Analysis Paper	
5 -- Feb 23	Climate Change II		Brainstorm Teach-In topics
6 -- Mar 1	Climate Change III		Assign Teach-In groups by interest
7 -- Mar 8	Spring Break		
Part Two -- Pollution: Waste, Toxicity, and the Public Trust			
8 -- Mar 15	Waste & Environmental Racism	Library Resource Paper	Guest Lecture: Carl Zimring
9 -- Mar 22	Air, Water, and Toxins		
10 -- Mar 29	What Happened in Flint	Teach-In Plan	Class meets on Bb site
Part Three -- Biodiversity: All Creatures Great and Small			
11 -- Apr 5	Species Threatened & Endangered		
12 -- Apr 12	City Creatures	Policy & Justice Essay (draft)	Guest Lecture: Gavin Van Horn*
13 -- Apr 19	Sustainability Teach-In at RU!	Teach-In Group Project	Earth Week
14 -- Apr 26	Biodiversity & Wilderness		SUST Symposium (4/27)
15 -- May 3	Biophilia & the Land Ethic		
16 -- May 10	Finals Week	Policy & Justice Essay (revision)	*To be confirmed

## Textbook Information

**Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate*.** (Simon & Schuster, 2015, paper, ISBN 1451697392). Available at the RU Bookstore, Wabash Building.

**E. O. Wilson, *The Future of Life*.** (Vintage, 2003, paper, ISBN 0679768114). Available at the RU Bookstore, Wabash Building



## Seminar Format and Classroom Expectations

This class is a seminar, which places a premium on critical thinking, interactive discussion, class participation, writing, and research. Our small size and hands-on learning approach mean that **each of you will play a vital role in the class as scholar and active participant**. Consequently, my expectations are high for engaged, thoughtful, and regular participation. Please note these important classroom guidelines:

- Attend every class session. There is no substitute for good attendance.
- Turn phones/devices to silent mode during class to avoid interruptions.
- Close laptops unless we're working on something together (email and Facebook can wait).
- Come to class prepared to discuss all of the assigned readings.
- Check your RU student email account several times per week to stay hip (to the syllabus, that is).

## Requirements and Key Assignments

This class is 16 weeks in duration (which includes Spring Break and Finals) and has a distinct weekly rhythm. Required readings include our assigned texts, websites, and/or documents available in the **Readings** section of our Bb site. You should also access the following online information resources:

- Subscribe to the [SUST at RU blog](#) and the [Schaumburg's Sustainable Future blog](#)
- Like" the [SUST Facebook page](#) (if you're a Facebook user)
- Register on the [AASHE website](#) and e-subscribe to the [AASHE Bulletin](#)

In addition to regular and engaged **Class Participation** during all class activities and discussions, our class also requires several key writing/research/presentation assignments:

- **Weekly Post** (3-5 sentences) to the Discussion Board on our Bb site prior to each class session: connects the assigned readings with a news source, website, document, or other relevant source of interest
- **Organization Analysis Paper** (4-5 pages): select an environmental organization (local, state, national, or international) and systematically describe/assess its work on promoting sustainability, advancing environmental policy and/or law, and/or exploring ethics.
- **Library Resource Paper** (4-5 pages): identify, summarize, and assess five sources on a policy issue or problem within one of our key themes (e.g., climate change, biodiversity, pollution, environmental justice, campus or community activism)
- **Policy & Justice Essay** (5-7 pages): analysis of a past or present environmental policy issue, problem, or debate. Describes legal context/implications and explicitly addresses issues of ethics and environmental (in)justice. **Draft** and **revision** required.
- **Earth Week Teach-In Project**: group-based campus engagement project in which teams select a sustainability-related issue about which to raise awareness and inspire action during Earth Week at RU. Topics can range from educating the RU community about climate change, water quality, alternative energy, sustainable food, and/or recycling/composting; to raising awareness about environmental injustices; to promoting a campus culture of conservation and sustainability; etc. The goal is to use the public platform of Earth Week to increase environmental literacy at RU and inspire ethical reflection/activism. The Project requires a group-authored **plan**, an RU-based **event/display** during Earth Week, and a 1-page **handout**.

## Contact Information

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AUD 829 (office hours on Tues and Wed 10:30am-1:30pm)

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<http://blogs.roosevelt.edu/mbryson> (faculty website)

**Email ([mbryson@roosevelt.edu](mailto:mbryson@roosevelt.edu)) is the best way to get in touch with me;** cellphone is next best. My office hours are published in our 340 Bb site as well as on the Contact page on my faculty website. Tuesdays I'm generally in AUD 829 from 10:30am-1:30pm unless scheduled for a faculty meeting.

I am available for a campus-based or phone appointment, should you have questions or feel like you need some individualized help beyond what I can provide in the classroom. Keeping up is vitally important in this class, for our schedule is both tight and complex. Please do not disappear! I check my email and voicemail regularly, and I do my best to return messages within 24 hours during the work week. Remember that there's no substitute for regular participation and timely submission of your assignments.

### **Accommodation of Persons with Disabilities**

"The University will provide reasonable accommodations to students or applicants with documented disabilities in compliance with all local, state and federal laws and University policies and procedures.

"Students with documented disabilities who wish to receive accommodations and/or services should notify the University as soon as possible. Students should contact the Office of Disability Services, at (312) 341-3810 for the Chicago Campus or (847) 619-8846 for the Schaumburg Campus, and provide documentation of their disabilities and their requests for accommodations/services to this office.

Reasonable accommodations will be determined on a case-by-case basis."

(RU Student Handbook, p. 113).

### **Accommodation of Students for Religious Holidays**

"Roosevelt University respects the rights of students to observe major religious holidays and will make accommodations, upon request, for such observances. Students who wish to observe religious holidays must inform their instructors in writing within the first two weeks of each semester of their intent to observe the holiday so that alternative arrangements convenient to both students and faculty can be made at the earliest opportunity. Students who make such arrangements by the deadline will not be required to attend classes or take examinations on the designated days, and faculty must provide reasonable opportunities for such students to make up missed work and examinations. However, all work missed for such absences, including papers and examinations, must be made up. Students who do not arrange for excused absences by the deadline are not entitled to such accommodations."

(RU Student Handbook, p. 112).

Updated 27 January 2016