

Sustaining (Y)Our Future

A Spring 2025 Senior Capstone Seminar with Prof. Heather C. Olins

General Information

Meeting Time: Tuesdays, 1-2:15 PM

Location: Stokes Hall 363S

Instructor: Heather C. Olins, PhD | olins@bc.edu

Office Hours: Tuesdays 9-10:30 AM, Higgins 444A, or by [appointment](#)

Course Overview

In this 1 credit course, seniors from a variety of majors will come together weekly to consider ways they might engage in future work related to climate change mitigation, biodiversity preservation, and sustainability. We will take stock of our skills and interests, examine the landscape of climate solutions, and identify interesting and unexpected ways people are actively working towards these solutions across disciplines.

Learning Objectives

After taking this course, students will be able to

- explain the fundamental drivers of global ecological change (climate change, land use change, over extraction, pollution...) and the associated threats to biodiversity,
- describe the types of potential solutions to these problems at scales ranging from personal to international governmental action,
- articulate the specific ways in which they feel drawn to participating in that solution space,
- and feel more hopeful and empowered (in other words, feel less climate anxiety) about these global challenges than they did at the beginning of the course.

More broadly, this course will provide an opportunity for students to reflect on their time at Boston College and integrate one's undergraduate experience for a fulfilling whole-life journey.

Core Text

All We Can Save: Truth, Courage, and Solutions for the Climate Crisis edited by Ayana Elizabeth Johnson & Katharine K. Wilkinson

Additional Online Learning Resources (open access)

[Project Drawdown](#) online platform

[Project Regeneration](#) online platform

HHMI Biointeractive's [The Science of Climate Change](#) film

Evaluation

Final grades in this course will be based on the following table, rather than percentages or scores on individual assignments. In order to earn a particular letter grade, you must meet the requirements of each category below. Cases where someone has met most, but not all of the requirements for a particular category will result in intermediate (+/-) grades. For example, if you meet all requirements for an “A” grade except for attendance but you miss 2 class meetings, you would most likely earn an A- in the course. For another example, if you are overwhelmed or checked out at the end of the semester, you might choose not to complete the Personal Action Plan final project, and earn a “B” in the course.

	F	D	C	B	A
Attendance	Miss more than 4 meetings	Miss 4 meetings	Miss 3 meetings	Miss 2 meetings	Miss 0 or 1 meeting
Participation*	Not adequate	Not adequate	Developing	Proficient	Exemplary
Course Journal	Journal not kept or not submitted	Few entries include thoughtful reflection and evidence of having completing the associated work	About half of the entries include thoughtful reflection and evidence of having completing the associated work	Most entries include thoughtful reflection and evidence of having completing the associated work	All entries include thoughtful reflection and evidence of having completing the associated work
Case Study Presentation	Not completed	Not completed	Not completed or did not meet all guidelines	Completed and met all guidelines	Completed and met all guidelines
Personal Action Plan	Not completed	Not completed	Not completed	Not completed or did not meet all guidelines	Completed and met all guidelines

* See participation rubric below for additional explanation

Tentative Schedule

Coming Together (Weeks 1-4)

- Introductions and community formation
- Emotions and motivations associated climate engagement
- Establishing a common vocabulary around the relevant issues (overview of climate change, threats to biodiversity, and planetary sustainability)
- Interdisciplinary perspectives: How do our different disciplines engage with these challenges?

Exploring Solutions and Accelerators (Weeks 5 - 10)

- Drawdown Framework
- Project Regeneration
- Research, Interviews, and Case Study Presentations

Planning Personal Engagement (Weeks 11-14)

- Identifying personal skills and superpowers
- Considering our contexts, communities, and values
- Articulation and sharing of career goals and aspirations. Where are we currently in the post-college planning stage?
- Personal Reflection and Discernment culminating in [Climate Action Venn Diagrams](#): What are we good at? What work needs doing? What brings us joy?
- All careers can be Climate Careers: readings, discussion, and reflection
- Synthesize all the threads of our exploration into a “compass” to guide our paths forward
- Sharing and discussion of Personal Action Plan drafts
- Integration, reflection, formation for a whole-life journey

Participation Rubric

	Exemplary (90-100%)	Proficient (80-90%)	Developing (70-80%)	Unacceptable (below 70%)
Frequency of participation in class	Student is a frequent participant, and initiates contributions in most class meetings.	Student initiates contribution at least once per week.	Student occasionally initiates contribution	Student does not initiate contribution and needs instructor to solicit input.
Quality of comments	Comments always insightful & constructive; uses appropriate terminology. Comments balanced between general impressions, opinions, & specific, thoughtful criticisms or contributions.	Comments mostly insightful & constructive; mostly uses appropriate terminology. Occasionally comments are too general or not relevant to the discussion.	Comments are sometimes constructive, with occasional signs of insight. Student does not use appropriate terminology; comments not always relevant to the discussion	Comments are uninformative, lacking in appropriate terminology. Heavy reliance on opinion, e.g. "it's bad", "I liked it" etc.
Listening skills	Student listens attentively to others as indicated by comments that build on others' remarks, i.e. student hears what other say & contributes to the dialogue.	Student mostly attentive when others present, as indicated by comments that reflect & build on others. Occasionally shows disengagement or needs reminders to focus.	Student is often inattentive and needs reminders to engage and focus. Occasionally makes disruptive comments when others are speaking.	Does not listen to others; regularly talks while others speak or does not pay attention while others speak; distracts from discussion; sleeps, etc.
By the end of the semester...	Student has demonstrated their substantial and authentic engagement with the material through some combination of in-class comments, discussion before/after class, office hours visits, or e-mail related to the course.	Student has demonstrated some authentic engagement with the material beyond required activities/assignments through some combination of in-class comments, discussion before/after class, office hours visits, or e-mail related to the course.	Student has demonstrated some engagement with the material through required activities and assignments, and occasionally via some combination of in-class comments, discussion before/after class, office hours visits, or e-mail related to the course.	Student has not made themselves known to the professor, and has not demonstrated evidence of engaging with the material.