THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO INCLUDE SUSTAINABILITY IN A COURSE

All courses which apply for the SUS (sustainability) attribute must include at least two sustainability learning outcomes, 1) the core learning outcome that “students will be able to comprehend the interconnections between environmental, social, and economic systems in relation to sustainability,” and 2) a discipline specific sustainability learning outcome. Below are examples of sustainability inclusion in courses taught by faculty in this year’s CoP.

1) A German Course – FL 3160

German Literature and the Supernatural,
The Big Question: “How have German texts portrayed the natural world as strange, magical, or dangerous, and how has this affected cultural attitudes toward other species and natural resources?”

As part of the course’s sustainability focus, students will be able to apply the texts read in class to comprehend the interconnection between environmental, social, and economic systems in relation to sustainability. With each reading, we will discuss ecological discourse and representation, not only in literature, but also in its adaptations as music, art, and film. We will also investigate the ways in which culture, religion, and philosophy have shaped literary treatments of the “natural” and “supernatural,” and how those treatments have manifested in eco-political form (for example, the consequences of Nazi “blood and soil” ideology).

2) A Math Course – MATH 1050

The Big Question for this course is, “To what extent is statistics able to make statistical conclusions (or measure) on issues relating to sustainability, and what do these decisions mean for our society?”

I have provided real data sets on global warming in the SLC area, gender discrimination, pollution and mortality (by city) so that students may use statistical decisions to comprehend the interconnection between environmental, social, and economic systems in relation to sustainability. With each reading, we will discuss ecological discourse and representation, both in literature, but also in its adaptations as music, art, and film. We will also investigate the ways in which culture, religion, and philosophy have shaped literary treatments of the “natural” and “supernatural,” and how those treatments have manifested in eco-political form (for example, the consequences of Nazi “blood and soil” ideology).

WHY TEACH SUSTAINABILITY?

In an effort to make both the present and the future vibrant, equitable, and sustainable, we need to foster a culture of sustainability on our campus and, by extension, in our wider communities, so that it becomes a lens of habit in the way we live our lives. A “culture of sustainability” implies a recognition of the interconnections and interdependencies of human and natural systems. Our health, economy, and society need healthy ecosystems in order to thrive.

It is vital that sustainability education be included in courses found across the curriculum so our students are aware that the decisions we make in our daily lives at school, work, home and at play all have impacts on our household, local, regional and global contexts (environmental, social, and economic). And, similarly, that we are all affected by the quality of our air, food, and water, as well as the infrastructure and amenities available to us (e.g., mass transit, housing), and the policies that govern and regulate our society.

Teaching sustainability in an array of courses will increase students’ awareness and comprehension that healthy human societies are fostered and supported through a complex web of interconnections between their physical, social and economic dimensions. Sustainability-includes courses will equip students to recognize their own position of power and better enable them to apply their skills and understanding to address the sustainability challenges we face both at home and in the global arena.

FACILITATING THE INCLUSION OF SUSTAINABILITY

Explore and Share Together

One approach to foster the inclusion of sustainability in more courses across campus is through faculty participation in an 8-session “Sustainability Community of Practice” (CoP) over the academic year. This group provides an engaging, supportive, and rewarding way for faculty to come together with others from an array of disciplines to explore sustainability education. The 2019-2020 CoP has been facilitated by faculty peers (from Geography, Sociology, Economics and Education) who have engaged in sustainability teaching and training. Sessions include:

• Definitions of sustainability, in its most expansive sense;
• Intersectional points of connection and relevance across the curricular landscape;
• Connections to our place: campus, community and region;
• Possible brief content area presentations (particularly relevant to our locality/region);
• Reflection;
• Dialogue and sharing of resources, challenges and solutions with fellow faculty from an array of disciplines across campus; and
• Time to workshop, learn and implement with colleagues a step-wise process to help include sustainability in a course (the articulation of learning outcomes, the collection of resources and strategies for assessment).

Reward and Recognize

The faculty who attend at least 7 of the 8 CoP sessions and successfully apply during the spring semester to have one or more of their courses listed with the SUS course attribute (which indicates that a course includes sustainability in some way) are eligible for a $750 honorarium at the end of the academic year. Support for these “Sustainability Faculty Fellows” comes from a Presidential Innovative Teaching Award and the Sustainability Practices and Research Center.