DESCRIPTION

Overview
An innovative, collaborative, applied course and group practicum in environmental policy consultation at the global level. Linked via distance learning technologies with students in a parallel course at Wageningen University, the Netherlands, students will take up a semester-long consultancy project ('commission') with the Policy and Analysis Branch of the United Nations Division for Sustainable Development ('client'). Students will learn group consulting skills including issue definition and stakeholder identification; proposal preparation, team building and leadership skills; data collection, analysis and interpretation; report writing and presentation skills. With colleagues in the Netherlands, students will fulfill the client's Terms of Reference, producing and delivering an integrated set of natural or social science briefs for international policy makers related to the 2018 theme of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development: "Transformations Towards Sustainable and Resilient Societies". The specific Sustainable Development Goals to be covered under this theme are #6 (clean water and sanitation), #7 (affordable and clean energy), #11 (sustainable cities and communities), #12 (responsible consumption and production), and #15 (life on land).

Enrollment
An additional 1 cr is available to students electing to continue working with colleagues in the Netherlands through preparation and delivery of the final report (~ December 22).* Maximum enrollment: 10 students. Instructor's permission required.

* Note: all credit hours must be signed up for at the time of registration.
Requirements
As an applied, practical, teamwork-oriented course, students are expected to be actively engaged and take initiative as individuals and members of work teams, including:

- Regularly attend course sessions and participate in local and international work team sessions (on-, off-, and across-site, as needed);
- Complete background readings, write literature reviews, and carry out research activities;
- Communicate and work effectively with participants across and between sites, and with client contacts, as appropriate;
- Energetically engage with individual, local and international work team assignments; and
- Contribute to team, course, and inter-site project deliverables, as specified in the course syllabus & the client's detailed terms of reference.

Course Deliverables
As an applied studio course, the primary deliverables are specified in the client's detailed Terms of Reference. In addition, there will be several intermediate procedural and substantive internal deliverables, as specified below. Lastly, students will write two short reflective essays, communicating their personal goals and expectations for the course, and reflecting on their experience in the course, respectively.

Intermediate assignments
#1: Essay on goals for this course (Tues., 10/10)
#2: Presentation of preliminary proposal to client (Thurs., 10/12)
#3: Work teams preliminary briefs (Tues., 10/17)
#4: Complete revised proposal for client review (Thurs., 11/2)
#5: Completion of draft report (Tues., 12/5)
#6: Reflective essay on experience in the course (Fri., 12/22)

Grading
- Client evaluation of team products, 50%
- Instructor and peer evaluation of your contributions to the course & work teams, 30%
- Two short reflective essays on your personal goals for & experience in the course, 20%

Learning Outcomes
Upon successful completion of this course, each student should be able to:

- Collaboratively plan, develop and coordinate complex, multi-sited projects;
- Communicate effectively and professionally with external clients and scientific experts;
- Analyze environmental problems and policy options, including: issue definition and stakeholder identification;
- Collect, interpret, evaluate, and validate scientific and policy-oriented data and findings;
- Effectively communicate scientific and policy-oriented findings in written and oral forms; and
- Contribute to team building, coordination and communication, across multiple cultures and sites, and via multiple media.
Students will read extensively from literature related to Sustainable Development Goals and new, potentially high-impact scientific findings and technological solutions in the nexus of issues involving clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy, sustainable cities and communities, responsible consumption and production, and life on land. Also recommended:


Acknowledgments

Bettina Bluemling, Wageningen University (WUR); and Lei Zhang, Renmin University of China were integrally involved with the development and initial design of this course. The course has continued to develop and thrive with Machiel Lamers and Astrid Hendriksen at WUR. Our clients at the Policy and Analysis Branch of the United Nations, Alex Roehrl, Clovis Freire, and David O'Connor, have been enthusiastic supporters since 2013 & have been delightful to work with. Administrative officers at both ESF and WUR have been encouraging and helpful in the success of this project from the beginning. Jon Rubin, Director of the SUNY Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) Center, in New York City, has been a stalwart supporter of this course, as well. Funding for initial course development and technical consultation has been generously provided by Wageningen University, the Netherlands, through its "Small Projects for Innovation of Education and Distance Learning" grant program.

SCHEDULE*

I. Project Definition/ Launch

Week 1 – Introduction and Overview

Tues., 8/29: Course Introduction

Individual introductions

Introduction to the Client and Terms of Reference

REQUIRED:

Terms of Reference (ToR)

RECOMMENDED:


UN Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/)

* For this multi-sited, partially online, international course, now in its third year, all the usual and customary caveats about 'subject to change' remain applicable. A sincere 'thanks in advance' for everyone's patience as we work to establish and stabilize technological and institutional course environments.
**Thurs., 8/31: Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

*** Introduction by Dr. Myanna Lahsen (ML), Wageningen University ***

- Historical background
- Organizational structure
- Future plans/ trajectory

**REQUIRED:**

Terms of Reference (ToR)


**REVIEW:**


**RECOMMENDED:**


**ADDITIONAL:**


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**Week 2 – External Consulting: an Introduction**

**Tues., 9/5: Being an External Consultant: Roles and Expectations**

*** Skills Module #1: Project Planning & Development (DS) ***

**RECOMMENDED:**

- Thomas, ch. 1, "From managing change to managing surprise?"
- Thomas, ch. 2, "The art of client management"
- Thomas, ch. 4, "Managing initial client meetings"
- Thomas, ch. 5, "Understanding and defining the client's problem"

**Thurs., 9/7: IEPC Consultancy Goals and Organization**

- Follow-up Belbin team roles exercise
- Review Terms of Reference
- Review background documents
- Preparing for initial Client meeting

**REQUIRED:**

- Thomas, ch. 4, "Managing initial client meetings"

**REVIEW:**

Terms of Reference (handout)


Week 3 – Project Planning and Development

Tues., 9/12: Client Introduction

*** Client introduction: Live connection w/ UN DSD staff, re: ToR (invited) ***

REQUIRED:

Readings in the 'Horizon Scanning' folder on Blackboard

Thurs., 9/14: Refining Project Goals, Deliverables, Requirements

Review Terms of Reference
Focus on Sustainable Development Goals #6, 7, 11, 12, 15
The concepts of 'nexus', 'integrative', etc.
Project planning & organization (begin)

REVIEW:

Thomas, ch's 2, 5

II: Project Implementation & Client Buy-in

Week 4 – ESF Team Meetings

Tues., 9/19 & Thurs., 9/21

Project planning & organization

Week 5 – Work Team Meetings

Tues., 9/26: Work team meetings*

Form, begin meeting in ESF work teams

Thurs., 9/28: Work team meetings

Continue to organize, work in ESF work teams

Week 6 – Intercultural & Virtual Communication

Tues., 10/3: International Consulting – Collaboration Tools

*** Skills Module #2: Intercultural & Virtual Communication (ML) ***

Thurs., 10/5: Work team meetings

Meet in ESF work teams

Week 7 – Preliminary Proposal Presentation

Tues., 10/10: Work team meetings

Meet in ESF work teams

* Work teams will meet during and, as needed, outside regular the class time, in fulfillment of client's Terms of Reference.
*** Assignment #1 due: Essay on goals for this course ***

Thurs., 10/12: Presentation of preliminary proposal to client
  Virtual meeting w/ Client, via Skype
*** Assignment #2 due: Presentation of proposal to client ***

Week 8 – Preparing for International Collaboration

Tues., 10/17: Follow-up from client presentation/ revise proposal
*** Assignment #3 due: Work teams preliminary briefs ***

Thurs., 10/19: Advance work for Tuesday's meeting
  Preparing for Tuesday's inaugural meeting with WUR student participants

III: International Collaboration/ Data Collection & Analysis

Week 9 – Joint meetings

[Mon., 10/23: Course starts at Wageningen University (WUR)]

Tues., 10/24: ESF-WUR live connection (08.00 NY; 14.00 NL)
  Individual & work team/ project introductions
  Joint preparation for meeting w/ client

Thurs., 10/26: Joint meeting w/ client (invited)
  Progress on ToR; WUR student intros to client; client overview of ToR

Week 10 – Project Planning, Development & Organization II

Tues., 10/31: Preparing Formal, Written Reports

  RECOMMENDED:
  Thomas, ch. 7, "Presenting client feedback"

*** Skills Module #3: Client Communication (DS) ***

Thurs., 11/2: International work team (IWT) meetings (online)*

*** Assignment #4 due: Complete revised proposal for client review ***

Week 11 – Project Planning, Development & Organization III

Tues., 11/7: Joint meeting w/ client (invited)

  Individual & work team/ project introductions

*** Meeting with client ***

* International work teams (IWTs) will meet during the regular class time and, as needed, also out of class, in fulfillment of client terms of reference.
Thurs., 11/9: IWT meetings (online)*

**Week 12 – Data Collection/ Report Outlining (work teams)**

Tues., 11/4: IWT meetings (online)
Thurs., 11/16: IWT meetings (online)
Outline final report

**Thanksgiving break**

[WUR: Begin drafting final report]

**Week 13 – Data Analysis (work teams)**

Tues., 11/28: IWT meetings (online)
Thurs., 11/30: IWT meetings (online)

**IV: Report Writing/ Presentation of Results**

**Week 14 – Presentation of Preliminary Results; Finalization of Report**

Tues., 12/5: Review and discussion (in person & online)

*** Review and discussion of draft report (across sites) ***

*** Assignment #5 due: Completion of draft report ***

Thurs., 12/7: Presentation of preliminary results to client

*** Assignment #6 due (3 cr): Reflective essay on experience in the course ***

**Week 15 – Submission of Final Report**

[ESF extended period begins – 4 cr students only]

**Weeks of 12/11 & 12/18, TBA**

*** Client feedback, based on presentation, draft report ***

*** Assignment #7 due: Delivery of final product to client ***

*** Assignment #6 due (4 cr): Reflective essay on experience in the course ***

**January 2018 – Receipt of Client Evaluation**