

 <p>THE CENTER FOR JUSTICE & PEACEBUILDING</p> <p>A PROGRAM OF EASTERN Mennonite UNIVERSITY</p>	<p>Design for Sustainability and Regeneration Course PAX 689</p> <p>SPI 2025 Session 2: May 29th to June 6th</p> <p><i>Course meeting location and time: TBA</i></p>
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INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION:

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COURSE DESCRIPTION:

The short course *Design for Sustainability and Regeneration* equips participants with systemic thinking skills, practical tools, and the knowledge needed to redesign lives, projects, and ecosystems for sustainability. Based on the Gaia Education 4D Framework, the course explores sustainability and regeneration through four interconnected dimensions: Social, Ecology, Economy, and Worldview. Through a combination of theoretical and experiential learning, participants will dive into each of these dimensions with expert facilitators, and engage in a field trip to explore sustainable initiatives in the region.

Participants will gain practical skills to design regenerative communities, projects, and organizations with stronger social systems, improved efficiency, and healthier environments. The course also emphasizes the importance of community-building, strong local economies, and efficient resource use, helping participants foster a deeper sense of belonging. By the end of the course, you will be inspired to apply sustainability principles to any field, while connecting with a global network of change-makers.

This program, certified by Gaia Education as a Mini-EDE, is a short version of the Ecovillage Design Education Programme (EDE), adapted for the University.

COURSE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

The course objectives can be detailed according to the 4D Framework: Social, Ecology, Economy, and Worldview Dimensions.

Social Dimension

The Social Dimension focuses on building strong groups and communities by fostering collaborative communication, participatory processes and inclusive decision-making. Students will learn to navigate

conflict, embrace diverse perspectives, and facilitate group processes that strengthen relationships and create healthy social environments.

In the Social Dimension, students will learn:

- To co-create healthy and collaborative groups, projects, communities, and/or organisations
- To improve your communication skills and communicate more compassionately
- To share leadership and use participatory processes to make decisions that everyone can accept
- To navigate conflict and embrace diversity – of ideas, beliefs, roles, etc.

Ecological Dimension

Ecological designers ensure that life-supporting natural functions are not only preserved but regenerated whenever possible. They work with nature rather than against it to support the creation of life.

In the Ecological Dimension, students will learn:

- To make whole-systems designs using permaculture principles
- To create healthier environments through local and low impact solutions
- To use appropriate technology for water and waste management
- To use renewable energies for greater efficiency
- To build with natural materials
- To regenerate soils and ecosystems while producing healthy food

Economic Dimension

Our current economic system is unsustainable, yet few are aware of the alternatives. This course will help you understand those alternatives and the true meaning of economy and wealth.

In the Economic Dimension students will learn:

- About the unsustainability of the global economic system
- How to close the loops creating circular economies
- The importance of localization and how to strengthen local economies
- About the impact of conscious and responsible consumption
- How to create complementary currencies and systems

Worldview Dimension

The Worldview Dimension invites you to become more conscious of how our own worldview and value system affect our perceived needs and inform the way we act in the world and design solutions.

In the Worldview Dimension, students will learn:

- To observe and become aware of how worldviews permeate our actions and decision-making
- To create a deep connection with nature through personal experience
- To think global and act local to support the great transition
- To become more sustainable
- To develop a healthy lifestyle
- To support implementing global sustainability frameworks on a local level (Eg. The SDGs - Sustainable Development Goals)

Throughout the course students will learn:

- How groups, communities, and neighbourhoods worldwide are redesigning their realities to co-create regenerative cultures
- How it is possible to live a low impact, low consumption and high-quality lifestyle
- The benefits of participatory processes and experiential learning
- The power of education in transforming lives and realities

*** It is important to note that while the short course will not allow for an in-depth exploration of each topic, it will provide an overview of all the content areas and their interconnections. Students will gain valuable insights, be encouraged to reflect critically, and apply their knowledge through collaborative group projects. Additionally, local visits to case studies will offer the opportunity to observe real-world examples in action and engage directly with practitioners who are actively implementing these initiatives on the ground.*

Project Design:

The course methodology emphasizes collaboration through the formation of Design Groups, which act as dynamic laboratories for experimenting with and applying the tools and knowledge acquired throughout the program. Each group is tasked with developing a project or implementing an initiative that promotes sustainability, with the flexibility to either create something new or support an existing initiative.

- Hands-on Experience: Students will work in design teams to gain practical experience in applying their learning to real-world challenges.
- Interest-Based Groups: Design Groups will be formed around shared topics of interest, aligning with students' passions and goals.
- Project Development: Students will co-create meaningful projects that reflect the principles and content covered in the program.
- Integrative Exercise: Collaborative projects will serve as opportunities to explore the interconnected dimensions of sustainability.

Case Studies: visiting local projects and communities

To enrich the learning experience, the course includes visits to two local projects that will serve as practical case studies. These visits provide students with the opportunity to observe real-world applications of the concepts explored during the program, deepening their understanding and inspiring new perspectives.

Twin Oaks Community: <https://www.twinoaks.org/>

Silver Run Forest Farm: <https://silverrunforestfarm.org/>

RECOMMENDED TEXTS AND OTHER RESOURCES: suggested reading materials and other relevant resources are listed below.

SOCIAL

BUCK, J. and VILLENES, S. *We the people: consenting to a deeper democracy. A guide to sociocratic principles and methods.* Sociocracy.info. Washington D.C, 2007.

BUTLER, Lawrence; ROTHSTEIN, Amy. *On Conflict and Consensus: A Handbook on Formal Consensus Decision-Making.* Foods Not Bombs Publishing, 1998.

CHRISTIAN, Diana Leafe. *Creating a Life Together: Practical Tools to Grow Ecovillages and Intentional Communities.* New Society Publishers, 2003.

Howard Zehr. *The Little Book of Restorative Justice.* Revised and updated ed., 2015. ISBN 9781561488230. \$6.99. **Available via EMU Library in hardcopy and online:** <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/emu/detail.action?docID=1922319>

ROSENBERG, Marshall. *Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life: Life-Changing Tools for Healthy Relationships.* PuddleDancer Press, 2015.

SOMÉ, Sobonfu. *The spirit of intimacy: ancient teachings in the ways of relationships.* New York : W. Morrow, 1999.

ECOLOGY

Bruce

ECONOMY

LOCKYER, Joshua. Community, commons, and degrowth at Dancing Rabbit Ecovillage. *Journal of Political Ecology* 24: 519-542, 2017.

Money as Debt: [Money as Debt - Full Documentary](#) (47')

Trade Gone Mad: <https://www.localfutures.org/films/trade-gone-mad/> (4')

The Economics of Happiness: <https://www.localfutures.org/programs/the-economics-of-happiness/>
(1:08)

WORLDVIEW

MACY, Joanna; YOUNG BROWN, Molly. *Coming Back to Life: The Guide to the Work that Reconnects*. New Society Publishers, 2014

WAHL, Daniel. *Designing Regenerative Cultures*. Triarchy Press Ltd, 2016.

Articles on Ecovillages

FOIS, Francesca ; FORINO Giuseppe. The self-built ecovillage in L'Aquila, Italy: community resilience as a grassroots response to environmental shock. *Disasters*, 38(4): 719 – 739, 2014.

KUNZE, Iris. Social Innovations for Communal and Ecological Living: Lessons from Sustainability Research and Observations in Intentional Communities. *Communal Societies: Journal of the Communal Studies Association*. V. 32, N. 1, 2012.

LITFIN, K. Reinventing the future: The global ecovillage movement as a holistic knowledge community. In: KÜTTING, G.; LIPSCHUTZ, R. (Ed.). *Environmental governance: power and knowledge in a local-global world*. p. 124-144. Routledge, 2009

REQUIRED ASSIGNMENTS:

Course Participation: 25% [expected of all participants]

Students are expected to attend each session and be ready to participate in group exercises and discussions.

Project Development and Presentation: 50% [expected of all participants receiving 2 or 3 credits and Gaia Education certification]

Students are expected to develop projects in groups, bringing together the course content and their interests. At the end of the course, they will be invited to present their projects. Presentations will be graded based on the following criteria: Preparation, Clarity of Presentation, Engagement with Content, Articulation between Topics/Dimensions. Engagement on the project groups throughout the course will also be evaluated. The final version of the project can be submitted until August 1st, 2025. (Please see the Project Design session above for more details).

Case Study Essay: 25% [expected of participants receiving 3 credits only]

Students are expected to write an essay articulating the course content to the local visits/case studies. Choose one of the case studies. Connect and compare to course sessions, readings and additional resources, and contribute additional background research as needed.

Due Dates:

Students taking the course for credit have until August 1st, 2025 to complete their graded work, including the submission of the essay and the final version of the project. Students will continue working on the essay and the final version of the project in June and July after SPI concludes.

DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE:

The course program and daily schedule can be found HERE: [MINI EDE SPI SCHEDULE](#)

SPI ATTENDANCE POLICY:

It is expected that individuals registering for an SPI session will attend the entire course (barring unforeseen travel delays or emergencies). Please contact SPI directly at spi@emu.edu before registering if you know you will have to miss any days of a course. SPI certificates are provided to participants only if they miss no more than one class day unless prior arrangements have been made with the SPI team and confirmed with the instructor. **For-credit participants are expected to attend all class sessions unless they are given permission from the instructor to miss a session.** SPI courses rely on active student participation in a learning community. If a participant misses class repeatedly and this disrupts the learning for others, they will be asked to leave the course and no money will be refunded for remaining course time.

GRADING CRITERIA AND OTHER POLICIES:

SPI provides all students taking the course for graduate credit some supplemental information that will serve as a resource after SPI when students are working on course assignments. This includes information on library resources, EMU's academic integrity policy, and guidelines for writing graduate papers, information regarding the grading scale and course deadlines, and then some suggestions we have for you in order to make your experience of taking SPI courses for graduate credit as successful as possible! These [documents](#) are all available online.