

## Course Overview

This course grapples with the daunting challenges facing contemporary cities and opportunities for promoting more sustainable paths forward. Blending theoretical reflection and practical case analysis of innovative, local and international sustainability projects, we explore how we might create vibrant places that would allow us to live, get around, build, work, and engage with others in socio-culturally, economically, and ecologically responsible and regenerative ways. In the midst of great pessimism, the course takes a critically optimistic tone, focusing on creative visioning and marking out promising pathways to a brighter future while recognizing the significant barriers in the way. Beyond standard lectures, the course will be built around engaging group discussion, a careful read of two recent texts - “Sustainist Design Guide” and “Happy Cities”, guest speakers, field excursions, and provocative videos.

## Assessment

1. **Sustainist Design Quiz** – (15%) Jan 19<sup>th</sup>
2. **Sustainist Design Case Study Assignment** (20%) In a small group you will research, and produce a short illustrated case study of a sustainability project based on the framework developed in the text. Due Mar 28<sup>th</sup>
3. **Happy City Seminar** (20%) – With a partner you will lead a discussion focusing on a chapter from the text sometime during the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the term.
4. **Participation** (20%) – consists of

## Notes on learning expectations

1. Think deeply about why you are here and what you want to get out of your experience at UVic in the short time you'll be here. Use this time wisely to develop marketable skills and good habits - e.g. effective written, visual and oral communication, critical thinking\*, problem solving, empathic listening, organization, perseverance, and initiative.
2. I consider such skill development and good habit formation as being at least as important as content mastery in this course. While I want you to learn important things about sustainable communities, I also want you to develop particular skills and habits. Keep in mind employers are much more concerned with your skills and habits than your marks. For example, communicating insightfully and persuasively about ecological and issues is absolutely critical for bringing positive change about.
3. Effective learning involves recognizing how the course material is directly relevant to your life – in this case how sustainability is not just some topic of scholarly consideration but intimately about your future on this planet.
4. \*Note: critical thinking is often misrepresented as cynical, pessimistic, or “being against things”. In this class it should rather be understood in terms of healthy skepticism with received wisdom recognizing the world could / should be