

How Environmentally Sustainable is Marlboro College?

Time: F 1.30–4.50pm

Place: Sci217

Level: Introductory

Credits: 3

Instructor: Matt Ollis

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Website: <http://cs.marlboro.edu/courses/fall2010/sustainable/home>

Blurb: In our Environmental Mission Statement we commit to “using energy efficiently and resources wisely.” Do we? How do we know? In this course we critically compare different methods of assessing environmental impact and dig into the data to evaluate our performance. Through a combination of guest speakers and hands-on activities we range across many topics within sustainability at every level of the Marlboro community. These topics include energy, waste, food, transport, forestry and greenhouse gas emissions.

To a large extent we will decide as a group the most fruitful way forward both in considering the larger picture of sustainability and choosing/designing metrics for evaluating Marlboro’s performance. This means that there is not a full syllabus available yet. (And there won’t be until *after* the course!) However, there is some structure locked in. William Edelglass will join us to discuss climate change and moral responsibility; Jenny Ramstetter will take us out into the woods to consider the ecosystems that exist on campus and examine the college’s forestry management plan; we’ll dig into the nuts and bolts of how the campus runs with Don Capponcelli and KP Peterson; we’ll be working on the community-built greenhouse with Kenny Card; Adam Franklin-Lyons will be talking with us about food issues and Jim Tober will also join us (topic to be confirmed).

The text for the course—*Sharing Nature’s Interest* by Chambers, Simmons and Wackernagel—is available in the bookstore.

Grading: The principal aim of the course is to produce an evaluation of how environmentally sustainable Marlboro College is (as you may have gathered from the title of the class). This piece will be a whole-class effort for which one grade will be assigned to all participants. This will constitute 30% of your grade. There will be two individual pieces of graded work. The first will be a mid-term paper for which you will have a wide range of choices of topic counting for 20%. The second will be a final paper proposing some action the college could take to improve its environmental practices and evaluating its various costs and benefits; this also counts for 20%. The remaining 30% of the grade will be based on attendance, participation, engagement and sundry smaller homework tasks.

What now: For the last two years Marlboro College has completed the Sierra Club “Cool Schools” survey evaluating the environmental performance of colleges and universities across the country. The latest results were recently published and can be viewed, along with commentary, evaluation methodology and the colleges’ surveys, at this address:

http://www.sierraclub.org/sierra/201009/cool_schools/default.aspx

Before class tomorrow please browse these pages and the college’s two internal reports that are linked on the course website. Consider: What are the strengths and weaknesses of the survey? What action, if any, should Marlboro take based on the results? What would you do differently if you wanted to assess the sustainability of a college campus? Should Marlboro continue to participate?

Academic Integrity: You are expected to be aware of the college’s policy on academic integrity and to abide by it. It can be found on the college website, and is linked from the course website. Please come and talk to me if anything is unclear.