SUSTAINABILITY ISSUE PROJECT

In this Project, you will identify, examine, and analyze an environmental sustainability issue in your local area or region. Before you get started make sure you send your instructor your topic idea.

**Suggested Marking Criteria**

* + - Presentation and flow of paper: Does it include an introduction and conclusion? The introduction should provide a "map" for the reader, and the conclusion should sum up your view and arguments
		- Clarity of paper and writing
		- Background and research material used: For example, did you use scholarly material and the course readings, if applicable? Did you balance the viewpoints from non-scholarly material?
		- Grammar, paragraph and sentence structure, spelling

**Final Submission**

* + - A 10-12 pages, double-spaced essay

**Project Components**

1. **Identify a Project**

**You will need to identify a project.** However, you already may be aware of a good project topic. Your local or regional newspapers and radio and TV news are good sources for other ideas.

When you have selected your topic, please describe it in a blog post/discussion forum by answering the following questions: Why is this a sustainability issue? How long has this been an issue?

Summarize the main issues (environmental, social, political, and economic) of your topic.

**Note**

If possible, attend a local meeting or to collect data by some other method that requires interaction with stakeholders. You may want to proactively determine if any meetings are occurring in your local area that would be suitable to attend.

1. **Stakeholders**

In Identification, you selected a subject for your final project and identified and summarized the central environmental, social, political, and economic issues.

In Stakeholders, delve deeper into your subject to identify who is involved: Who are the stakeholders (individuals and groups)? Why are they interested in this topic? With respect to your chosen topic, describe their views and identify their values.

1. **Systems Diagram**

Create a systems diagram that illustrates human-natural system interactions. Be sure to include inputs and outputs, as well as feedback mechanisms.

Include your diagram in your final project submission to illustrate the main components of your topic and their relationships.

1. **Meeting or Event Participation**

Now that you have learned something about who is involved in your project issues and their interests and values, participate in a local meeting.

Alternatively, if a meeting is not available, you can gather information using other means. Some alternatives to attending a local meeting are:

* + - Participate in or host a Twitter chat on your chosen subject.
		- Interview the main proponents involved in your topic area.
		- Post and monitor a Facebook page about your environmental concern.

The key to success is to interact with others to gather relevant information.

Answer the following questions: Who spoke (posted, interviewed, etc.)? What groups do they represent? Did they raise additional issues or express values other than those you already have encountered? Who do you think made the most effective argument and why?

1. **Impacts**

Your work with your project to date has involved: analyzing a problem; identifying stakeholders and their wants, needs, and values; and understanding the science behind your project. This week you will assess the negative and positive impacts (costs and benefits) of your environmental topic as it affects various stakeholders by considering the following questions:

* + - What do you think are the potential impacts (positive and negative) for the short- and long-terms?
		- How do you propose weighing present values against future concerns?
		- Are all impacts at the local or regional scale, or do you think that some impacts will have a wider geographic influence? If so, which ones?
		- Will the impacts affect all people equally? If not, who will benefit and who will not, and why?

After you summarize these impacts (both positive and negative), you may want to post your summary in the online discussions so that you can get some feedback from other participants. Take a look at some of the impacts highlighted by other learners’ projects. Compare and contrast the similarities and differences; this exercise may be useful as you start to think about the solutions and outcomes for your issue.

1. **Decision Making**

This component is to identify and evaluate the decision-making structures, formal and informal, that will determine the outcome of your issue. Consider the following questions, which are designed to guide your analysis:

* + 1. Who are the main decision-makers?
		2. To whom do the decision-makers consult?
		3. Describe the structure in which these decision-makers operate (e.g., local or provincial governments, collaborative decision-making between government and non-government organizations, etc.).
		4. Do you see evidence that suggests that power is shared equally amongst the participants involved in the decision-making process?
		5. If not, can you suggest some solutions to remedy this situation? What are the barriers to implementing your solutions?
		6. Are any "voices" missing from the discussion/debate? If so, who? What might be some of the problems with consulting with additional people? What would be some positive impacts of doing so?
1. **Decision Making**

Identify and assess potential solutions and resolutions to your environmental sustainability issue.

The following questions will guide your analysis:

* + 1. What solutions are being proposed?
		2. Do you see any room for resolution amongst the various stakeholders?
		3. How do these solutions address economic, environmental, political, and social concerns? What are the trade-offs and how are they determined?
		4. Sometimes, you can learn a lot by looking at similar issues from other jurisdictions. Often, international examples differ enough, in terms of their governing structure and history, to provide some ideas that you can use at home. With this knowledge in mind, consider the following:
			- Are there examples from other jurisdictions (nationally or internationally) from which we can learn? What are the limits to using the "lessons learned" from another jurisdiction, and what are the opportunities?
			- By contrasting and comparing two similar examples, what can you learn?
1. **Outcomes**

The final component for your Project! You have moved from doing some very basic work on your environmental issue—by describing it and identifying the main stakeholders—to considering the complex issues of interrelated problems and opportunities.

With every issue, a time comes when you—as a citizen and a student of sustainability—must base your decision on available information.

Therefore, the final component is to determine the applicable outcome of your issue. Remember to justify your thinking!