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Interested in supporting the Green Scene programming by giving to the Sustainability Fund? Click here.

Bulletin contributors: Daniela Duran and Aaliyah Johnson

@UAlbanyGreenScn
Dr. Ilka Kressner is an Associate Professor in Hispanic and Italian Studies. Below she talks about her course ASPN 443/ASPN 516 Ecology and the Arts in Latin America

What are some of the topics that you cover in your course?

In our class, we examine literature, film, visual arts and diverse form of ‘art-ivisim’ (activism via art) from Latin America that reflect on the contemporary ecological crisis. We examine the relationship between human beings and physical space and pay special attention to activism from marginalized environmental perspectives (indigenous, Afro-Latin American, women, LGBTQI+ communities).

Among the topics we discuss are metaphors used to define ‘culture,’ ‘environment,’ and ‘collateral damage’ among others. We get to know forms of thinking and living in community with non-Eurocentric social and human values that inform environmental perspectives.

In the postcolonial context of Latin American studies, two topics will be key: that of extractivism and agro-exportation, particularly starting during the mid-20th century with the slow ecological violence caused by toxins in monocultures.

What interested you about teaching a course about Ecology & Arts in Latin America?

I have been engaged in environmental activism since I was an adolescent (that was back in Germany where I grew up) and when studying abroad in Latin America became fascinated with the practices in the subcontinent. In my academic career, I worked on notions of space (utopia, atopos), connectivity, belonging and extractivism and how it is portrayed in art. These topics are portrayed in most creative and thought-provoking ways in Latin American art. I am very happy that I get to teach this course for the first time in the fall of 2022.

Do you have any specific sustainability learning objectives for this course?

The key one is to zoom in on the perils of extractivism, to which we will dedicate our capstone experience project. For me, it is also always key to examine forms of narrative that are used to convey sustainability.

How do you measure if students have increased their knowledge with regards to sustainability literacy?

Critical readings in the context of extractivism, forms to reduce inequalities and water sovereignty will accompany our discussions in addition to being part of material to be presented by learners, and form part of essays and quizzes.
Which of the UN Sustainable Development Goals do you feel are addressed most in your course?
From among the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the following will certainly be addressed in my class:
# 6 Clean Water and Sanitation
# 8 Decent Work and Economic Growth
# 9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
# 10 Reduced Inequalities
# 12 Responsible Consumption and Production
# 13 Climate Action
# 14 Life below Water
# 15 Life of Land
# 16 Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions

Is there anything else you want students to know about this course?
Three things I want to add:
1) The class is taught in Spanish.
2) I will also be teaching, an undergraduate topics course on Latin American cinema. It is a COIL class that I will jointly teach with a colleague in Venezuela. In the context of our discussions of documentaries, students will collaborate with students from Caracas in a research experience documenting and comparing the works of local environmental NGOs in Albany and Caracas in the forms of 10-minute documentary videos.
3) The Humanities Center, housed in the English department, is organizing a series on Environmental Studies this fall, where professors and their classes from the English, Anthropology, History and Spanish departments, will organize film screenings, visit sustainable farms in the area and conduct other interdepartmental environmental activities.
Daniela Duran, a sustainability intern, took part in the Empire Commons Electricity Bills Program this spring. We asked her to write about her experience.

The Office of Sustainability oversees a 10 week campaign focused on energy conservation which encourages people to make energy pledges, turn off equipment and lights when not in use and use the stairs when possible. The Empire Commons Electricity Bill program was created to show students residing in the apartments their estimated electricity use. Since each apartment has an individual electric meter, which is unique to this complex, fake electric bills can be generated as an educational tool in energy conservation and budget planning. As a team, we read the electric meters of each apartment a month apart and compare the data to create a baseline for billing. Once the bills are created, they are sent out to the residents to educate them on how much they would have to pay for that month of energy use if they were billed for usage. As a student, this program was super interesting to be behind the scenes and witness how much of an increase or decrease in energy consumption was displayed during our meter reads. An important part of creating these bills is recognizing the factors that could influence the range of each apartments energy use; such as if students spent the weekend visiting their families, left numerous devices on or had a lot of guests. Participating in this program was very effective in getting a well-rounded perspective on what factors influence usage. Overall, my role in this program was to provide this insight in addition to collecting data and observing these differences.

Sample of one of the fake electric bills, which was modelled after those given by National Grid. Students are able to see their use versus other residents. The back of the bills provide energy conservation tips.
Last April the Center for Undergraduate Research and Creative Engagement (CURCE) held its annual conference and for the first time, several projects were recognized for their contribution to the field of sustainability research. A dozen projects were featured from the disciplines of Engineering, Environmental Science, Anthropology, Archaeology, Climate Change, Cultural Studies, Economics, Education, Geography, Computer Science, Public Policy, Emergency Preparedness, Urban Studies and Planning, Sociology, Public Health and Informatics. Projects focused on many of the UN Global Goals with Global Goals #3 Good Health and Well-being, #9 Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure, #10 Reduce Inequities, #11 Sustainability Cities and Communities, #13 Climate Action and #15 Life on Land being cited most.

Congratulations to the following students researchers for this recognition and you can view some of the posters presented here.

Habib Affinnih  Macy Hayes  Sanchita Paul
Kaya Carvajal  Victoria James  Eiryn Sheades
Maxim Couillard  Dua Kaurejo  Amal Siddiqui
John Michael Garbelland  Sara Magee  Sydney Snyder
Ethan Gerber  Sherlyn Mercado  Zhuoning Wu
Karyn Doke  Tony Comanzo  Vaasu Taneja

Research 

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What is the UAlbany Green Scene?

UAlbany Green Scene is not just a single office but rather a coalition of groups and individuals that work towards promoting and advancing sustainability on campus and in our community. The Office of Sustainability strives to coordinate and communicate the activities of these various entities.

Student groups and individuals that provide sustainability programming and education include:

- Student Association Director of Health and Sustainability
- UAlbany Eco-Reps *
- UAlbany Zero Waste Advocates *
- Albany Clean Energy Conservation Corps*
- Fill it Forward and UCapture Ambassadors *
- UAlbany Students for Sustainability
- UNA-USA
- Albany Outreach for Animals
- UAlbany Outdoors
- UAlbany Ski and Snowboard Club
- Students Stopping the Trafficking of People
- Democracy Matters
- Albany Young Democratic Socialists of America
- UAlbany Students for Sustainability
- UAS Sustainability Manager
- Sustainability Coordinators*
- Sustainability Ambassadors *
- Climate Action Implementation Teams
- UAlbany Zero Waste Advocates*

*see page 9 for more details on these groups

Academic and Administrative offices that initiate, communicate, manage and maintain sustainability projects and events are:

- Director of Sustainability
- Energy Officer
- UAS Sustainability Manager
- Sustainability Coordinators*
- Sustainability Ambassadors *
- Climate Action Implementation Teams
- UAlbany Zero Waste Advocates*

Sustainability is not done by one person or in one semester, but rather it takes an entire network of people and organizations to contribute consistently over time. The UAlbany Green Scene embraces the power of collective impact and persistent action to meet our sustainability goals. **If you have a group that you would like added to the list of Green Scene affiliated organizations, email us at gogreen@albany.edu**
CDTA Nature Bus Service

*Every Saturday until September 24 at 9 am — 6pm*

The Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy (MHLC), the Capital District Transportation Authority (CDTA), and local project partners, like the Albany Pine Bush Preserve, have come together again to offer free Saturday CDTA bus service to connect City of Albany residents to eight natural spaces in and around Albany. To learn more about the Nature Bus route, including pick-up locations and drop off times, download the CDTA bus schedule [http://www.cdta.org](http://www.cdta.org) To learn more about programming at Nature Bus stops, visit MHLC’s Nature Bus web page: [www.mohawkhudson.org/nature-bus](http://www.mohawkhudson.org/nature-bus)

DIY Shower Steamers Make and Take

*September 16th, 6:30—7:30 pm, Honest Weight Food Co-op, 100 Watervliet Ave, Albany*

Learn how to make your own all-natural shower steamers/bath bombs at this fun Friday evening class. All of the materials will be supplied so you can just show up and relax.

[Register Here](#)

Five Rivers: Annual 40th Fall Festival

*Saturday September 17, 10:00 am - 4:00 pm, Five Rivers Center 56 Game Farm Road, Delmar*

A family-oriented environmental celebration featuring hands-on educational activities, interactive exhibits, guided walks, and more. Enjoy opportunities to meet live animals and explore staffed exhibits from a wide range of local conservation partners. There will also be live music from local bands Frettin’ Old Guys and Off The Record, as well as sales of refreshments. For details, go to Friends of Five Rivers’ website at [www.FriendsofFiveRivers.org](http://www.FriendsofFiveRivers.org)

Get There Green 2022

*September 19—25*

[Pledge](#) to use alternative forms of mobility as part of this statewide campaign during NYC Climate Week. Even one day can make a difference! Green your commute, take a selfie, post and tag @ualbanygreenscn #GTG2022.
Be a Change Agent

We are often asked “how can I get involved with the sustainability office?”. The first step is to make sure you are in the know by following us on social media (FB, Twitter, Insta, Tik Tok @ualbanygreenscn or Linked In @UAlbany Office of Sustainability) and signing up for one of our email distribution lists. But for those that have the time, energy and commitment to take on a leadership role, the Office of Sustainability oversees several groups geared towards students, faculty and staff that help spread the word and initiate sustainable practices. Below is a description of these groups:

**Eco-Reps** are students that receive specialized training to conduct sustainability programming, give sustainability presentations on greening events and assist in completing green office certifications. Apply [here](#).

**Fill It Forward and UCapture Ambassadors** are students that promote and educate on the Fill It Forward and UCapture programs. **FIF** provides participants a bar coded tag to put on their reusable bottles. When the tag is scanned, it gives information on the environmental benefits of using a refillable bottle and prompts a donation to clean water projects. **UCapture** is a browser extension that triggers the donation of carbon offsets to the university when the user purchases items from a participating vendor.

**UAlbany Zero Waste Advocates** is open to students, faculty and staff who receive specialized training and knowledge in waste reduction in order to participate in local zero waste events, advocate for zero waste change on campus and conduct programming and outreach.

**Albany Clean Energy Conservation Corps** is open to students, faculty and staff. Volunteers receive training in energy conservation and weatherization techniques and can then sign up for service days to weatherize area homes during the month of November. Apply [here](#).

**Sustainability Coordinators** are faculty and staff that serve on the campus sustainability committee. The group focuses on managing and creating engagement activities and operational change, meeting monthly during the academic year. Members serve on sub-committees related to Zero Waste, Sustainable Purchasing, Green Office Certification, Outreach and the Terra Awards.

**Sustainability Ambassadors** are faculty and staff that provide important support and communication of campus sustainability activities by promoting and attending sustainability events and campaigns on campus.

*If you are interested in joining one of these groups, email us at gogreen@albany.edu or indicate your interest at this form.*
Abigail Gerdes

What year did you graduate? May 2022
What was your major/minor?
Bachelor of Science in Environmental Science with a concentration in Climate Change and a Minor in Mathematics
What was your co-curricular and student organization involvement on campus?
I signed up for the Eco-Rep course in Fall 2020 where I received my Eco-Rep Certification. Following Eco-Reps, I joined UAlbany Green Scene within the Office of Sustainability, where I became the Zero Waste Liaison in Spring 2021. My role as Zero Waste Liaison focused primarily on helping to facilitate the implementation of back-of-house composting in the Campus Center. Additionally, I explored options for food rescue efforts by immersing myself into the surrounding community through Zero Waste Capital District. Zero Waste Capital District is a group committed and focused to the education and outreach of reducing waste that encompasses the entire capital region. Within ZWCD I volunteered at local farmers markets and other events to educate people on sustainable practices (like composting) and the programs offered within the community to help reduce waste. Other co-curricular activities non-related to the Office of Sustainability but related to environmental science and climate change include working with Professor Oliver Elison Timm and the Albany Pine Bush Preserve to study microclimates and related vector borne diseases through tick transmission and working with Capital Corals Inc. and the Coral Restoration Foundation to analyze survival rates for out planted coral in Florida.
What are you doing now? Where do you live?
Directly after college I accepted a job offer from a company called Centrica Business Solutions. Centrica Business solutions is an energy services company that helps other institutions and municipalities reach carbon reduction goals through the installation of solar panels, battery storage, and retrofitting outdated inefficient energy systems. My role within the company is to help higher education institutions create solutions (plan, design, and implement) to achieve their carbon reduction goals and energy needs. With the energy sector being the largest contributor to carbon emissions, I believe the work my company and I do is crucial to creating a sustainable future. I still reside in the Capital Region.

How have you applied your experience with the sustainability movement on campus and involvement with the office of Sustainability into your post-college life and career?
Through my involvement with UAlbany Green Scene I have gained confidence and experience working in a professional setting, a networking setting, and a collaboration setting. My experience with Green Scene also opened my eyes to the many outlets that we as individuals, groups, and/or communities can take to help promote and implement sustainability within our local region and beyond. The connections, friends, and network I built during my time working with the Office of Sustainability have already proven to be fruitful in my career and post-college life. But, most importantly my experience with the Office of Sustainability showed me the fulfillment and joy I would receive dedicating my time to something that I believe is of great importance for the longevity of our environment and society. A classroom can teach you a lot but cannot teach you the value of being dedicated and passionate about something you believe in. For me that is sustainability, and I can attribute knowing this to my experience and involvement with the Office of Sustainability and UAlbany Green Scene.

The Office of Sustainability is proud of the successes of our alumni! They were essential in the early stages of the sustainability movement at UAlbany and have shaped where it is now.