

Grand Challenge Curriculum (GCC 3025)

Seeking the Good Life at the End of the World: Sustainability in the 21st Century

Tu/Th 1-2:15 pm
Nicholson Hall 335
3 credits
Spring 2023
Class #63579
Section 1

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Overview

Course Description

What does it mean to seek “the good life” in a time of rapid climate changes, mass extinction of plant and animal species, and the increasing pollution of our oceans, atmosphere, and soils? Is it possible to live sustainably, as individuals and societies, in what scientists are calling the Anthropocene, or this new epoch of human influence over the planet? Will sustainability require that we sacrifice the gains humanity has made in our quality of life? Or can we find a way to create a “good Anthropocene”? This course will attempt to answer these questions in four ways:

1. by providing an overview of sustainability science, both what it says about human and natural systems and how it comes to make these claims
2. by examining various conceptions of the good life, both individual and social, and how they intersect with the findings of sustainability science
3. by exploring the conflicts that exist within and between differing visions of sustainability and the good life through case studies in biodiversity, energy, and water
4. by pursuing collaborative research projects that will help students apply their knowledge and skills to current problems in sustainability studies

We will read widely in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities to understand a range of historical and contemporary perspectives on these questions, and in doing so we will put abstract ethical principles into conversation with a diversity of specific cultures and environments. By the end of the course, students will have examined their own assumptions about personal and professional happiness, considered how these align with—and diverge from—societal visions and values, and explored innovative solutions to help sustain our productive economy and our planet.

Liberal Education Requirement: Liberal Education courses help you investigate the world from new perspectives, learn ways of thinking that will be useful to you in many areas of your life, and grow as an active citizen and lifelong learner. This course fulfills the Liberal Education requirement for *Civic Life and Ethics* theme by examining the concept of “the good life,” which was a foundational concern for Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics*. It seeks to help you understand the role of ethics in your daily life, both public and private, particularly as it relates to some of the world’s most pressing environmental problems. The course accomplishes this by showing:

- how “environmental” problems arise in part from social dilemmas and thus cannot be solved without substantive ethical deliberation, in both private and public life
- how ethics are inseparable from the historical and social contexts in which they arise
- how individual conceptions of the good life are connected to societal visions of the good life
- how individual actions can have social consequences, public policy can affect individual behaviors, and public engagement can affect civic life

- how ethical reflection on different visions of the good life can apply to contemporary environmental problems
- how scientific observations and learning interact with moral duty

Objectives

What questions will the course help you to answer? How will you grow in knowledge and understanding? What intellectual abilities will the course help you to develop?

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- *understand* basic facts and concepts concerning sustainability science and human values
- *connect* the diversity of disciplinary perspectives on sustainability, including environmental science, communication, philosophy, history, sociology, economics, and public policy
- *clarify* your own position by evaluating competing visions of the good life in relationship to the core drivers of major environmental challenges
- *cultivate* the virtues you will need to live sustainably in the Anthropocene, such as wisdom, justice, moderation, and courage
- *collaborate* with others, using time and project management skills, to find solutions to pressing social, economic, and environmental problems
- *practice* taking risks, pushing your limits, and becoming uncomfortable in order to learn new things
- *reflect* on your own knowledge, experiences, and learning strategies to improve future performance
- *communicate* your ideas effectively in writing and in speaking

Student Learning Outcomes: This course also meets five of the University's seven Student Learning Outcomes by helping you to:

- *identify, define, and solve problems*, through the collaborative portion of your final project
- *locate and critically evaluate information*, through the research for your final project
- *understand diverse philosophies and cultures within and across societies*, through our discussion of the different perspectives on the good life
- *communicate effectively*, through your class participation, class presentations, writing assignments, and final project submissions
- *acquire skills for effective citizenship and life-long learning*, through the writing assignments and final project, which encourage you to reflect on the role of ethics in private and public life

Grand Challenge Curriculum (GCC): The Grand Challenge Curriculum addresses important societal challenges through a solution-driven, interdisciplinary approach to learning. Its common goals are:

- **Communication skills:** develop the ability to communicate the complexity of the challenge(s) being studied to individuals and communities outside of the classroom
- **Problem Definition:** practice inquiry-based learning and design-thinking approaches to understand complex issues from multiple perspectives in order to see the interconnected nature of challenges facing society
- **Collaboration:** participate in team-oriented, issue-based projects that engage different disciplinary and personal perspectives in collaborative learning
- **Tolerance of Ambiguity:** acknowledge the emotions you have when working with complex challenges
- **Intercultural Competence:** learn that strategies to address complex issues must engage and respect the knowledge of local and global communities, including experts within those communities, and be developed in response to diverse cultures and contexts
- **Personal Agency:** identify strategies that may impact the challenge at a local or policy level
- **Systems Thinking:** see the challenge in context with other issues facing society and our planet

COVID-19 Protocol

How will we keep ourselves safe and healthy?

- This course follows the University's [Get the Vax Protocol](#), which includes a vaccine requirement for students and faculty and strongly encourages booster shots as soon as you are eligible.
- If you experience [symptoms of COVID-19](#) or any potentially infectious respiratory illness, you should not come to class. Please consult with your healthcare provider about treatment options and with the [M-test program](#) for COVID testing resources. Such an absence is an [excused absence](#).
- The University expects all community members to respect those who choose to wear a mask, as well as those who choose not to wear one. Up-to-date policies on face covering are available on the [Safe Campus](#) page.
- We may decide, for academic and/or health reasons, to conduct some of our classes remotely. Should we pursue this option, we will do everything we can to ensure that you continue to learn as much as possible.

Texts

What reading materials will help you to pursue the goals of this course?

All of our readings will come in the form of chapters and articles that will be available on our Canvas site.

Instructors

Who will be helping you achieve your goals in this course?

Jessica J. Hellmann is the director of the Institute on the Environment and the Ecolab Chair in Environmental Leadership. She is also a Professor in the Department of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior in the College of Biological Sciences. Her research focuses on global change ecology and climate adaptation, and she was among the first to propose and study ways to reduce the impact of climate change through new techniques in conservation management. She regularly counsels state and national governments on habitat management, restoration and endangered species conservation, and she has extended her work to human systems, including health, infrastructure, food and water. Hellmann is a frequent contributor to leading scientific journals such as *Proceedings of the National Academies of Science*, *Frontiers in Ecology and the Environment*, *BioScience*, and *PLOS ONE*. She serves on the editorial board of the journal *Evolutionary Applications*, is an associate editor with both *Conservation Biology* and *Elementa*, and serves on committees for the Ecological Society of America, the College Board, and the National Academy of Sciences. She is also routinely called upon by leading media outlets to provide expert input on topics related to global change and ways to minimize adverse impacts to people and nature. She is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and the Ecological Society of America.

Daniel J. Philippon is an associate professor in the Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts, where he teaches courses in the environmental humanities, literary nonfiction writing, and sustainability studies. His research interests concern American environmental literature and its relationship to the ideas of nature, culture, and place. He is the author of *Conserving Words: How American Nature Writers Shaped the Environmental Movement* (2004), the co-editor of *Coming into Contact: Explorations in Ecocritical Theory and Practice* (2006), and the editor of *Our Neck of the Woods: Exploring Minnesota's Wild Places* (2009), among other books. A Past President of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE), Philippon has also been a Senior Fellow at the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society in Germany, a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Turin and University of Gastronomic Sciences in Italy, and a Visiting Professor at the École Normale Supérieure de Lyon in France. He is currently completing a research project examining the discourses of the sustainable food movement. In 2016 he helped to co-organize the University's Environmental Humanities Initiative, and in 2017 he received the Morse-Alumni Award for Outstanding Contributions to Undergraduate Education, and in 2022 he received the Arthur "Red" and Helene B. Motley Exemplary Teaching Award.

Names and Pronouns

What should we call one another?

Please tell us how you would like to be referred to in class. We will happily address you by the name and gender pronoun you use, or by any other form of reference, and we would be glad to inform class members to do the same. We encourage you to call us by our first names (most people do), but you are welcome to call us “Professor Hellmann” and “Professor Philippon” if you prefer. Jessica uses she/her pronouns, and Dan uses he/him pronouns. Note that class rosters will list your legal name unless you [enter a different one](#) through your OneStop account.

Contact Us

How can you contact us to help you learn?

The easiest way to contact us is immediately after class; we would be happy to meet with you briefly to answer a question or elaborate on a point made in class. To contact us at other times, or to arrange to meet at another time, email is the best way to reach us. We will do our best to respond to you within 24 hours during the work week. Our contact information appears at the top of this syllabus.

We do not keep office hours, but we would be happy to set up a time to talk with you, in whatever way is most convenient (email, phone, video, etc.). Even if you do not have a specific question, we encourage you to talk with us at some point during the semester, so that we can get to know you better as a person and learn more about the subjects that interest you, since the main reason we are here is to help you learn and grow.

Feedback and Grading

How will we evaluate the nature, quality, and progress of your learning?

Feedback

We will attempt to provide feedback to you in multiple ways, in person and online. Sometimes this feedback will be for the entire class, and sometimes it will be for you individually. We will also solicit feedback from you about how the course is going on multiple occasions, so we can improve the course and help you learn more effectively.

Grading

Grades are an admittedly imprecise attempt by us to measure the nature, quality, and progress of your learning. You should consider the course requirements listed below, therefore, as a means to provide us with *evidence of your learning* — that is, evidence of your acquisition of the knowledge and skills our course is meant to help you cultivate.

We will award grades in this course according to the University of Minnesota’s [Grading and Transcripts](#) policy:

- A: achievement that significantly exceeds expectations in the course
- B: achievement that is above the minimum expectations in the course
- C: achievement that meets the minimum expectations in the course
- D: achievement that partially meets the minimum expectations in the course; credit is earned but it may not fulfill major or program requirements
- F: represents failure in the course and no credit is earned

We will also award pluses and minuses, with the highest possible grade being an “A.”

We will assign an “I” (Incomplete) only in extraordinary circumstances, such as hospitalization. An Incomplete requires a written agreement between us, and it will automatically become an “F” at the end of the next semester of your registration if you do not complete the course requirements by that time.

Grades will be assigned in terms of a percentage of possible points according to the following standards:

	B+ >= 87%	C+ >= 77%	D+ >= 67%	
A >= 93%	B >= 83%	C >= 73%	D >= 63%	F < 63%
A- >= 90%	B- >= 80%	C- >= 70%		

We may choose to grade more generously, but we will not raise our standards above these.

If at any time you have concerns about your grade, please do not hesitate to contact us. Overall, we would say we are “tough but fair” graders. **We expect your work to be outstanding**, and the way to get an “A” is to meet those expectations in every respect.

We will be posting grades to our Canvas site, but grades for attendance and participation will not be calculated until the end of the semester.

Deadlines and Late Papers

Deadlines benefit all of us: they help you do the best you can in the time you have; they provide a common window for everyone to complete a task; and they help us evaluate your work in a timely fashion. We recognize, though, that not everyone can meet every deadline in the same way each time. For this reason, we take a three-stage approach to deadlines that balances the benefits of deadlines with the flexibility of late submissions. For every **submission deadline** listed on the syllabus, there is a **24-hour grace period**, during which you may submit your assignment late, no permission needed, no questions asked. If you need more time than this, you may request (via email or in person) up to a **one-week extension** with no consequences. If you do not request an extension, or you submit your assignment after the extended deadline, your submission will be considered late, and its grade will be reduced proportionate to how late it was submitted. (The exact amount will vary by personal and/or group circumstances.) ***This policy does not apply to Reading Responses or the submission of the Final Deliverable. See the sections below for information about those assignments.***

University Policies and Resources

What University policies and resources exist to help you succeed in this course?

Because the number of University policies and resources that apply to academic courses has become quite large, the English Department has compiled a [list of these](#) on its web site. These include important policies on:

- Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences
- Student Academic Integrity and Scholastic Dishonesty
- Student Conduct Code
- Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity, and Affirmative Action
- Sexual Harassment
- Disability Accommodations
- Mental Health and Stress Management
- Academic Freedom and Responsibility

These also include a wide range of resources to support your learning, such as [Student Academic Success Services](#), [Student Writing Support](#), and [Student English Language Support](#). Please familiarize yourself with these policies and resources, which will help you succeed in this course.

Requirements

What will you be doing to pursue the goals of this course?

To succeed in this course, you must complete the following requirements, which are worth a total of 1,000 possible points. For more information on this point system, see the section on grading.

Summary of Requirements

1. Attendance and Participation (100 points)
2. Reading Responses (200 points)

3. Position Papers (300 points)
4. Final Project (400 points)

1. Attendance and Participation (100 points): Prefiguring the Good Life

To “prefigure” something is to embody the goal of an activity in the activity itself, to “be the change you wish to see in the world,” as the saying goes (often misattributed to Gandhi). By attending and actively participating, you will be prefiguring some of the values we think are crucial to living the Good Life.

Your regular attendance is important, because we cannot learn from one another if you are not here. If you know in advance that you are going to be absent on a particular day, please let us know. We follow the University’s policy on Makeup Work for Legitimate Absences, listed above. *Note that a pattern of unexcused absences is cause for a grade of “F” in the entire course.*

Throughout the semester, we will get to know each other’s ideas, personalities, and foibles—both in writing and in person. To make the most of our time together, therefore, we expect only the best of what you have to offer. Ideally, your mind, your courtesy, and your sense of humor should all be operating in top form. You should be eager to learn and grow, open to constructive criticism, and willing to help and collaborate with others. In return, we will always begin and end class on time, will place any course materials online as soon as possible, and will make ourselves available to answer your questions and discuss your concerns before and after class, whenever possible, in addition to by appointment.

You are welcome to use a laptop, tablet computer, or cell phone for course-related activities. Please respect us and your fellow students by not using your devices for other purposes (such as non-course-related email, social media, web surfing, and texting). Disrespectful use of technology distracts you and us from the experience we are trying to have together. In particular, studies have shown that putting your cell phone away can increase your comprehension, lower your anxiety level, and foster your mindfulness. Because disrespectful use of technology interferes with learning, it is considered a violation of the Student Conduct Code.

As part of your attendance and participation score, we may also ask you to submit other kinds of writing, to work in teams and give informal presentations, and to connect with one or more classmates outside of class as needed.

Your regular attendance and active participation matter because this course is not just about acquiring knowledge; it is also about improving your ability to engage in public discourse. It is about helping you find your voice, showing that every voice matters, and practicing the skills of civic participation. This involves reading and listening carefully, interpreting what you have read or heard, and making your own contribution to an ongoing conversation. Your “participation grade,” therefore, is our attempt to evaluate how committed you have been to actively engaging others, observing how other people (ourselves and your fellow students) engage one another, and receiving feedback about your own engagement.

Because we recognize that some of your participation will occur in ways that may be difficult for us to judge—such as in small-group discussions, in conversations with one or more other students, and in other unstructured activities—we would also be happy to evaluate your non-verbal participation (or “active listening”) by reviewing the notes you take in class. Although active listening cannot take the place of actively contributing to a learning community, it can be an indicator of the depth of your engagement. Please see us if you wish to take advantage of this option.

At the end of the semester, we will grade your participation according to the following scale:

- A: frequent and courteous participation, with mature and thoughtful insights
- B: above average participation and insight
- C: moderate participation and reasonable insight
- D: below average participation with little understanding of the issues
- F: little or no participation

To receive full points for attendance and participation, therefore, you should read the assigned texts carefully, attend the class meetings conscientiously, and participate actively in class discussions, small-group work, and other in-class assignments.

Two smaller assignments will also be part of your attendance and participation grade:

a. Learning Assessment (5 points): At the beginning of the semester, we will ask you to report privately to us (through a Canvas quiz):

- what are your expectations for the course?
- what are your fears and concerns (if any) about the course?
- what do you consider to be your strengths and weaknesses as a learner?
- what barriers (if any) to effective learning do you face this semester?
- anything else we should know?

b. Mid-semester Reflection (5 points): Halfway through the semester, we will ask you to complete a mid-semester reflection, evaluating the course, your participation in it, and anything you can do to improve your learning. At the end of the semester, we will ask you to evaluate yourself again, as well as indicate what you have done to improve since mid-semester. We will then take this final evaluation into account when assigning grades in this portion of the course.

2. Reading Responses (200 points): Understanding the Good Life

Purpose: To prepare for our class meetings, we would like you to write a series of ten weekly reading responses over the course of the term, in response to our course texts. These responses will help you to understand the Good Life in several ways:

- they help you actively engage with the course material and thus improve your understanding and retention of our subject matter (that is, your learning)
- they provide a means for you to share your thoughts with the other students in the class, which not only allows us to exceed the limits of our class meetings but also allows students who may not feel comfortable speaking up in class the opportunity to share their thoughts by another means
- they help us to know your interests in advance of our class meetings, so we can tailor our class discussions accordingly

Instructions: Each reading response should be approximately 150-200 words long (the equivalent of about half a double-spaced page) and should be a thoughtful response to one or more of the texts you have read for class that day. You may certainly write more than this, but 150 words is the minimum. Your initial response should be based primarily on your own attention to and engagement with the texts, but we also encourage you to engage other students by posting follow-up replies to their responses. You might, for instance:

- explain why you agree or disagree with a reading
- provide additional historical or theoretical context about a subject
- describe something that confuses, surprises, or troubles you
- ask a question, and maybe even attempt to answer that question
- compare one reading to another
- provide new information about a subject

We will post discussion prompts for some of the readings, but in general we would prefer that these responses reflect your own interests and questions. ***Pro Tip: If it's not clear from your response whether or not you have actually read the text, you're probably not going into enough detail.***

Reading responses should be submitted to the appropriate "Discussion Forum" on our Canvas site by 9 a.m. on the days posted on the Course Schedule. **Please post them as text entries, not file attachments.**

Follow-up Responses: Either before or after each of our class sessions, we also encourage you to post at least one follow-up response to something you read, heard, or reflected on since you posted your initial Reading Response. For example, this could be:

- an addition to or reconsideration of your original response
- a reaction to something someone else has posted
- a response to new information you have learned
- a development of something said in class

This need not be an extensive response. Think of it instead as the equivalent of a “minute paper/muddiest point” assignment you might be asked to complete as a form of in-class writing. Writing a follow-up response (either to our in-class discussion or in response to other people) is optional, but we will take any follow-up responses you write into account when calculating final grades.

Feedback and Grading: Although we will read these responses regularly, we will not be providing written feedback on individual entries. Instead, we will watch for trends in the length, number, timing, and quality of your responses throughout the semester, and we will let you know if you need to improve. Each reading response will be graded pass-fail and is worth 15 points (10 responses x 15 points = 150 points). At the end of the semester, we will award an additional grade of up to 50 points for overall merit, based on the following scale:

- A: substantial, detailed, and/or insightful engagement or analysis
- B: some engagement or analysis, perhaps with some summary
- C: mostly summary, with little engagement or analysis
- D: shorter than 150 words, little to no understanding, and/or poorly written
- F: a pattern of late, missing, or inadequate responses

Late Responses: Because late reading responses cannot help you or us prepare for class discussion, it is important that most of your responses be submitted on time. **You may submit up to two late responses with no penalty**; any additional late responses will receive no credit, with the exception of legitimate absences, as defined by University policy. Please plan your reading and writing accordingly.

3. Position Papers (300 points): Envisioning the Good Life

Given that this course fulfills the Liberal Education requirement for Civic Life and Ethics, we would also like you to write three 750-1,000 word (approx. 3-4 pages) Position Papers in which you envision what the Good Life means for yourself and others by developing, defending, or challenging your personal values and beliefs. These writing assignments bridge the personal and analytical components of our course, giving you the opportunity to reflect on your own relationship to the subjects we will be discussing. Unlike your Reading Responses, these Position Papers ask you to respond to three specific questions:

1. What does the Anthropocene mean to you personally?
2. How is your personal vision of “the good life” related to the idea of “the just society”?
3. What is your personal position on one of our “good life conflicts”?

These Position Papers should be formatted in 12 point Times Roman (double-spaced with 1-inch margins) and submitted to our Canvas site on the days indicated on the syllabus.

While your Position Papers should primarily express your own ideas, they must also include information from the reading materials and lectures, so that they demonstrate your engagement with the ideas of others. This is how you will show us evidence of your learning. When you include material from other sources, **be sure to indicate this with quotation marks (unless you are paraphrasing) and include an appropriate citation.**

You may choose to write a bit more than 1,000 words, up to a maximum of five pages, but 750 words is the absolute minimum. Each Position Paper will be worth 100 points, and we will discuss these in class as part of our engagement with the course material.

Complete grading criteria for these is on our Canvas site, but in general the best position paper:

- develops, defends, or challenges the author’s personal values and beliefs
- engages the reading materials and/or lectures carefully and thoughtfully
- demonstrates a rich, accurate understanding of the course material
- defines terms and considers opposing arguments where appropriate
- uses quotation marks (unless paraphrasing) and includes appropriate citations for material that is not common knowledge
- is free (or almost free) of grammatical, spelling, or mechanical errors

4. Final Project (400 points): Creating the Good Life

All Grand Challenge courses involve team-oriented, issue-based projects that engage different disciplinary and personal perspectives in collaborative learning. In this course, your group project will be to help create the Good Life in whatever way you see fit.

After the first few weeks of orientation we will guide the class in forming groups of approximately 4-5 students each. As part of this process, each group will select a topic or issue concerning sustainability and the good life to explore in further detail. Each group will then decide together on an approach to create a final “deliverable” (such as a white paper, a website, a podcast or video, a public education and/or social marketing campaign, a museum exhibition, art installation, and so on).

Your work on this assignment should go beyond “book learning” and include some form of “fieldwork,” such as interviews with scientists, subject experts, policy-makers, or other relevant individuals or groups. You might also consider reaching out to local nonprofits, government agencies, and/or other organizations that are already addressing issues you care about, to see if your group could help solve one or more existing problems in a kind of group internship. While we would love to see you make the world a better place, it is also possible that your project may not involve taking action, as some aspects of sustainability and the good life are more about “seeing the world in a certain way” than “doing something specific” in response to the Anthropocene. And if the goal of your project is simply to make yourselves better people, that may also be enough.

Given that this assignment is as much about process as it is about product, one helpful way to approach it is to ask what kind of process you most enjoy: the *design* process (building a prototype), the *artistic* process (creating an art project), the *documentary* process (telling a story), the *inquiry-based* process (answering a question), and so on. In this sense, the final project is a form of “Process Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning,” which seeks to empower you to explore a subject that interests you in more detail, in whatever way you wish.

Throughout the semester, each group will submit three “milestones” to mark its progress toward its goal. In addition, each group will prepare a presentation to explain its findings, and all members of the group will submit individual evaluations of their own contributions and the contributions of the other group members. Each of these components has its own point value:

- **Milestone #1:** Annotated Bibliography, 2-3 pp., double-spaced (20 points).
- **Milestone #2:** Project Proposal, 2 pp., double-spaced (15 points). Your project proposal should answer three questions:
 1. **What are you planning to do?** What is your intended subject, what is the method by which you will address this subject, what do you plan to deliver (your deliverable), who is the intended audience for your project, and what type of process do you plan to follow in pursuing your project (see above)?
 2. **What is the mission of your project?** What is the point of what you are doing? What do you hope to achieve for yourself and/or for others? What would you like your readers/viewers to take away from your project? If you hope to create some kind of change, what is your “theory of change”? In other words, what do you expect your project will accomplish (its predicted impact) and how and why do you expect it will accomplish these things?
 3. **What would “success” look like for your project?** Set the standards by which we should judge your work, in addition to the grading criteria we provide in the syllabus.
- **Milestone #3:** Progress Report, 1-2 pp., single-spaced (15 points). Your progress report should explain what remains to be done, and who is going to do it.
- **Group Presentation** (50 points)
- **Deliverable** (250 points). **No extensions!**
- **Self-evaluation** (50 points).

Group Presentation: The group presentation is *not* the same thing as the deliverable. You should think of the presentation as a public sharing of (a) the results of your final project work up to that point and (b) a near-final draft of your deliverable. You will be expected to take advantage of the feedback you receive after your presentation to continue improving your deliverable before you submit it.

If you wish to use slides in your presentation, please share these with us *before* the presentations begin, either by sharing your Google Slides, emailing us your PowerPoint or Keynote file, or bringing a flash drive with your files on it. There will not be time to swap out laptops. Please plan to talk with the class *about* your slides, not read from them.

Presentations will be graded holistically using the following criteria:

- **Slides:** quality, creativity, clarity (5 points, if using; if not, add 5 points to the following)
- **Presentation skills:** overall verbal presentation, clarity (10 points)
- **Content of presentation:** effectiveness, clarity, robustness (25 points)
- **Class questions:** ability to respond and effectiveness of answers (10 points)

Grading criteria: Grading criteria will differ depending on the project, but some general guidelines are:

- **Content** (150 points): Is your project insightful? Does it demonstrate a rich understanding of the material it examines? Is it inspiring, impressive, and something you are proud to call your own?
- **Coherence and clarity** (25 points): Is your project focused and well organized? Does it have a clear purpose, and is it devoted to fulfilling that purpose? If you are making an argument, do you support your claims with evidence and address opposing arguments? If your project is creative or artistic, is it original and interesting? Does it compel our attention?
- **Proof-reading and documentation** (25 points): Is your project free of errors in grammar, punctuation, and spelling? Do you credit the source of borrowed ideas, statements, and/or images appropriately?
- **Integration/evidence of group work** (25 points): Is the whole greater than the sum of its parts? Is it at least the equivalent of what 4-5 people working individually would do for 40 percent of their grade?
- **Execution vs. Difficulty** (25 points): Was your goal ambitious, even if the result was imperfect?

In other words, *the final project is supposed to be a complete work, not raw footage or a lump of clay*. Outstanding final projects may result in a higher overall final grade, as they are meant to demonstrate your learning throughout the semester.

Submitting Your Project: Three things to check before submitting:

1. **Documentation:** Did you include a Works Cited list, which develops and revises your Annotated Bibliography?
2. **Reflection Statement:** If your project is not self-explanatory or does not take written form, did you include a reflection statement or some other form of written documentation, explaining what your group did, why and how you did it, what research you conducted and/or data you collected about your topic, and any other relevant context for whatever action you took?
3. **Accessibility:** Did you set up all your files, websites, and/or videos with the proper permissions for us to be able to view them? If we cannot access your files, we cannot grade them, and we will not have time to track you down during exam week to determine how to access them.

For help in planning long-term and/or collaborative projects, see the University Library's [Assignment Calculator](#) and the Center for Educational Innovation's site on [Surviving Group Projects](#). We will also review abstracts, outlines, and partial or complete drafts, with sufficient notice.

Course Schedule

How is this course structured to develop your knowledge, understanding, and abilities throughout the semester?

This schedule is subject to change, so if you miss a class you should check with a classmate for the most current information. Lecture notes, handouts, and additional readings will be available on our Canvas site. All readings are listed as bullets and should be read *before the class* on the day they appear.

PART ONE: Challenges to the Good Life

Week 1 - The Anthropocene as a Framing Concept

1/17 **Week 1.1 - Welcome**

1/19 **Week 1.2 - Good Life, Meet the Anthropocene**

- Loukianov, et al., "Young People, Good Life Narratives, and Sustainable Futures: The Case of Instagram"
- Malhi, "The Concept of the Anthropocene"
- Video: "The Great Acceleration"

Due: Reading Response #1 (by 9 a.m.)
Learning Assessment (by 9 a.m.)

Week 2 - Biodiversity Loss as a Challenge to the Good Life

1/24 **Week 2.1 - Science, Culture & Systems Thinking**

- Ellis, "Science Alone Won't Save the Earth"
- Meadows, "Dancing with Systems"
- Kimmerer, "Windigo Footprints"
- Nelson, "Drivers of Ecosystem Change" (Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, Chapter 3) and accompanying image

1/26 **Week 2.2 - Responding to Biodiversity Loss: Science, Policy & Indigeneity**

- IPBES Global Assessment Summary for Policymakers
- Oliver, "Nature Inside and Out"
- "Targeting conservation efforts ... can advance ... goals"
- Chaplin-Kramer, "Mapping Natural Assets"
- Jones, "The world has a new plan to save nature"

Due: Reading Response #2 (by 9 a.m.)

Week 3 - Climate Change as a Challenge to the Good Life

1/31 **Week 3.1 - Philosophical Perspectives on the Good Life: Hedonism & Eudaimonism**

- Fuchs, et al., "Our Vision: The Good Life"
- Video: "Good Life Goals" (how to achieve UN Sustainable Development Goals)
- Alpert, "The Good-Enough Life"
- Palmer, et al., "Environmental Ethics" (optional)

2/2 **Week 3.2 - Responding to Climate Change: Science, Anxiety & Social Action**

- Roberts, "Don't Look Up: The First Good Movie about Climate Change"
- Video: Climate Change: The View from Minute Earth
- AAAS, "What We Know: The Reality, Risks, and Response to Climate Change"
- Marris, "How to Stop Freaking Out and Tackle Climate Change"
- AAAS, "How We Respond: Community Responses to Climate Change" (optional)

Due: Reading Response #3 (by 9 a.m.)

PART TWO: Visions of the Good Life

Week 4 - The Good Life & the Just Society

2/7 **Week 4.1 - Project Identification (this is a critical day – please make every effort to attend!)**

Due: Position Paper #1 (by 1 p.m.)

- 2/9 **Week 4.2 - Environmental Justice & Non-Western Perspectives**
- Agyeman, et al., "Trends and Directions in Environmental Justice"
 - Miller, "Racism Drives Environmental Inequality—But Most Americans Don't Realize"
 - Key elements of "Indigenizing Environmental Thinking"
 - Salazar, "Buen Vivir: South America's rethinking of the future we want"
- Due: Reading Response #4 (by 9 a.m.)

Week 5 - Capitalism, Consumption & Happiness

- 2/14 **Week 5.1 - Correcting Market Failures: Is Capitalism the Problem or Solution?**
- Williams and Khanna, "It's Time to End Slash-and-Burn Capitalism"
 - Salzman, et al., "Global Status and Trends of Payments for Ecosystem Services"
 - Marchese, "Our Obsession With Growth Must End"
 - "An Ecomodernist Manifesto" (optional)
- 2/16 **Week 5.2 - Social Perspectives on the Good Life: Consumption & Happiness**
- Stewart, "Why do we buy what we buy?"
 - Bain, "Ethical consumption can't be the burden of shoppers alone"
 - Kimmerer, "The Gift of Strawberries" and "Epilogue: Returning the Gift"
 - Bhalla, "What's your 'fair share' of carbon emissions?" (optional)
- Due: Reading Response #5 (by 9 a.m.)
Mid-semester Reflection (by 9 a.m.)

Week 6 - Everybody Eats: Sustainable Food Systems & Global Food Justice

- 2/21 **Week 6.1 - Sustainable Food Systems: From Production to Consumption**
- EAT–Lancet Commission, "Summary Report"
 - Fischer, et al., "Land Sparing or Wildlife-Friendly Farming?"
 - Patel and Philippon, "Still Stuffed and Starved, Ten Years Later: A Conversation"
 - Patel, "Food Sovereignty: Power, Gender, and the Right to Food"
- Due: Milestone #1: Annotated Bibliography (by 9 a.m.)
- 2/23 **Week 6.2 - How Much Meat Should We Eat?**
- Holmes, "How much meat can we eat — sustainably?"
 - Parlasca and Qaim, "Meat Consumption & Sustainability"
 - Reynolds, et al., "Alternative Protein Sources" (optional)
 - Nyquist, "Despite sufficient crop harvests, we will fall short ..." (optional)
- Due: Reading Response #6 (by 9 a.m.)

Week 7 - Building a Renewable & Equitable Energy Economy in Minnesota

- 2/28 **Week 7.1 - Who's Got the Power? Energy Generation, Distribution & Regulation**
- Video: "What Are Distributed Energy Resources?"
 - Polikov, "Everything You Need to Know About Public Utility Commissions"
 - MPCA, 2020, "Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, 2005-2018"
 - Griffith, "From Homes to Cars, It's Now Time to Electrify Everything"
 - Bains and Dammel, "ECO Act Update: One Year of Progress" (optional)
- Due: Milestone #2: Final Project Proposal (by 9 a.m.)
- 3/2 **Week 7.2 - What Does a Just Transition Look Like — Globally vs. Locally?**
- Minnesota's 2025 Energy Action Plan (pp. 7-14)

- McCauley and Heffron, "Just Transition: Integrating Climate, Energy, and Environmental Justice"
 - Hsu, "Solar Power's Benefits Don't Shine Equally on Everyone"
- Due: Reading Response #7 (by 9 a.m.)

Week 8 - Spring Break

3/6-10 **Week 8 - No class**

PART THREE: Conflicts Over the Good Life

Week 9 - Nestlé Waters in Michigan: A Case Study

3/14 Week 9.1 - Background on the Case

- Fishman, "The Revenge of Water"
- Dempsey, "A Giant Loophole" (chap. 4 from Great Lakes for Sale)
- Seely, "Can the Great Lakes continue to fend off an increasingly thirsty world?"
- Stanley and Adler, "Bottled Water Plant Planned for South Metro"
- Weingarten and Davis, "A mega-dairy is transforming Arizona's aquifer and farming lifestyles" (optional)

Due: Position Paper #2 (by 1 p.m.)

3/16 Week 9.2 - Stakeholder Exercise

- Readings will be posted on our Canvas site

Due: Reading Response #8 (by 9 a.m.)

Week 10 - Line 3 in Minnesota: A Case Study

3/21 Week 10.1 - Background on the Case

- MPR: Oil and water: The Line 3 debate
- Erdrich, "Not Just Another Pipeline"
- Fernandez, "Poetry and Fiction Don't Tell the Whole Line 3 Story"
- Yergen, "Why the Energy Transition Will Be So Complicated" (optional)

3/23 Week 10.2 - Stakeholder Exercise

- Readings will be posted on our Canvas site

Due: Reading Response #9 (by 9 a.m.)

Week 11 - Mining in Minnesota: Past, Present, and Future Conflicts

3/28 Week 11.1 - Final Project Workday (Tentative)

3/30 Week 11.2 - Perspectives on Mining in Minnesota (TBD)

Due: Reading Response #10 (by 9 a.m.)

Week 12 - Prepping for an Uncertain Future

4/4 Week 12.1 - Preppers & Utopians: Should We Retreat from the World?

- Groff, "Waiting for the End of the World"
- Mariani, "The New Generation of Self-Created Utopias"
- O'Connell, "This Is Not the End of the World and You Are Not a Prepper"

Due: Position Paper #3 (by 1 p.m.)

Note: [Classroom to Community Workshop](#) group registration deadline (expected)

4/6 **Week 12.2 - Does Sustainability Depend on a Robust Democracy?**

Discussion: The strengths and weaknesses of individual action vs. collective action

- Renkl, "Effortless Environmentalism"
- Soll, "Individual Actions Won't Fix Our Environmental Problems"
- Utne, "Feeling Hopeless? Embrace It."

Due: Milestone #3: Final Project Progress Report (by 9 a.m.)

PART FOUR: Final Project Presentations

Week 13

4/11 **Week 13.1 - Final Project Workday (Tentative)**

Note: [Classroom to Community Workshop](#), 6-8 pm, on Zoom

4/13 **Week 13.2 - Group Presentations (Part One)**

Week 14

4/18 **Week 14.1 - Group Presentations (Part Two)**

4/20 **Week 14.2 - Group Presentations (Part Three)**

Week 15

4/25 **Week 15.1 - Group Presentations (Part Four)**

4/27 **Week 15.2 - Last class: Deliverables due by 11:59 p.m. *No extensions!***

Exam Week

5/1 **Monday - Self-evaluations due by 11:59 p.m.**

5/15 **Monday - Final grades due by 11:59 pm**