School of Environmental and Life Sciences

ENVS3006: Surviving the Anthropocene: Sustainability in the 21st Century

Callaghan

Semester 1 - 2025

THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE AUSTRALIA

COURSE OUTLINE

www.newcastle.edu.au

CRICOS Provider 00109J

OVERVIEW

Course Description

In contrast to the past 12,000 years of the Holocene's relative stability, the Anthropocene refers to the profound and accelerating human transformations of the earth's climate and environment. However, while it is necessary to acknowledge the accelerating global impact of humanity on our world, we also must recognise that such changes are not universal. Rather the Anthropocene produces and reproduces unequal geographies of political, social, cultural and economic relations. This course takes up the challenge proposed by philosophers, social scientists and scientists who argue that nothing less than a transformation of society is needed to move us towards a sustainable future. To respond to this challenge, students will critically examine conceptual, ethical and practical tools for rethinking and determining measures of sustainability. Insights from complexity theory, contemporary social thought, and non-western knowledges that can provide ways of reimagining cities, agriculture, everyday life, consumption and waste will provide opportunities for students to examine and evaluate current and proposed pathways and processes of transformation towards sustainability. Previous course title - Sustainability: Theory and Practice

Academic Progress Requirements

Nil

Requisites

Course Replacement:
You cannot enrol if you have successfully completed any of the following course(s): EMGT3070

Assumed Knowledge

ENVS1004 (previously EMGT1020) and ENVS2008 (previously EMGT2020) are recommended. Students enrolled in the B Arts program - Human Geography and the Environment Major, must have successfully completed GEOG1020 and GEOG2080, OR at least 20 units of 3000 level directed courses from this major.

Contact Hours

Callaghan
Field Study
Face to Face Off Campus
11 hour(s) per term
Week/date to be advised. This includes field laboratories and computer laboratories conducted during an intensive field trip.
Lecture
Online
2 hour(s) per week(s) for 11 week(s)
Online Modules.
Tutorial
Face to Face On Campus
1 hour(s) per week(s) for 11 week(s)

Unit Weighting Workload

10
Students are required to spend on average 120-140 hours of effort (contact and non-contact) including assessments per 10 unit course.

CONTACTS

Course Coordinator

Callaghan
A/Pr Michelle Duffy
Michelle.Duffy@newcastle.edu.au
(02) 4921 5097
Consultation: Please email Michelle to schedule an appointment

Teaching Staff

Other teaching staff will be advised on the course Canvas site.

School Office

School of Environmental and Life Sciences
Room C228 Chemistry Building
Callaghan
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9am-5pm (Mon-Fri)

SYLLABUS

Course Content

Topics will be chosen from:

1. Introduction to contested notions of sustainability and sustainable development
2. Critical review of the history and theoretical basis of sustainability
3. Ethical stances for sustainability
4. Sustainability theory, including non-western knowledge systems, complexity theory and contemporary social theory
5. Rethinking sustainability case studies, including agriculture, cities, everyday life, consumption, waste, and food.
6. Assessment of sustainability initiatives and critical analysis of sustainability indicators
7. Pathways and possibilities for sustainable futures

Course Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of this course, students will be able to:

1. Explain and critically evaluate contested notions of sustainable development, and develop their own concept of sustainability with reference to values, policies and futures;
2. Analyse current attempts to implement sustainability at local, regional and global levels;
3. Use and critically evaluate indicators of sustainability;
4. Analyse and comment on major issues in sustainability such as cities, agriculture, waste, and food lifestyle and consumption issues;
5. Apply key insights from complexity theory, contemporary social theory, non-western perspectives and transdisciplinary thinking to major issues in sustainability;
6. Engage constructively with diverse groups in building more sustainable futures.

Course Materials

Other Resources:

- Students are expected to attend one of the class field trips scheduled in either week 3 (Friday 14 March 2025) OR week 4 (Friday 21 March 2025). Students will be assigned one of these field trip schedules at the beginning of semester.
  PLEASE NOTE: Attending the field trip is necessary for completion of two of the course's assessment: Assessment 2 (field trip report) and Assessment 3 (sustainability report)

SCHEDULE

Week	Week Begins	Topic	Learning Activity	Assessment Due
1	24 Feb	What is the Anthropocene?	Required readings Tutorial	Online activity due MONDAY 3 MARCH 2025
2	3 Mar	Sustainability: History, Key Concepts & Contested Definitions	Required readings Tutorial	Online activity due MONDAY 10 MARCH 2025
3	10 Mar	Field trip GROUP 1: FRIDAY 14 MARCH	Tutorial - important for field trip preparation Field trip	No online activity
4	17 Mar	Field trip GROUP 2: FRIDAY 21 MARCH	Tutorial - important for field trip preparation Field trip	No online activity
5	24 Mar	Living in Denial	Required readings Tutorial	Online activity due MONDAY 31 March 2025
6	31 Mar	Questioning the Role of Think Tanks, Politics & the Media in Climate Change Denial	Required readings Tutorial	Online activity due MONDAY 7 APRIL 2025
7	7 Apr	Questioning the Ethics of Sustainability & Sustainable Development	Required readings Tutorial	Online activity due MONDAY 14 APRIL 2025 Field trip workbook due: FRIDAY 11 APRIL 2025
Recess				
Recess				
8	28 Apr	Rethinking Human-Planet Relations	Required readings Tutorial	Online activity due MONDAY 5 May 2025
9	5 May	Sustaining our Worlds	Required readings Tutorial	Online activity due MONDAY 12 MAY 2025
10	12 May	Rethinking Consumption	Required readings Tutorial	Online activity due MONDAY 19 MAY 2025
11	19 May	Rethinking Waste	Required readings Tutorial	Online activity due MONDAY 26 MAY 2025 Group presentation due: Friday 23 MAY 2025
12	26 May	Transforming for the Future: Now What?	Required readings Tutorial	Online activity due MONDAY 2 JUNE 2025
13	2 Jun	Independent study		Final report due FRIDAY 6 JUNE 2025
Exams				
Exams				

ASSESSMENTS

This course has 4 assessments. Each assessment is described in more detail in the sections below.

	Assessment Name	Due Date	Involvement	Weighting	Learning Outcomes
1	Group Presentation	FRIDAY 23 May 2025	Group	20%	2, 4, 6
2	Field Trip Report	FRIDAY 11 April 2025	Individual	30%	2, 3, 6
3	Sustainability Report	FRIDAY 6 June 2025	Individual	40%	2, 3, 5
4	Online Quizzes	Students have one week to complete each quiz. For example, week 1 quiz is to be completed by 5pm Monday 3 March 2025. Full schedule of due dates is provided in this document's schedule as well as on the Canvas site.	Individual	10%	1, 2, 3, 4

Late Submissions The mark for an assessment item submitted after the designated time on the due date, without an approved extension of time, will be reduced by 10% of the possible maximum mark for that assessment item for each day or part day that the assessment item is late. Note: this applies equally to week and weekend days.

Assessment 1 - Group Presentation

Assessment Type Presentation
Purpose Opportunity to reflect on course learning and critically consider the University's responses to sustainability and climate change
Description Refer to assessment guidelines in Assessment folder on Canvas
Weighting 20%
Length Short presentation (3 PPT slides, 5 minutes)
Due Date Friday 23 May 2025
Submission Method In Class
Assessment Criteria Refer to marking rubric
Return Method Online
Feedback Provided In Class
Opportunity to Reattempt Students will not be given the opportunity to reattempt this assessment.

Assessment 2 - Field Trip Report

Assessment Type Log / Workbook
Purpose The field trip focuses on the challenges of climate change faced by communities, environments and industry in the Hunter region, NSW, and how these challenges are being addressed. Students are expected to collect a range of data and material that will be the basis for a separate assessment, the Sustainability Report.
Description Refer to assessment guidelines in Assessment folder on Canvas
Weighting 30%
Length 3000 words
Due Date FRIDAY 11 April 2025
Submission Method Online
Assessment Criteria Refer to marking rubric
Return Method Online
Feedback Provided Online - 3 weeks after submission.
Opportunity to Reattempt Students will not be given the opportunity to reattempt this assessment.

Assessment 3 - Sustainability Report

Assessment Type	Report
Purpose	In this field trip report your task is to expand on one (1) specific challenge and response to climate change that you identified while on the field trip.
Description	Refer to assessment guidelines in Assessment folder on Canvas
Weighting	40%
Length	2000 words
Due Date	FRIDAY 6 June 2025
Submission Method	Online
Assessment Criteria	Refer to marking rubric
Return Method	Online
Feedback Provided	Online - 3 weeks after submission.
Opportunity to Reattempt	Students will not be given the opportunity to reattempt this assessment.

Assessment 4 - Online Quizzes

Assessment Type	Quiz
Purpose	To assist with comprehension of required readings
Description	Refer to assessment guidelines in Assessment folder on Canvas
Weighting	10%
Length	short answers
Due Date	Students have one week to complete each quiz. For example, week 1 quiz is to be completed by 5pm Monday 3 March 2025. Full schedule of due dates is provided in this document's schedule as well as on the Canvas site.
Submission Method	Online
Assessment Criteria	Refer to marking rubric
Return Method	Online
Feedback Provided	Online - PLEASE NOTE: students may reattempt this assessment within the week the quiz is open.
Opportunity to Reattempt	Students will be given the opportunity to reattempt this assessment.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Grading Scheme

This course is graded as follows:

Range of Marks	Grade	Description
85-100	High Distinction (HD)	Outstanding standard indicating comprehensive knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of an outstanding level of academic achievement; mastery of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives.
75-84	Distinction (D)	Excellent standard indicating a very high level of knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of a very high level of academic ability; sound development of skills*; and achievement of all assessment objectives.
65-74	Credit (C)	Good standard indicating a high level of knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of a high level of academic achievement; reasonable development of skills*; and achievement of all learning outcomes.
50-64	Pass (P)	Satisfactory standard indicating an adequate knowledge and understanding of the relevant materials; demonstration of an adequate level of academic achievement; satisfactory development of skills*; and achievement of all learning outcomes.
0-49	Fail (FF)	Failure to satisfactorily achieve learning outcomes. If all compulsory course components are not completed the mark will be zero. A fail grade may also be awarded following disciplinary action.

*Skills are those identified for the purposes of assessment task(s).

Attendance

Attendance/participation will be recorded in the following components:

- Field Study (Method of recording: A roll will be taken)

PLEASE NOTE there is a cost for bus hire of approximately $25-30

Communication Methods

Communication methods used in this course include:

- Canvas Course Site: Students will receive communications via the posting of content or announcements on the Canvas course site.
- Email: Students will receive communications via their student email account.
- Face to Face: Communication will be provided via face to face meetings or supervision.

Course Evaluation

Each year feedback is sought from students and other stakeholders about the courses offered in the University for the purposes of identifying areas of excellence and potential improvement.
As a result of student feedback, the following changes have been made to this offering of the course:

- Tutorials will assist students with the skills needed to prepare the field trip workbook and the final report.

Learning Analytics

The University uses an evidence-based approach to enhancing student learning and delivering support. Our careful analysis of data through learning analytics informs decision making processes related to student learning, academic outcomes, and support services. Learning analytics may be used to identify targeted individual opportunities for additional support services or interventions.

Interviews on Assessment Items

An Interview may be conducted on any assessment item in this course, in accordance with the Interview on Assessment Items Procedure. The purpose of the interview is to verify the author of the material submitted in response to the assessment task and provide a quality assurance measure.

In the event the Course Coordinator is not satisfied that a student's oral responses are

consistent with the work originally submitted, the matter will be referred to the Student Academic Conduct Officer, who will take appropriate action under the Student Conduct Rule.

Academic Integrity and Ethical Academic Conduct Policy

All students are required to meet the academic integrity standards of the University. These standards reinforce the importance of integrity and honesty in an academic environment. Academic Integrity policies apply to all students of the University in all modes of study and in all locations.

Please refer to the Academic Integrity and Ethical Academic Conduct Policy

Adverse Circumstances

The University acknowledges the right of students to seek consideration for the impact of allowable adverse circumstances that may affect their performance in assessment item(s).

Applications for special consideration due to adverse circumstances will be made using the online Adverse Circumstances system where:

1. the assessment item is a major assessment item; or
2. the assessment item is a minor assessment item and the Course Co-ordinator has specified in the Course Outline that students may apply the online Adverse Circumstances system;
3. you are requesting a change of placement; or
4. the course has a compulsory attendance requirement.

Before applying you must refer to the Adverse Circumstance Affecting Assessment Items Procedure.

Use of generative artificial intelligence in course assessments

It is critical that any work submitted for assessment is your own original work. Before using generative AI tools (such as ChatGPT, Perplexity, Microsoft Copilot, etc) in any assessable work you must ensure that such use is in line with the requirements for the course and expectations of your Course Coordinator

Misuse of AI tools may be considered a breach of the University's Student Conduct Rule and could result in disciplinary action.

Artificial Intelligence detection software may be used to review any work you submit. If you have used AI in any way other than has been expressly permitted by your course coordinator, you may be engaging in academic misconduct and be subject to penalties.

For information, refer to:

- Generative AI Tools
- Academic Integrity

Important Policy Information

The Help button in the Canvas Navigation menu contains helpful information for using the Learning Management System. Students should familiarise themselves with the policies and procedures at https://www.newcastle.edu.au/current-students/respect-at-uni/policies-and-procedures that support a safe and respectful environment at the University

This course outline was approved by the Head of School. No alteration of this course outline is permitted without Head of School approval. If a change is approved, students will be notified and an amended course outline will be provided in the same manner as the original.

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