

**John Felice Rome Center**  
**Course: Environmental Sustainability (ENVS 283)**

Summer 2026

Mondays/Wednesdays | 9:00-12:00pm (meeting room tbc)

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Office Hours: Mon. 12:00-1:00pm (by appointment)

*Please note: this is an Engaged Learning course, approved for the Service-Learning category, satisfying the Loyola University Chicago Engaged Learning requirement. All students must complete the service-learning experience and related assignments in order to successfully pass this course.*

### **Course Description**

This course will analyze the impacts of current global environmental challenges affecting our planet and our society. Most of the pressures on our ecosystems, climate, atmosphere and oceans are anthropic and testify how we have reached a critical juncture in our relationship with the environment. Human activities are ubiquitous and the consequences on the environment have become so severe that they have pushed key environmental parameters well beyond a range of natural variability, leading the Earth system to operate in a no-analogue zone.

In order to analyze some of the key drivers of environmental degradation, the course will cover basic topics such as biodiversity and ecosystem services, air pollution and atmosphere, climate change and food systems. We will describe the impacts that anthropic activities, such as waste production and unsustainable consumption practices, are posing on our ecosystems and the related severe social and economic consequences.

We will examine initiatives and actions that policy makers, stakeholders and citizens are carrying out to address these significant pressures and compare different approaches adopted at local, national and European level. This course will provide a basic understanding of sustainable development principles and an increased awareness and capability to interpret the complex interrelations between current environmental pressures and different social, economic, political and cultural contexts.

Work in class will be complemented with practical activities regarding sustainability.

### **Learning Outcomes**

On completion of the course students should be able to:

- Develop the basic concepts of environmental sustainability.
- Determine the main drivers of environmental degradation and assess the social and economic risks.
- Provide examples of policy initiatives and projects to achieve high levels of individual and ecological wellbeing.
- Articulate and apply environmental sustainability indicators (to improve thinking, problem solving, and decision making).
- Improve awareness and communication skills related to environmental sustainability.

Please note that, as this is a Service Learning course, you are asked to satisfy the first two learning outcomes in connection with your Service Learning experience at Orti Urbani Monte Ciocchi.

### **Required Text / Materials**

Assigned readings will be posted on Sakai

Assigned readings will be found on various scientific and policy publications, printed papers/slides

Each week's readings must be completed before coming to class



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### **Attendance Policy**

In accordance with the Rome Center mission to promote a higher level of academic rigor, all courses adhere to the following attendance policy. Prompt attendance, preparation and active participation in course discussions are expected from every student. Any lateness or leaving class early will impact the final course grade.

Attendance is mandatory at every class meeting for each course. Absence due to sickness or injury needs to be corroborated by a doctor's note. Students late to class twice will be credited with one absence in accordance with the JFRC's Attendance policy. Three (3) absences will result in an automatic failure (F). Travel does not constitute reason to miss class.

### **Assessment Components**

• Participation	20%
• Assignments	20%
• Service learning	15%
• Final Exam	45%

### **Participation**

The topics addressed throughout the semester will be presented and discussed in class. Attending, participating and coming prepared to class are crucial aspects of this course. Students will be invited to share their views on the different topics during the lessons either individually or in group discussions while respecting different opinions of the other students. Group discussions will be organized weekly around different thematic issues covered during the semester. Readings will provide support and guidance to students for their class discussion.

### **Assignments**

Students will be asked to complete assignments on specific topics covered during the semester (waste, air pollution and climate, food systems). The assignments will help students interpret the environmental challenges and allow them to be better prepared for the presentation and for both midterm and final exams. The assignments will be posted on Sakai.

### **Service learning**

The Service Learning component of this course, which should total at least 20 hours, requires students to engage with the Orti Urbani Monte Ciocchi community garden to support its development and maintenance. This will be achieved through on-site engagement and reflection tasks. Specific project details will be shared in class.

The Service Learning portion of the course will be assessed taking into account the quality of practical engagement with the site and the thoroughness of the reflection component, which will be demonstrated through in-class discussion and a dedicated written assignment.

### **Final Exam**

The final exam will be based on the topics presented and discussed throughout the course. Students will have 2 hours to complete the exam.



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### **Grading**

94-100: A  
90-93: A-  
87-89: B+  
84-86: B  
80-83: B-  
77-79: C+  
74-76: C  
70-73: C-  
67-69: D+  
60-66: D  
59 or lower: F

### **Academic Integrity**

Plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are unacceptable at the the Rome Center and will be dealt with in accordance with Loyola University Chicago's guidelines. Please familiarize yourself with Loyola's standards here: <https://catalog.luc.edu/academic-standards-regulations/undergraduate/>. You are responsible to comply with the LUC University Catalog.

### **Statement on Title IX**

The Rome Center follows Loyola's [Comprehensive Policy and Procedures for Addressing Discrimination, Sexual Misconduct, Retaliation](#) and will comply with those as indicated and instructed.

### **Late or Missed Assignments**

Late or missed assignments will not be accepted for grading without the authorization of the instructor. ***As per the JFRC academic policies, students who miss any scheduled exam or quiz, including a final exam at the assigned hours will not be permitted to sit for a make-up examination without approval of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs.***

***Permission is given rarely and only for grave reason; travel is not considered a grave reason. Make-up exams will only be given for documented absences.***

### **Accessibility Accommodations**

Students registered with the Student Accessibility Center requiring academic accommodations should contact the Office of the Dean at the John Felice Rome Center, the first week of classes.

## Course Schedule

Date	Topic	Readings
Session one (18 May)	Course overview/Introduction to sustainable development <u>Activity:</u> conceptualizing sustainable development	on sakai
	Population dynamics, inter-generational responsibility and planetary boundaries: the role of consumer culture in shaping the future of our planet <u>Classroom discussion:</u> <i>overconsumption and underconsumption, what are basic human needs and how to improve our ecological footprint?</i>	on sakai
	<u>Activity:</u> <i>calculate your ecological footprint twice (one for your Italian experience and one considering your lifestyle at home) and write down the main differences and three ways to improve your environmental performance.</i>	
Session Two (20 May)	Visit to the urban agricultural garden in Monte Ciocchi (kick off session for the service learning component of the course)	on sakai
Session three (25 May)	Waste management Defining waste and its management <u>Activity:</u> <i>Analyse how waste is managed in Rome and what are the key challenges to reduce the amount of waste produced. In class we will develop a concise action plan highlighting how to apply some of the principles and practices of the Zero Waste Movement in our daily life on campus and compare the differences with our habits and behaviours back at home.</i>  <u>Classroom discussion:</u> <i>Think and describe a product or service that you daily use and answer the following questions:</i> 1) <i>where, why, and how often do you use it.</i> 2) <i>highlight its sustainable and unsustainable features, with a particular focus on waste management.</i> 3) <i>imagine yourself as a designer of the product or service and provide ideas on how to improve the design of the product to reduce or eliminate waste.</i>	on sakai
	<u>Assignment 1:</u> <i>In a short essay highlight what are the main messages of the zero waste management approach addressing economic, social and environmental benefits of such approach as well as relative costs.</i>	

Session four (27 May)	<p>Ecosystems and human activity Protecting biodiversity and conserving biomes <i>Activity: In groups, walk around different sections of JFRC Campus. Discuss and respond to the assigned four questions.</i></p>	on sakai
Session five (1 June)	<p>Protecting biodiversity for the future of the planet <i>Activity: Visit to the Botanical Garden. Analysing and conceptualizing the importance of local diversity and variety to ensure resilience and adaptation to environmental change.</i></p>	on sakai
Session six (3 June)	<p>Atmosphere and Air Pollution <i>Activity: Understanding the atmosphere and the related Consequences of pollutants on its balance and composition. Italian cities have one of the highest premature mortality rates in Europe due to poor urban air quality. Cities are increasingly recurring to hard measures to reduce the impact of air pollution on human health. In class, analyze the effectiveness of these plans and compare them with what is applied in cities in the US. In groups, identify possible measures that could complement or substitute these measures.</i></p> <p><i>Assignment 2: develop an air pollution reduction plan building on the experiences carried out in cities in both Italy and the US. We will start working on the plan as group activity in class.</i></p> <p><i>Activity: work in groups based on assignment 2. Discuss the solutions identified and building on your findings propose your own plan for the city of Rome. Choose, if needed, additional measures that could complement those identified in your assignments and find a catchy slogan. As a group you will be presenting the plan to the class.</i></p>	on sakai
Session seven (8 June)	<p>Climate Change Human activities and consequences linked to atmospheric alteration: main pressures and potential solutions to tackling climate change from mitigation to adaptation as well as new emerging approaches (e.g. geoengineering).</p> <p><i>Activity: group discussion on proposals to protect present and future generations from climate change. How to ensure progress? How to manage economic, social, and environmental impacts. How to monitor implementation and hold countries accountable? What is the follow up to the Paris agreement? In groups we will address these questions and discuss the way forward building on the IPCC findings and national, regional and global commitments to address climate change.</i></p>	on sakai
Session eight (10 June)	Sustainable Food Systems	on sakai



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*Activity: Conceptualizing sustainable food systems. Analyse the role of local and traditional knowledge in promoting sustainable food systems and the case of Italy's rural areas. The nutritional and ecological value of traditional foods. How does local traditional culture contribute or not contribute to promoting sustainable food systems. Compare different agricultural practices and how they influence our eating habits and their potential contribution to sustainable development.*

*Assignment 3: "Sustainable Lifestyle Eating Experiment". Experience and reflect on the possibilities, obstacles, and constraints of a lifestyle transition towards "sustainable eating habits" as a potential contribution to solving environmental problems, promoting local economies, and increasing social equity. Keep a two day journal describing your "sustainable lifestyle Experiment".*

Session nine (15 June)

Final visit to the urban garden Monte Ciocci

on sakai

All is linked: vision and approach to sustainability. How to apply sustainability principles in practice.

*Activity: presentation of the SL component project and farewell to the volunteers. The SL component project will be carried out in groups throughout the semester, choosing a topic related to the course (e.g. sustainable consumption patterns, biodiversity protection, sustainable waste management, addressing atmospheric pollution and climate change, sustainable food systems); analyzing how an initiative such as the urban gardens Monte Ciocci can potentially contribute towards the objectives of the chosen topic and identifying three main interventions that could increase the contribution of the gardens to the objectives.*

Session ten (17 June)

Final exam