

FYS103 G - First-Year Seminar: You Can Make a Difference - Fall 2023
Lasell University - Professor Betsy Leondar-Wright

OVERVIEW: Droughts, fires, flooded coastlines, extreme heat, mega-storms: climate change is already harming people around the world, especially in poor countries. Within your lifetime it could become a catastrophe threatening all life on earth - unless enough people take action to turn the situation around. You can be one of those people!

In this course, you will learn what works to bring about an environmental change. In a team, you will get to know one climate action organization and teach the class about their strategy. And the whole class together will identify one way Lasell could lighten its carbon footprint, educate the campus community about it and bring a proposal to decision-makers.

You will also learn tips for studying at the college level and navigating Lasell's resources, and you'll get lots of practice in all the researching, reading, writing, speaking and self-care skills you'll need to ace your college courses.

SUMMARY OF DEADLINES

Make sure you have a way of keeping track of what assignments are coming up.

Tuesday Sept 19 - Essay on your experience of empowerment and disempowerment

Thursday Oct 5 – Upload first written reflection paper before class; Turn in journal in class

Tuesday Nov 7 – Upload second written reflection paper before class; Turn in journal in class

Wednesday December 6 - Deadline for completing whole group advocacy campaign

Staggered dates from November 2 to 21 – Team presentations

Remember to track your team's deadline.

SCHEDULE OF SESSIONS, READINGS AND DEADLINES

INTRODUCTION SECTION
1. Tuesday Sept 5 - Welcome to Lasell; What's empowering and disempowering
2. Thursday Sept 7 - Making a difference on climate change; Overview of the course
3. Tuesday Sept 12 - Resources to succeed in college
<i>Reading: Active reading handout (in Module for this week)</i> <i>Homework: Survey on your study habits before class</i>
4. Thursday Sept 14 – What we will do this semester; Climate basics
<i>Reading: Climate Basics for Kids, https://www.c2es.org/content/climate-basics-for-kids/</i> <i>Bring in your clarifying questions about the reading to class</i>
SECTION 1 - CLIMATE CRISIS, CLIMATE SOLUTIONS
5. Tuesday Sept 19 – Introduction to youth climate action
<i>Assignment due: Essay due</i>
6. Thursday September 21 - Film: <i>This Changes Everything</i>
7. Tuesday Sept 26 - Guest speaker: Which solutions are the priority?
<i>Guest facilitator: Workshop on En-roads Climate solutions model by Alice Plane</i>
8. Thursday Sept 28 - Which solutions are the priority?
9. Tuesday Oct 3 - Individual carbon footprints; Learning from readings
<i>Reading (in the Module): Mothers Out Front handout on personal/systemic change</i>
SECTION 2 - HOW TO MAKE CHANGE
10. Thursday Oct 5 – What could Lasell do?
<i>Reading: <u>Lasell's sustainability plan</u>; Open all 4 tabs under "What We're Doing"; bring questions for the guest speaker</i> <i>Assignments due: Upload first written reflection paper before class; Turn in journal in class</i>
11. Tuesday October 10 - Campaigns for climate solutions
<i>Reading: Hunter, Climate Action Handbook. Part of Chapter 2, Campaigns, pp. 19 to top of 27</i> DEADLINE: Choose campaign goal by this class

12. Thursday Oct 12 - Strategies for climate solutions
<i>Homework: Take 350.org's <u>Intro to Campaigning online training</u> (scroll down, middle option) watch videos, answer questions and bring your answers to class.</i>
<i>Assignment deadline for teams: Fill in name, organization and date for interview and interview questions</i>
13. Tuesday Oct 17 - Public opinion about the climate crisis; Campaign message-crafting
14. Thursday Oct 19 – Talking with others about your campaign goal
15. Tuesday Oct 24 – Field trip to gas leaks (or if rain, Meet Climate Activists game)
16. Thursday Oct 26 – Meet Climate Activists game (rain date for field trip); Greener Lasell campaign planning
17. Tuesday October 31 – Greener Lasell campaign planning
18. Thursday Nov 2 - Team presentation; Greener Lasell campaign meeting
Team presentation on the strategy of grassroots pressure on elected officials
19. Tuesday Nov 7 - Team presentation; Greener Lasell campaign meeting
<i>Assignment due: Monthly journal turn-in and reflection paper</i>
Team presentation on the strategy of boycotts & divestment from fossil fuels
20. Thursday Nov 9 - Team presentation; Greener Lasell campaign meeting
Team presentation on the strategy of blockades, protests and other nonviolent direct action
21. Tuesday Nov 14 – Team presentation; Greener Lasell campaign meeting
Team presentation on the strategy of persuasion and technical assistance to change technology
22. Thursday November 16 - Team presentation; Greener Lasell campaign meeting
Team presentation on the strategy of voter mobilization to elect pro-climate politicians
23. Tuesday Nov 21 - Team presentation; Greener Lasell campaign meeting
Team presentation on the strategy of lawsuits
<i>NO CLASS ON THURSDAY NOVEMBER 23 - HAPPY THANKSGIVING!</i>
24. Tuesday November 28 – Greener Lasell campaign meeting

25. Thursday November 30 - Prepare for Symposium and other campaign activities

Tuesday Dec 5 - No class - SYMPOSIUM – Please attend and represent the campaign

Wednesday December 6 - Deadline for completion of Greener Lasell campaign

26. Thursday December 7 - Last class - Debrief campaign and wrap up course

COURSE EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING:

A) Reading. Fact sheets on climate change, organizational websites, essays, book chapters, how-to materials: you will read many kinds of sources in this course. The purpose of reading is to get a three-dimensional picture of the impacts of climate change, the solutions to limit its impacts, and the strategies to reach those solutions.

The discussions and activities we do in class will presume you have done the readings *by the date they are listed*. Please come to class ready to ask questions about them and discuss them. Clarifying questions are always welcome, in class, in the professor's office hours or by email.

B) Class attendance and participation. In the classroom you will practice the skills of a successful college student, by sharing your experiences and ideas, by listening to others, by giving small presentations, by doing in-class exercises, and by discussing the readings. That's why your most important responsibility is to come to every class and engage fully while here.

The class participation grade (15% of the final grade) will be based on attendance, engagement with in-class activities, homework, and verbal participation, and demonstrated understanding of the readings. Both speaking and focused listening will be valued; either too much silence or too much over- participation (interrupting others or dominating discussions) could negatively affect your grade.

If you miss a class, you are responsible for getting notes from a classmate and for following any links on Canvas to keep up. More than three unexcused absences will lower your final grade by 1/2 point per absence. Arriving more than 10 minutes late counts as half an absence.

Mental absences will be treated the same as physical absences, reducing your grade if they happen too often. Please do not look at or listen to unrelated content on a device (laptop, phone, etc.) during class; unless we are doing an exercise requiring the internet, offline laptops may be used for taking notes only. Please put phones out of sight, disconnect from the internet, and shut off any device that might make noise or otherwise distract you or others during class.

Homework assignments will count towards this part of your grade. Conversations with the professor and peer mentor outside of class also add points to your grade. Please make one

appointment to meet one-on-one with the professor and one to meet with the peer mentor during the semester. We want to get to know you!

C. ASSIGNMENTS. To succeed as a college student, you will need to hone your skills in note-taking, project management, writing, public speaking and teamwork, and the assignments in this seminar are designed to help you expand and practice those skills.

Please submit written assignments electronically via the online submission function of the Canvas course website, unless otherwise noted.

1. Short essay on you and empowerment – Due September 19; 250 to 500 words; up to 5 points

When in your life have you felt disempowered, like you couldn't pull off something challenging? When have you felt empowered, solo and/or together with a group? What made the difference? When have you been told "you can do it"? And when have you been told "you can't do it"—including any negative messages you heard that "someone like you can't..." based on your gender, race / ethnicity, age cohort, disability or other social identities – and how have you resisted such discouragement? Reflect on the role of adults (teachers, mentors, parents, coaches), as well as peers, who have affected your levels of empowerment and disempowerment.

The two goals of this assignment are to get you thinking about yourself and the self-confidence needed for climate advocacy; and to get early practice in writing for a college course.

Grade will be based on completeness in answering the questions (in any order) with examples from your own experience, and drawing out general points from them; on thoughtfulness; and on clear clean writing (no particular formal style required, just well-organized paragraphs with complete, well-punctuated sentences).

2. Journaling – 2 deadlines to turn in your journal in class (September entries on Oct 5; October entries on Nov 7) @ 5 points = up to 10 total

In a spiral notebook, spend a few minutes writing about each reading, film, guest speaker, student presentation, classroom activity, etc. Often class sessions will include some writing time, but make sure to budget time to write about readings on your own time, aiming for at least 3 bullet points per source. At the end of each month, turn your journal in to the professor. These notes will be the source material for your 2 reflection papers (see below).

The goal of this assignment is to strengthen your habit of notetaking. Taking handwritten notes is a very effective way of anchoring your learning and generating your own responses and ideas. You will remember course content much better if you write about it in your own words.

Grades will be based on completeness (number of readings, films, speakers and activities covered, and evidence of a thorough mark-up system), not on the writing quality or contents, as you're writing for your own use.

3. Reflection essays – 2 deadlines (Oct 5; Nov 7); 450 to 750 words; @ 10 points = up to 20 total points

Use your handwritten journal entries to synthesize what you learned from the course in the prior month and reflect on it. The first step is to re-read and mark up key points in your journal, using highlighter pens, post-its or another mark-up method. Then look for repeated themes in what you've marked, to answer the question "what are my big take-aways from what I learned last month?" Come up with at least 3 themes to write about, pulling together content from various readings, films, speakers, activities, etc, into a synthesis. Feel free to include your own reactions, opinions and feelings of hope or despair, as well as information and concepts you learned. Each paper should have an opening, at least 3 sections (each referring to at least 2+ course sources (4+ total), and a conclusion. All sentences should be your own, with no quotes. No reference list (bibliography) is needed for course sources; just put in parentheses the author, e.g. (Bastida) or the title, e.g. (*This Changes Everything*), to clarify when you refer to or draw from a reading or video.

The goals of this assignment are to strengthen your skills of synthesizing and writing at a college level, and to give you a solid understanding of climate crises, solutions to them and strategies to reach those solutions.

Grades will be based on thoughtfulness; on number of course sources summarized how accurately and synthesized how well, and on writing quality. An A-level paper will reflect much understanding of course content and deep thought about bringing things together and forming opinions and judgments.

4. Greener Lasell campaign – with deadline for completion December 6 – Group grade for everyone, up to 20 points; Individual grade for leadership roles, up to 10 points. Extra credit of 5 points if the campaign succeeds in Lasell agreeing to implement the goal.

Lasell University has a sustainability plan that will have positive impacts on climate change, but as an institution we could do even better. As we learn about solutions to mitigate crises caused by climate change, the whole class will agree on one small, doable improvement Lasell could make. As we learn about strategies to get organizations to change their practices, the whole class will pick some methods to influence Lasell decision-makers to make that improvement. You will implement the plan in class sessions and by activities outside class time.

The goals of this assignment are to practice the skills involved in climate advocacy, to apply strategy concepts to a real-world campaign, to raise awareness of climate change

on campus – and ideally to actually change what Lasell does in the future.

The group grade will be based on how realistic the campaign plan is, how well the steps are carried out, and how well the class works together.

The individual grades will be based on the amount of effort outside of class sessions, and on leadership roles such as speaking at meetings with Lasell officials, or on Lasell radio/TV, creating materials such as posters, Instagram memes and Symposium display; and recruiting allies who get involved in the campaign. There will be enough leadership opportunities that everyone can be a leader.

The extra credit will be based on getting verbal and written commitments to act on the solution that is the campaign goal from a Lasell decision-maker. (A tentative response like “we’ll consider it” doesn’t count.)

5. Team presentations on strategies – Each team will have a different deadline in November – up to 20 points total

Each team will sign up for one strategy that organizations are using to push for climate solutions and teach the class about how that strategy is being used.

Your team will research one or more organizations who use that strategy, and attempt to set up and record a remote interview with someone involved in the organization, asking them about their climate change strategy and about their successes and failures so far. Based on what the organization(s) want supporters to do, your team will come up with a quick action for everyone in the class to do during class or before the next session, such as signing an online petition, posting something on social media, or contacting an elected official or other decision-maker.

On your presentation date, all team members will teach the class for approximately half an hour. Together you will present a graphically rich powerpoint about the strategy and organization(s) for about 10 minutes, play excerpt(s) from the interview(s) you recorded, and invite students to take an action step and help them carry it out in less than 15 minutes. A deduction will be taken for missing team members.

The goals of this assignment are to strengthen your skills in teamwork, research, analysis, graphics and speaking in front of groups; and to increase the whole class’s understanding of strategies to win climate change solutions.

Grade will be based on how well researched the topic is; how well the powerpoint teaches visually, and how clearly the verbal presentation explains the organization(s) and strategy (up to 11 points); on thoughtfulness of interview and of choosing excerpts to show (up to 7 points); and on choice of brief action for other students to take and helpfulness in getting them to take it (up to 2 points). The whole team will get the same grade for the assignment, but deductions will be taken from the grade of any inactive or missing team members.

GRADING

Grades are on a 100-point scale. Your final grade will be based on the total number of points you earn through class participation and assignments.

Here is a summary of your opportunities to earn points:

- ◇ Attendance and class participation, including homework and reading = up to 15
- ◇ Essay on what makes you feel empowered or disempowered = 5
- ◇ Journals entries @ 5 per month = 10
- ◇ Monthly reflection papers @ 10 = 20
- ◇ Team presentation on a strategy (powerpoint presentation that profiles an organization and its strategy, including recorded interview(s) and action for class to take) = 20
- ◇ Group grade for Greener Lasell campaign - up to 20-point group grade + up to 10-point individual grade for playing leadership roles = 30

Total = 100

Extra credit for Symposium on December 5 – up to 5 points

(Up to 2 point for creating materials for booth outside of class time; 1 for coming early to set up class booth; 2 for staffing booth)

Extra credit if group campaign succeeds at its goal = 5

COURSE POLICIES

Policy on student opinions

The journaling, reflection essays, class discussions and team presentations will ask you to put forward opinions. Feel free to try out a stance new to you, or one you aren't sure you actually agree with. If you disagree with the professor or the author of a reading or with a film, you will not be graded more strictly for that; if you agree, you will not be graded more leniently. All positions you take will be evaluated only by whether you present evidence and whether you make a reasoned argument.

Absences from class and extensions

Your first 3 absences won't be penalized, because I know that life happens. Starting with the 4th absence, I'll take one-half point off your final grade per absence.

If you miss 4+ class sessions and want to avoid that deduction, you are welcome to bring me documentation of an unavoidable conflict or serious situation.

For example, you could bring a doctor's note, prescription slip or appointment verification to document illness or injury; a note from a Lasell dean or social service provider could verify a request on the basis of family emergency; a clergy member could verify a religious obligation; a coach or professor could verify a mandatory schedule conflict.

The other option for restoring class participation credit is to do make-up work for the class(es) you missed, such as doing a classroom exercise or writing a summary of a film or reading.

Three late arrivals count as one absence.

A similar policy applies to late submissions of assignments. Minutes or hours late don't matter, but days late do: the deduction clock for late submissions starts ticking 24 hours after the deadline. One-tenth of the possible credit will be deducted for each weekday late. An excused extension can be granted for a documented unavoidable crisis.

Since individual computer troubles won't be accepted as an excuse for late submissions, it's important to save frequently and back everything up on OneDrive or another site in the cloud.

Identity Expression: This classroom is a safe space for all community members to express their identity, and respect will be given to all. The professor is committed to allyship, supporting your social identities and the expression thereof, but may not always be perfect in this regard and welcome your feedback. The Donahue Institute for Ethics, Diversity, & Inclusion is an excellent, supportive office on campus to help you, and it has a Bias Reporting system if you feel disrespected or discriminated against (anytime or anywhere) due to your identity expression or hear someone else disrespected. We welcome you to use the gender pronouns most comfortable for you and encourage you to share your preferences with us.

LEARNING GOALS OF FIRST-YEAR SEMINARS

First-Year Seminars, including this one, are designed to strengthen your skills and knowledge in the core areas that Lasell prioritizes. As you practice the four Knowledge Perspectives (KPs) and the seven Core Intellectual Skills, you are building your capacity to excel in all your other college courses, in advocating for a better world - and in your future career.

4 Knowledge Perspectives:

- to interpret and analyze the complex interrelationships and inequities in human societies in a global and historical context (Global & Historical Perspective)
- to analyze modes of creative self-expression with an aesthetic perspective (Aesthetics & Creativity)
- to apply the process of scientific inquiry to comprehend the natural world and to solve problems (Scientific Inquiry & Problem Solving)
- to evaluate and understand how individual differences relate to social norms, trends and problems (Individuals and Society)

7 Core Intellectual Skills:

- to read and respond in an informed and discerning way to written texts of different genres
- to write clear, well-organized, persuasive prose
- to use listening and speaking skills to express ideas and information clearly and confidently in a variety of settings
- to apply quantitative reasoning to solve problems effectively
- to use appropriate technological tools to solve problems efficiently

- to collect, analyze, and synthesize appropriate data and sources effectively, ethically and legally
- to work effectively in collaborative settings

Learn the ropes of succeeding at Lasell College:

- How to use Canvas and syllabi to understand professor expectations
- Where to get support with academic, health and other problems
- How to manage your time, meet your deadlines and maximize your grades
- How to come across like a professional to professors and employers

Definition of Connected Learning

Connected learning is the Lasell College educational philosophy describing the process of integrating ideas, concepts, and direct experience through action, combining projects, simulations, and real-world situations with direct, critical reflection. At Lasell, we include these components in every course so that students further develop and apply the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom.

Lasell's mission statement

We immerse students in experiential and collaborative learning that fosters lifelong intellectual exploration and social responsibility.