GENERAL EDUCATION COURSE ENHANCEMENT GRANT COMPETITION

1. **Principal Investigator Name(s) and Academic Title(s):** Lisa Werkmeister Rozas, Ph.D., BSW Program Director, Associate Professor

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3. Is this a new course or a currently existing course?
   New Course

4. List the course title and course number of the proposed/enhanced course and name of the sponsoring department or program. (For new courses that many not have been assigned a number yet, use a proposed title and generic number that indicates the course level: e.g. POLS 2XXX)
   The idea of this course is to examine the intersection of environmental literacy, civic engagement, and socialization through a social work lens.

5. Describe your project and the work that will be done during the grant period on course content, course design, and/or teaching approach. Provide a clear statement of the objectives of the project in terms of student learning.
   The primary objective during the grant period is the creation of a robust syllabus and innovative assignments that allow for the integration of three primary arms needed for establishing ecoliteracy: a basic understanding of the environment as a resource, knowledge of various cultural practices that enhance or inhibit environmental sustainability, and knowledge of various dimensions of power located in socio-political structural forces that oppress or promote environmental sustainability.

   A secondary objective is to make connections with various local environmental advocacy organizations, state and municipal institutions who would be willing to be a point of contact and partner for students developing their final assignment, which would include activism and civic engagement.
   Some of the local agencies that have been preliminarily identified are:
   Clean Water Action
   Environment Connecticut
   Sierra Club
   Citizens Campaign for the Environment
   Environment & Human Health, Inc. (EHHI)
   Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice
   Sustainable CT

   The objectives of this course will be clearly stated and course material, assignments, and classroom process will be designed to meet them. The learning objectives for the course are based on the social work’s professional orientation to change as it relates to environmental social work practice.

   1. Students will develop an understanding of perspective taking and how physical and ideological space can be components of cultural norms and values.
2. Students will develop and cognitive knowledge and affective caring about the environment and environmental justice.
3. Students will learn the basic aspects of environmental sustainability
4. Students will develop an understanding of the importance of eco-centrism vs. anthrocentricity
5. Students will engage in critical thinking and critiques of the neo-liberalist and other hegemonic paradigms
6. Students will learn skills of community organizing and development and the different forms advocacy takes.
7. Students will utilize information learned in class to assist them in actualizing their ethical and social responsibilities to our diverse world
8. Students will gain a basic understanding of social work skills helpful when working for environmental justice, including environmental human rights and intergenerational justice

6. How do you intend to evaluate project objectives once the course, as proposed, is offered? Please identify intended learning outcomes and assessment tools.

Assessment will measure both process and content. General understanding and knowledge with regard to theories that facilitate an understanding of human and environment interaction, environmental literacy, and community development and advocacy will be attained through weekly journal responses to specific questions, midterm evaluation of the progress of the final project (written and short oral presentation) and the final assessment of the action project which will be presented to the class. The projects will be analyzed through the use of a rubric where competencies such as critical thinking, knowledge of community organization/development, knowledge of concepts of sustainability, and awareness of cultural diversity will be assessed.

In addition, the critical consciousness scale will be used to assess the three primary components associated with the development of a critical consciousness which is associated with civic engagement, advocacy and sense of ethical responsibility. Research suggests that a higher level of critical consciousness is related to political participation and ability to participate in perspective taking. Higher scores on each CCS subscale reflect a greater degree of critical reflection or critical action, depending on the subscale in question.

The CCS is comprised of three subscales:
   i. *Critical Reflection: Perceived Inequality* (Scale items 1-8). This subscale measures youths' critical analysis of socioeconomic, racial/ethnic, and gendered constraints on educational and occupational opportunity.
   ii. *Critical Reflection: Egalitarianism* (Scale items 9-13). This subscale measures youths' endorsement of societal equality - all groups treated as equals - within society.
   iii. *Critical Action: Sociopolitical Participation* (Scale items 14-22). This subscale measures youths' participation in social and political activities to change perceived inequalities.

7. Describe how the course will fit into UConn’s General Education curriculum. (The General Education guidelines can be found at: http://geoc.uconn.edu/geoc-guidelines/) How will the course serve the broad goals of UConn’s General Education program (flexibility in thinking, foundations for learning at UConn and later in life, critical analytical skills, etc.)? The course is responsive to UConn’s General Education curriculum in that it offers interdisciplinary theories and approaches to understand the importance of environmental literacy with a keen emphasis on the importance of civic engagement. Students will bring the knowledge they learn beyond the classroom as they will participate in a group project that is directly related to environmental advocacy. Working across boundaries in multiple spaces will allow them to experience the diversity of human culture and the socio-political context which influences human interaction and their interaction with the environment.

8. For which content areas (CA1-4), competencies (W, Q), or literacies (Environmental – E) will the course be proposed and how will it address the specific criteria for courses in these content areas and/or competencies? [NOTE: Please review the Gen Ed criteria for your proposed content area(s), competency(ies), or literacy carefully. Most courses will not fulfill more than one or two areas. More content areas/competencies does not necessarily equal a stronger proposal. The GEOC is looking for proposals that demonstrate a significant understanding of the criteria in the Gen Ed category for which they are proposed.]

The course emphasizes several theories and models that investigate the reciprocal process of human health and well-being and the natural world. The final assignment, which comprises service learning within the context of the action project. The connection to the agency/organization will be ongoing and can be performed at the level of policy, civic awareness, or direct sustainable practice that occurs locally. Overall, the course will be incorporating four attributes found in environmental social work: 1) use of traditional social work skills (e.g. empowerment, team building, community development, management, anti-oppressive practice, multi-level assessments, holistic interventions and relational practices); 2) openness to different values and ways of being, 3) a change orientation and 4) working across boundaries and multiple spaces (Ramsay & Boddy, 2017).

9. How will the course add to and/or enhance existing course offerings? If applicable, which of the areas targeted by this year’s competition does it address? Does it fill other important gaps? How does it compare to current offerings or pedagogy? What will be distinctive about the course?

This particular course offering is targeted to address environmental literacy and also addresses the importance of integration by utilizing various sources of knowledge students have attained from other disciplines. The course is unique in that it utilizes a social work perspective to understand the concept of ecological justice. It utilizes important tenets of social work such as empowerment, ethical responsibility to effect change, valuing and being open to different ways of understanding and addressing the environment, the importance of community development, and the need to acquire skills
that are necessary to work on multiple levels such as society, community, and individuals to achieve ecological justice. Another important aspect of social work is that it understands and strives to show leadership in the development of public values and policy while advocating for rights and justice. The out of classroom experience with identifying an action project will allow students to be a part of the community. The knowledge and skills attained by taking this course are transferrable to any level of engagement with environmental sustainability and broader issues of human rights and social justice.

10. How will your course serve as a model to assist others in their efforts to improve the general education curriculum?
This course can service as a model to assist other departments interested in connecting service learning and community advocacy to their courses. Connections made with agencies and official in charge of public policy as well as NGO’s whose mission it is to effect environmental justice. Utilizing a variety of perspectives found in diverse cultural values and practices to interdisciplinary theories that can explain alternative ways of perceiving the natural and human world can demonstrate how such connections can seamlessly occur.

11. Is your proposal linked to any others being submitted in this competition? If so, explain the added benefits that will accrue to students from taking the courses as a group. No

12. Has this course even been submitted for this grant in the past? Yes / No / Unsure. No

13. Has this course been funded by this grant in the past? Yes / No / Unsure. No
(Note: All previous competition winners are available through links at http://geoc.uconn.edu/course-development-grant-competition/)

14. Has this course or will this course be funded by any other non-departmental source, e.g. CETL grant, non-university grants, etc? Yes / No / Unsure
No

15. Complete the budget form (found at http://geoc.uconn.edu/course-development-grant-competition/), explaining how the funds will be used to support the course development activities. ATTACHED

16. Email statement of support submitted

17. Draft Syllabus attached
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fiscal 2019</th>
<th>Amount budgeted</th>
<th>Fringe for Summer Salary **</th>
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<td>Travel</td>
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<td>Research (Faculty Account)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1,000 student worker: 5 weeks at $17/hour (avg 10 hours/week)</td>
<td>Usually none</td>
<td>$800</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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* Buyout: Funds can be used to pay an adjunct to teach a class normally taught by full-time faculty member during the Spring semester so that the faculty member can devote time to course development.

** The 2019 Fiscal Year fringe rate for Special Payroll summer salary is currently 23.6%. (See [http://budget.uconn.edu/fringe-benefit-rates/](http://budget.uconn.edu/fringe-benefit-rates/))

Justification:

Please explain how the expenditure of all funds will support this proposal (100-400 words). Please note that participants should explain how any expenses, especially travel, will benefit the COURSE, not necessarily the professional development of the proposer.

The two main budget items are for summer salary and student labor. Summer salary will be important for the time to be spend directly on developing the syllabus further as well as making connections with the various community and municipal environmental agencies. The student labor will be helpful in identifying important research, community agencies, and potential project for the course. The student will also help with developing a bibliography for the course.

University of Connecticut School of Social Work  
SOWK 3XXX Environmental Justice and Civic Engagement  
Draft Master Syllabus

Course Description
Using the concept of environmental justice this course will cover a wide range of social and cultural constructions of environment which span the historical to the contemporary. One of the main tenets of Social Work is to advocate for social justice. Much like Paolo Friere’s concept of “reading the world” as a way to interrupt systems of social oppression, this course will be instructive as to how to “read the biophysical world” in an attempt to harness the “hearts and minds” of individuals to propel them to take action. Addressing the issues of sustainability from multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary perspectives, this course incorporates both cognitive and affective processes to promote both knowledge and caring of the environment. Drawing
from different disciplines the class will explore the reciprocal relationship between humans and the environment. Students will participate in a community action project and will develop critical skills in contextual thinking, environmental analyses, and community organizing.

**Course Outcomes**

The learning objectives for the course are based on the social work’s professional orientation to change as it relates to environmental social work practice.

9. Students will develop and cognitive knowledge and affective caring about the environment and environmental justice.
10. Students will learn the basic aspects of environmental sustainability
11. Students will develop an understanding of the importance of eco-centrism vs. anthropocentrism
12. Students will engage in critical thinking and critiques of the neo-liberalist and other hegemonic paradigms
13. Students will learn skills of community organizing and development, the different forms advocacy takes, and the importance of civic engagement in achieving environmental justice.
14. Students will utilize information learned in class to assist them in actualizing their ethical and social responsibilities to our diverse world
15. Students will gain a basic understanding of social work skills helpful when working for environmental justice, including environmental human rights and intergenerational justice

**Required Text:**


**Recommended Texts:**


**Module 1: Environment as text**
Examine different social and cultural constructions of environments and incorporate various functional, cultural and critical literacies.

**Module 2: Culture and thinking about the environment**
Examine what society’s place is within the environment? Analyze and think critically about various conceptualization of time, space, nature, spirituality, consumption, health and well-being

**Module 3: Economics, Government, and Politics**
Students will examine the geo-political forces behind environmental decline and sustainability. The issue of human labor and the environment will be explored as well as the role that human rights has played in the protection of the environment.

**Module 4: Cultural Contact, Colonialism, Imperialism, and Migration**
Politics, geography, the push/pull factors of migration and immigration will be examined to understand how land, space, and other aspects of the environment have been controlled and manipulated to advantage hegemony throughout history.

**Module 5: Environmental Racism—brown spaces, overexposure to pollutants, hazardous waste sites, denial of ecological benefits**
Past and current examples of how often communities of color (and other targeted social identity groups) are subjected greater proportions of environmental hazards, such as toxic waste, brown fields, and other pollutants. These examples will be examined on the level of community, policy and social conditions.

**Module 6: Social Conflict and War**
This module will explore how human geo-political conflict has had an impact on the environment. Concepts of scarcity, capitalism, structural violence and redistribution of land within in the geopolitical landscape contributes to inequity and environmental injustice.

**Module 7: Environmental Activism as a necessary component of environmental justice**
What does it mean to be an environmental citizen? Examples of different ways of organizing communities and civic engagement will be explored in order to develop skills and personal responsibility to environmental justice. Principles of environmental human rights and intergenerational justice will also be discussed.

**ASSIGNMENT 1 – Current Events & Article Report**
Each class 1-2 students will be responsible for selecting articles from the required course reading for that class (e.g., journal article, book chapter). Each student will use this reading to critically analyze a current news piece (meaning within the past few months) that relates to some form of environmental injustice. The current piece must be from a credible news source such as The Hartford Courant, The New York Times, The Washington Post, Harper’s Magazine, Psychology Today, The Atlantic, The New Yorker, Time, Newsweek, The Huffington Post, etc. Each student will upload their current event news piece to the designated area of the discussion board on HuskyCT 1-2 days before class.
Each student not presenting that week will respond to at least 2 out of the four current events news pieces (responses should be thoughtful and address the critical issues raised). Students should post their responses on the discussion board at least two days before class.
1) Briefly report 1or 2 of the course article’s main points that relate to the chosen news piece.
2) How does the news piece help illustrate some aspect of the environment and/or environmental injustice focused on in the article (give 1 or 2 examples)?
3) Develop one question for the class to help begin a dialogue (questions should be open-ended).
The students responsible for presenting the news piece will summarize and present the themes created on the discussion board, in class and lead a10 minute dialogue. They will also provide a
Final Assignment: Environmental Justice Action Project

This assignment is done as a group project (3-4 people). The assignment is to design a project that addresses an important aspect of ecological justice. This project should be something that is viable and able to be implemented with the cooperation of a local environmental advocacy organizations or state and municipal institutions. Projects are expected to be both meaningful and doable. Think small and think of implementing something in a place that is familiar to you. Time will be spent getting information about and understanding the mission, goals, and objectives of the organization/institution with which the student would like to partner. Students are expected to draw on their knowledge of sustainability practices, community development/organization, socio-political forces that oppress or support environmental justice as well as how to develop a feasible project that could make a difference. The assignment will include at least 5-6 references from the readings and students will provide a bibliography. Each group will present their project the last day of class and provide a peer review of each presentation.

I. Describe the type of environmental injustice interested in combating (e.g. brown fields, clean water, lead in lower income housing, etc.)
   a. Describe the type of institutional oppression that you have studied (e.g. political, inter-group relations, ideological, cultural, organizational, community, societal, etc.).
   b. To what extent have our country’s values, policies and practices (institutional and cultural level) attributed to this environmental issue going unaddressed?
   c. How is this type of environmental injustice manifested? Give statistics and examples to support your perspective.

II. Discuss the nature of the problem – its history, the ways that it has been defined and constructed, associated factors, relevant policies and research.
   a. Whose perspective is dominant?
   b. What is the goal of this perspective?
   c. Who does it benefit

III. Assess the organization/institution’s ability to work with the community
    a. What work have they already accomplished?
    b. What could be helpful in getting more people to join them?
    c. Describe what strategies you have used to work with the community?

IV. Describe the project you hope to implement
a. What potential roadblocks loom? How would you address them?
b. What is the best outcome you could hope for? What is the very least you would hope to see happen?
c. How will you continue to advocate and engage in practices that advance human rights and environmental justice?

**Action Project: Due the last class**

Presentations will be evaluated for information about the problem, knowledge of the problem, level of analysis, critical thinking, creativity, feasibility, integration with the values and ethics and personal responsibility, commitment and passion, and quality of writing.

Please come prepared for each class by reading the following materials **before** class takes place. This means you must read all reading before the first class. All materials not handed out in class are available on HuskyCT.

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**Bibliography**


