

Fall 2017, POLITICAL ECOLOGY SERVICE LEARNING PROJECTS

OPTION 1: RECYCLE-DONATION LOOP

Organization: Sustainable Saratoga

Sustainable Saratoga is a non-profit organization that promotes sustainable practices and the protection of natural resources, through education, advocacy and action, for the benefit of current and future generations in the Saratoga Springs area.

Since 2008, Sustainable Saratoga has been a leader in promoting awareness of environmental issues and what we as a local community can do to minimize our ecological impact while maintaining a high quality of life.

Four core values guide the work of Sustainable Saratoga:

- A sustainable community is one that protects the benefits of natural resources, both local and global, while maintaining a strong local economy.
- Protection of ecological resources is essential to a sustainable economy.
- Smart land use and efficient urban planning practices help protect the environment and result in lower costs for public services, health care, and energy.
- By reducing waste and innovating in self-sufficiency, we can protect natural resources and keep wealth circulating in the community.

Website: <http://www.sustainablesaratoga.org/>

Zero Waste Initiative Previous Work: Sustainable Saratoga has already engaged in Bring Your Own Bag Saratoga initiative to change retailers' and consumers' dependence on single-use plastic shopping bags. The goal has been to minimize the negative impact of plastic bags on the environment, from their manufacture through the end of their brief useful life. In Fall 2016, Political Ecology students prepared a brochure that connects consumers to donation centers within 40 miles radius of Saratoga Springs. People who would like to donate items from electronics to clothing, from furniture to silverware will know where and when they can donate their items. Students produced a brochure, a map and presented their findings on what happens to unused items in the donation centers (e.g., e-waste).

Current Work: Sustainable Saratoga is organizing a Recycling Day on October 21, 9 am-2 pm, in Saratoga Springs High School Parking Lot.

(http://www.sustainablesaratoga.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Saratoga-Recycles-Day-Flyer_color.pdf) They will collect a wide variety of items, including clothing, coats, shoes, and purses; towels, rags, sheets, comforters, and quilts; large and small household appliances; electronics; metal objects and bicycles; and sewing supplies like fabric, notions, and yarn. They would like to organize this event in coming years.

They would like to engage more people in Recycle Day and create awareness through social media, and short informative videos. They also would like to record the experiences of people on October 21 Recycle Day.

Project Outcome: Produce two videos (one minute/ 90 seconds each) for Sustainable Saratoga

Group A, B, C, D (Total of 8 students)

- Write several scenarios and storylines for different audiences (specific target group 35-65 age group) with key messages.
- After approval from Sustainable Saratoga (October 17) start production (two video cameras are available for use in the instructor's office, a setting-home and garage of a Sustainable Saratoga member will also be available if needed)
- Edit the video to produce a high quality product for sharing in social media
- Prepare questions to interview people on October 21 Recycle Day
- After approval from Sustainable Saratoga, interview and record people on October 21
- Edit the video to produce a high quality product for sharing in social media

Sources Available:

-Media Services has computers with the following programs available:

Final Cut Pro

iMovie

Premiere

If you are not familiar with documentary/video editing, Skidmore uses www.lynda.com which provides technology/editing training for free. You can check the specific version on campus computers that you are familiar with or would like to use, complete the training at your own pace, and complete the editing process.

Meeting times with Sustainable Saratoga:

- 1) Presentation by Sustainable Saratoga and Q&A. September 19, Tuesday, 9:40-10:00 in class
- 2) October 17, 9:40-10:30, students meet with Sustainable Saratoga Zero Waste project coordinators: Margie Shepard
- 3) December 5, 9:40-11:00 presentation of the material to Sustainable Saratoga and receive feedback
- 4) Submission of final edited version: During Finals Week, December 14, 2017.

OPTION 2: OFFSETTING SCOPE 3 EMISSIONS on CAMPUS

As of 2014-15 academic year, about 1.5 percent of all U.S. students enrolled at a higher education institution in the United States studied abroad (NAFSA 2016). The U.S. education policy advocates increasing study abroad experiences of higher education students. Indeed, the Senator Paul Simon Study Abroad Program Act proposed to expand the total number of U.S. students studying abroad to a million annually by 2027, and increase the diversity of study abroad students to more closely match the undergraduate population, and encourage study in nontraditional locations (Congress Bill 2017).

Study abroad greenhouse gas emissions are calculated in Scope 3 emissions of higher education institutions that have an inventory of their GHGs. While Scope 3 emissions include other variables to measure, the data of study abroad can easily be retrieved from Off-Campus Study offices. In colleges and universities, study abroad emissions constitute at least 10 percent of total campus emissions (Union College in FY2014) to higher amounts. In the case of Skidmore College, the total of study abroad emissions alone is estimated to be 9 percent of total campus emissions. Together with faculty and student air travel, this rate increases to 17 percent (Skidmore GHG inventory 2013)

The service learning project will engage with two questions: What do other college do to offset their GHGs, particularly Scope 3 emissions, and complement this with raising new questions about the sustainability of study abroad experience itself.

In general, higher education institutions discuss the dilemma of encouraging more students to study abroad and the sustainability implications. Together with faculty, student and staff air travel (e.g., off-campus permanent locations in different countries and international student recruitment), the impact of study abroad GHGs should be evaluated further.

Project output: A research report on calculation and off-setting of Scope 3 emissions by other colleges

Group E (Total of 4 students)

1. Research 10-12 examples of colleges and universities (comparable to Skidmore in size and % of student study abroad) on their initiatives to off-set Scope 3 emissions.

The research report should address the following questions:

1a) How are they calculating their Scope 3 emissions?

1b) Does the institution have a way to offset Scope 3 emissions? If so, do they engage with them as a whole or divide it in different segments?

1c) If the college/university is focusing on one aspect, such as Study Abroad emissions, to offset, what type of initiatives do they implement? (e.g., mandatory for every program, offsetting the GHGs of one specific program, gradual goals as offsetting by x% by 2030)

1d) If the college has “light green” options, such as education/ awareness programs, what type of activities do they offer to students studying abroad, to faculty, staff and students who are commuting to campus and/or traveling to conferences and abroad?

Q2: How sustainable was the individual study abroad experience?

2. A survey of individuals who studied abroad about the total number of trips they have taken (domestic-international) during their study abroad after their return

Congress Bill 2017. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/senate-bill/601>

NAFSA 2016.

http://www.nafsa.org/Policy_and_Advocacy/Policy_Resources/Policy_Trends_and_Data/Trends_in_U_S_Study_Abroad/

Service Learning Reflective Writing Assignments

- You will complete two journal entries on your service learning project and use your journal to write reflectively about the service learning experience, readings, and other assignments.
- Each journal entry is about 300-600 words.
- These journal entries will help illuminate how political ecology addresses environmental issues through multidisciplinary perspectives and how service learning project helps you implement political ecology concepts to address diverse societal needs.
- You must complete two journal assignments over the course of the semester. The due dates for these assignments are October 17 and December 7. We will also have class discussion on these dates.
- Please note that the following are guiding questions and you may not include all of them in your journal.

Evaluation of entries: What am I looking for?

Looking for examples of:		
Analysis and Evaluation	Examining ideas/claims	Identifying and assessing arguments
Inference	Considering alternatives	Drawing conclusions
Reflection	Demonstrates contemplation of thoughts/feelings connecting with experiences	Demonstrates thoughtful consideration
Explanation	Stating results	Presenting arguments
Connection	Clarifies personal connection to experience	Clarifies personal connection to subject matter
Self-examination	Challenges initial thinking and feelings	Demonstrates changes in understanding

Journal 1 (Due October 17, 2017)

- How many hours have you committed?
- What are your expectations about your service learning assignment?
- What do you intend to accomplish through your SL work?
- What questions do you have about the organization or their work?
- Why does the case you work on require a political ecology approach?
- What is the problem that the SL project wants to address?
- How effective will be the outcome (that you will accomplish at the end) when we consider politics, cost, and complexity of the environmental issue in hand?
- What is missing from the SL project? What kind of additions/ changes can be made in the future to address the environmental issue through the class resources (e.g., limitation of time, skill levels, etc.)

Journal 2 (Due December 7, 2017)

- How many hours have you committed to your SL project?
- How did your expectations about your service learning assignment change over the course of the semester?
- How did your role change over the semester? (i.e., did you do the same task every time, or did your role change?)
- Why do you think service learning is used by Colleges and Universities as a teaching and learning strategy?
- What is your personal opinion of this service learning assignment?
- How has it influenced your knowledge of Political Ecology?
- What have you learned from this experience?