Educational Policy Studies (EdPol 150): Climate Change and Sustainability Education (Spring 2017)

The fundamental premise of this course is that as the impacts of climate change accelerate, it will become increasingly urgent to think creatively and constructively about how educational policies and practices at all levels (from preschool through K-12 to graduate education) might better support a broader sustainability agenda. The course has been designed to be relevant for educational policy students; for those in teacher education programs; as well as for those interested in after-school and extra-curricular programs, public science communication, public policy, and sustainability planning.

Major themes include the history of climate science and the emerging scientific consensus; innovative approaches by public and private agencies to synthesizing and communicating climate science; and the social, psychological, and cultural dimensions of responding to the climate crisis. The heart of the course is a detailed analysis of innovative policies and programs in schools, colleges and universities throughout Wisconsin, the U. S., and worldwide. We will also make a special effort to analyze and contribute to Wisconsin’s pioneering heritage in conservation education and the analysis of climate change impacts.

Supplementary themes in the course will include the role of climate impact studies and sustainability in international development programs, indigenous people’s responses to the climate crisis, and university-based responses (in both facilities and programming) to climate impacts. We will also analyze climate change-based social movements and counter-movements, debates around environmental and climate justice, and climate-based religious movements. Finally, we will consider community-level and personal responses to the climate crisis, all as mediated through educational principles and practices.

This course will align with Sustainability Certificate learning outcomes through our consideration of long-term thinking and shifting baselines; evidence-based sustainability frameworks that have emerged from various disciplines; and multiple stakeholder thinking. We will analyze how our understanding of climate change has emerged over time and through complex processes of international cooperation (such as the IPCC), and how our understanding of human impacts on natural ecosystems has shaped climate studies. We will also describe and interpret sustainability education from local, regional and global perspectives.

The course can also be counted toward the undergraduate certificate in Educational Policy Studies (EPS).