

**UNST 421 Capstone**  
**EcoDistrict**  
Summer 2012  
T//Th 11:45 – 12:35  
URBN 311

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## Course Syllabus

### Course Description:

This course is designed to give students an opportunity to learn about and become involved in the development of the SoMa EcoDistrict initiative. At this point, many of the goals and actions that have occurred within the SoMa EcoDistrict have been connected to Portland State University (PSU) and the PSU Climate Action Plan. As a result, students will also be given significant background on the Climate Action Plan and PSU's efforts to implement it. Students will be introduced to basic concepts and practices related to EcoDistrict in general and specifically work to develop the University EcoDistrict. Students will then directly participate in a campus project that will provide a base of experience for furthering the learning and appreciation for the work that goes into developing the EcoDistrict concept within the south downtown

### Overview

The Portland Metro EcoDistrict concept is a valuable and engaging framework for providing students with real-world projects that help demonstrate the concepts of systems thinking and sustainability. This class will focus on providing students with the history and present-day state of the work on EcoDistricts in Portland, as well as real and powerful ways to engage with the development of *their* EcoDistrict – the University District. By the end of the class students will have worked within groups on a place-based sustainability project, gained a strong understanding urban sustainability practices within a district concept, and also increased their literacy around sustainability and systems thinking.

### Partners

The main partner for this class will be the Campus Sustainability Office (CSO), who oversees sustainability initiatives throughout the PSU campus. CSO will be a resource for helping direct projects, identify resources for implementation and gauge feasibility. The Climate Action Plan Implementation Team (CAPIT!) – a cross University group accountable for advancing CAP goals – will also be a resource for helping the class access information and understand project barriers and opportunities. Lastly, the management group at University Pointe (the new housing unit being built at PSU) will be engaged with the project and invited to the final presentations of the groups.

### Guiding Principles

To maximize the applicability of the student projects and the overall learning experience, the following principles will be followed:

- There will be a conscientious effort to push students to think about the district-wide applicability of the PSU sustainability interventions
- Transparency strategies around resource and human flows will be a continual focus
- Continuous thought will be given to how this can serve as a long-term model that engages multiple faculty and departments
- Since the students will be broken into project team, an effort will be made to ensure that learning occurs across those the work done in each team, and not simply within them

## **Course Elements**

**Reading assignments and Class Discussion:** Selected readings from books, journals and on-line sources will be available for the students to assist in completing the projects. These will be made available through D2L– PSU Online. In addition, discussion prompts will be provided in advance of class for students to prepare for discussion.

**Class journal and final reflection:** students are to keep a journal to reflect on service and learning throughout the term. In addition, there will be a final reflection essay on the learning and experience from the Capstone

**Work in teams:** Students will work in assigned teams to complete the projects for the capstone. Each student is expected to be an active contributor to completing the field work for the team. Each student is expected to be equally involved in preparing and presenting the final presentation or product to the community partners.

**Scheduled class and team meetings:** Due to the limited time for the course, it is essential that students attend **each** scheduled class. In addition to scheduled class each team will be responsible for scheduling and attending team meetings.

**Field research:** Students will participate in two collaborative field research projects designed to add to the information and dissemination of information of EcoDistricts.

**Required team project work:** Since the major part of this course involves work on field projects, students are expected to complete on average approximately **6 hours per week total** of work on community projects in addition to class time spent with your project teams (usually on Thursdays).

## **Student responsibilities and grading guidelines:**

Students will have both class and project team responsibilities:

**A. Class responsibilities.** Each individual student will be responsible for the following:

1. **Class Attendance and Participation:** Students are responsible to attend all class meetings and project team meetings with partners. The first two weeks the entire class will meet on Tuesday and Thursday. After that the entire class will generally meet at the scheduled time on Thursday. In most weeks students will be requested to read material available either through D2L or through a web-link. In these cases students are expected to be fully prepared to engage the material that has been read in the class discussions or exercises. To help prepare for class discussion and participation students will post journal entries on readings and class work each week. Tuesday class sessions will mostly be for project team meetings. These meetings are to be scheduled by the team. This time can also be used as time to work on the team project. See class schedule.
2. **Class Journal:** Students are to make weekly entries into a reflection journal). Journal reflection entries are to be in response to readings, guest speakers and team project work (see class schedule). In some cases specific prompts will be given and posted in D2L Dropbox instructions. When there is no specific journal entry prompt, the entry is to consist of three parts:
  - (1) **What** – a main take-away;
  - (2) **So-what** – why this take-away has some particular importance and/or value to the learning and work of the class; and
  - (3) **Now What** – how this is going to help guide future work/learning in the class.

Journal entries are to be approximately 250 words and will be made on placed in the ‘dropbox’ on D2L by Thursday 11:00 AM each week beginning June 28 and ending August 9, 2012

3. Final Essay: each student will write a final essay that reflects on the accomplishments and learning of the Capstone experience. The final essay will be approximately 500 words and will be submitted in the 'dropbox' on D2L. Specific prompts for the final essay will be posted in D2L Dropbox instructions.

## **B. Capstone project responsibilities**

Each student will participate on a project team with other students on a University Pilot EcoDistrict project. The focus of the project for this term is to develop a strategy and action plan for informing and engaging new residents in University Pointe at College Station residence hall on the PSU campus. Each project team will develop 3 alternative proposals to address the project goals and choose one of the project proposal ideas to fully develop a plan of action. (See attached project outline and guidelines).

### **Grading criteria for individual class responsibilities (50% of total grade)**

- ◆ Regularity of class attendance
- ◆ Engagement and involvement in class discussions and exercises
- ◆ Thoughtfulness and overall quality of journal entries.
- ◆ Quality of final reflection essay

### **Grading criteria for team project responsibilities (50% of the total grade)**

- ◆ Overall quality of project outcomes
- ◆ Peer review
- ◆ Successful team performance
- ◆ Quality your final team project proposal and presentation.

## Timeline and Class Schedule

**(Please note: the schedule may change due to any adaptations required in the community projects)**

Week 1:	Tues 6/26	Introductions; review of course material, assignments and schedule. Review EcoDistrict concept and initiative on Campus;
	Thurs 6/28	Guest speaker: Walsh Construction and Sera Architects <b>Readings due:</b> <i>EcoDistrict Framework Document</i> ; and <i>Making EcoDistricts</i> (pages 1-5, 23-59); <b>Journal Entry Due:</b> reflection on reading
Week 2:	Tues 7/3	Tour: University Pointe and University EcoDistrict <b>Readings due:</b> South of Market Pilot Report and PSU' Climate Action Plan (pg 1-26 and one of the strategy sections (buildings and energy, travel, commuting or materials management) (see D2L
	Thurs 7/5	Presentation: Past classes and campus sustainability <b>Reading due:</b> <i>Environment and Urbanization BedZED</i> (see D2L) <b>Assignment Due:</b> bring one example of initiative to increase resident awareness/engagement in sustainable urban neighborhoods from internet <b>Journal Entry Due:</b> reflection on tour and reading
Week 3:	Tues 7/10	Team meetings to develop project proposals
	Thurs 7/12	Guest speakers: Chris North (sustainability and graphic design) Darrell Brown (business and sustainability) <b>Reading due:</b> <i>The social aspects of sustainability</i> (see D2L) <b>Journal Entry Due:</b> reflection on reading
Week 4:	Tues 7/17	Teams meetings (finalize 3 alternative project proposals)
	Thurs 7/19	Teams to present project proposals <b>Journal Entry Due:</b> reflection on team project work; class assessment
Week 5:	Tues 7/24	Team meetings (finalize priority project proposal)
	Thurs 7/26	Teams to present final project proposal selected <b>Reading due:</b> <i>Environmentally sustainable cities</i> (see D2L) <b>Journal Entry Due:</b> reflection on reading
Week 6:	Tues 7/31	Class Meeting – Important note schedule change <b>Reading Due:</b> <i>What is sustainability economics?</i> (Baumgärtner) (see D2L) Due: Review Proposal Examples (see D2L) <b>Journal Entry Due:</b> reflection on reading
	Thurs 8/2	Team meetings
Week 7:	Tues 8/7	Team meetings
	Thurs 8/9	Review team project work; preparation for final presentation <b>Journal Entry Due:</b> reflection on status of project and team work
Week 8:	Tues 8/14	Teams to present draft final presentation
	Thurs 8/16	<b>Final Project Presentations</b> Final project proposal and final essay due

## Team Project Description and Guidelines

**Learning Goals:** Understanding and appreciating (1) the importance of *resident*\* awareness and participation in advancing sustainability in urban neighborhoods; (2) effective ways to inform and engage *residents*; and (3) skills needed to develop effective strategies to meet goals.

**Goal:** to explore approaches that support and promote *resident* awareness of and involvement in the University EcoDistrict

**Objectives:** (1) develop alternative means for resident education and engagement; (2) provide analysis and assessment of most cost effective and feasible approaches; and (3) plan and develop a proposal for a pilot demonstration initiative.

\**Resident* definition: “one who resides in a particular place permanently or for an extended period” (Webster)

### **Project Work Guidelines**

**Phase I:** Alternative project proposal development and presentation

Each team to develop 3 possible projects for implementation to provide information and opportunities for engagement of residents in advancing the goals of the University EcoDistrict

Each project proposal is to be written using the following format.

**A. Description:** summary of deliverables (200-300 words)

**B. Justification:** criteria for evaluating project proposal (200-300 words each section)

*1. Why*

- Timeliness: current opportunities and conditions
- Relevance: how project addresses goals of ED and University mission)
- Potential impact: how project meets EcoDistrict performance standards; what are student opportunities for education/experience/job skills

*2. How and when*

- Method of delivery/accomplishment of deliverables
- How potential challenges/barriers can/will be overcome

*3. How much*

- What is required to implement (funding, support, cooperation, etc)
- Funding/support potentially available
- How long term requirements can be met (i.e., maintenance, updating, etc)

**C. Team Priority:** how and why the team ranks each project (100 words)

Make presentation to class/community partners on proposals for possible projects (**July 17**)

Based on the feedback and further analysis, present project selected for final proposal development and why it was selected (**July 24**)

**Phase II:** Priority project proposal development and presentations

Develop a plan and project proposal for pilot demonstration initiative as follows:

- Executive summary: (1 page)
- Project description and deliverables (2 pages)
- Importance of project (timeliness, relevance and potential impact) (2-3 pages)
- Implementation plan and timeline (2 pages)
- Budget and identification of funding/partner support required (1-2 pages)
- Attachments: (1) Example(s)/prototype(s); (2) partner letters of support

Present a draft of final presentation in class (**August 14**)

Make final presentation to community partners and submit written proposal (**August 16**)