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@UAlbanyGreenScn
Professor Cassie Andrusz in the Latin American, Caribbean and U.S Latino Studies Department is teaching a food movement and social justice course. The number for this course is ALC 330.

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

This course covers food, food systems, institutionalized racism, structural violence, social justice, resistance, food justice, and food sovereignty.

2. Why were you interested in teaching this course?

Food system activities, including producing food, transporting it, and storing waste in landfills, all produce greenhouse gas emissions and other pollutants that contribute to climate change. Meanwhile, climate change impacts the health and biodiversity of ecosystems, rendering them vulnerable. As a result, the health of the soil and food grown deteriorates and food production is threatened as farmers struggle with new pests, weeds, drought, floods and other shifting environmental changes. It is imperative in our world today to connect individual and local perspectives/knowledge to the systemic and global scale. I find working with students to draw these connections and examine the complexities they hold imperative in understanding how the food system, or systems that structure our societies work or not work, how to locate themselves within them and where they can activate change.

3. Which of the UN Global Goals does your course embody?

Students will be able to identify sustainable food system practices, Students will be able to discuss and debate the complexities of sustainable practices related to food systems, culture, race, and class and students will assess campus and community sustainability practices related to food and contribute their ideas on how to support or improve efforts.

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

I use a variety of assessments from weekly reports and group dialogue to creative writing projects. Our first assignment is an investigative paper, where students with an understanding of a new topic, such as social justice, are asked to attend a related a community or campus event and report back to the class. Students will present their paper to their class groups for review and debate. The most intensive assessment students participate in is called a Zine project, where students will identify a course topic most relevant/interesting to them and put together a short magazine or "zine". Zines are self-published, self-made creative writing pieces, made with any available materials from paint and shredded paper to photography and pasted. The goal of this project is to demystify the food system and draw attention to the (in)justice in a creative and accessible way, most importantly make students more than passive recipients of knowledge but active producers.

5. Which of the UN Sustainable Development Goals do you feel are addressed most in your course?

Poverty, Hunger, Health and Wellbeing, Economy, Reduced Inequities Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions Partnerships.

Food Movement and Social Justice
Being on a college campus means there are often higher levels of waste of certain materials than you would find in other organizations. One such example is the high use of pens, markers, pencils and especially dry erase markers. These items are welcome in the single stream recycling bins so they become landfill waste when they no longer work or serve the purpose for which they are intended. From the waste stream aspect, pencils might be considered the most sustainable since they are almost completely used up in the course of their intended use. Pens and markers leave behind plastic casings after their ink has been used up.

What if there was a way to divert this waste from the landfill? Would you be willing to redirect your old pens, markers and pencils? You now have that chance as the Office of Sustainability has purchased a Terracycle box to collect these items. Terracycle is dedicated to collecting hard to recycle items and diverting them from the waste stream. They work with specialized companies who can turn the hard to recycled items into new products. Anyone with spent writing utensils can bring them over to our collection box in CS 15, or send them to us via intercampus mail. And coming soon, they can be sent over to either the Office of Sustainability, CS 15 or to the new collection spot in the campus center near the reservation desk.

Another way to reduce waste from dry-erase markers is to convert to refillable ones. There are several types of refillable dry erase markers such as the Pilot Be Green or AusPen. Try a set next time you order!
Assistant Professor of Environmental Health Sciences Beth Feingold found people in Peru are being exposed to dangerous levels of mercury.

Dr. Feingold’s research focuses on toxins present in Peru. She found that people in the southern Amazon are being exposed to unsafe levels of mercury due to a combination of their diet and artisanal and small-scale gold mining. Mercury poses health risks such as neurological challenges, especially for women of childbearing ages, children, and people whose diet consists of large amounts of fish.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, artisanal and small-scale gold mining is the largest source of mercury emissions globally, greatly increasing the risks of mercury poisoning in communities nearby. Feingold states that this small-scale mining “is not subject to the same government oversight that larger-scale mining is, and as a result is often associated with the release of mercury into the environment and other detrimental impacts on the local environment.”

Feingold and colleagues conducted the first assessment of mercury exposure in a population-based sample in Madre de Dios, a artisanal and small-scale gold mining region in Peru. In their recent study, published in *Environmental Research*, they collected hair samples from 723 participants in 46 communities and conducted household surveys to assess fish consumption.

Their findings indicated that more than 37 percent of the population of Madre de Dios, including nearly 43 percent of women of childbearing age and 20 percent of children under 5, had hair mercury levels exceeding the levels that the World Health Organization deems safe.

“Monitoring children and women of childbearing age for elevated mercury levels could help assess potential long-term health impacts of chronic mercury exposure” said Feingold. It is imperative that research be done on toxins and related health risks.
How to Get Involved

Ever wondered how you can become involved with sustainability on campus, but did not know where to start? There are many ways both students and faculty and get involved in making changes on campus. Faculty and staff can do this by becoming a Sustainability Coordinator. The Sustainability Coordinators program gives university employees the opportunity to work with the Office of Sustainability on UAlbany Green Scene initiatives. Coordinators meet to discuss university-wide sustainability programs and give feedback to the Director of Sustainability. All coordinators complete a training on the current campus initiatives. Past projects include Earth and Wellness Day, Green Workspace Challenge Certifications, Terra Awards and the Office Composting Program.

Students can get involved and bring change to UAlbany by joining different organizations like UAlbany Students for Sustainability (USS), Albany Outreach for Animals (AOA), United Nations Association of the United States of America UAlbany Campus Chapter (UNA-USA), and UAlbany Outdoors. The USS group serves the campus and community by initiating, coordinating and maintaining student-driven sustainability projects. AOA strives to fight for animal rights and needs. UNA-USA seeks to advance the vision of the UN on the grassroots level of advocacy and UAlbany Outdoors encourages students to get off campus and into the outdoors.

If you are interested in any of these organizations, please visit MyInvolvement at https://myinvolvement.org/organizations. Students can also get involved in by becoming an intern for the Office of Sustainability. We will be at the upcoming Community and Public Service Fair on March 4th. Visit our table to learn about the opportunities!
Hearty Vegan Soups

*Thursday February 27th from 6:00pm-7:30pm at Honest Weight Food Co-op, 100 Watervliet Ave (Teaching Kitchen)*

Join Joanne Porrazzo in this hands-on wintertime class! You’ll learn to make quick, easy and satisfying vegan soups that will warm and nourish your body, mind and soul. Joanne has a culinary degree from the Natural Gourmet Institute and a Holistic Health Counselor’s certificate from the Institute for Integrative Nutrition.

Fracking and Water Quality

*Wednesday March 4th from 7:00pm-8:30pm at Nott Memorial, Union College, Schenectady, 807 Union St, Schenectady, NY 12308*

Dr. Desiree Plata from MIT will speak about her research in environmental chemistry with applications in minimizing the environmental impacts of emerging industries. Dr. Plata has a B.S. in chemistry from Union College and a PhD from MIT. Among her many notable achievements, she is an NSF CAREER awardee, a National Academy of Engineering's Frontiers of Engineering fellow, and two-time National Academy of Sciences Kavli Frontiers of Science fellow.

Environmental Justice Forum

*Sunday March 8th from 1:30pm-4:00pm at Albany Public Library (Auditorium), 161 Washington Ave, Albany, NY 12210*

Third Annual PEF Black Caucus Environmental Forum, “New Seeds of Sustainability.” A variety of speakers and community leaders will be speaking and/or in attendance. Light refreshments will be served.
New Yorkers for Clean Power is hosting an online teach-in for anyone interested in climate activism and being part of the youth climate movement. Leaders from the Student Climate Coalition, New York Youth Climate Leaders and others will be speaking about the work they do to #ActOnClimate and how you can take action.

UAlbany will be streaming the teach-in on Feb. 26 at 7pm in the Social Sciences building 256. Two of our campus student climate activists will be there to discuss upcoming events and to answer any questions about youth activism and how to get involved. Refreshments will be served.

Upcoming events include an Earth Day strike at West Capitol Park on April 22nd at 3pm led by the Albany Youth Climate strike and Sunrise Movement Albany. There will also be a Citizen’s Lobby Regional Conference in Troy beginning at 6pm on Friday March 6 and ending at 12:30pm on Sunday March 8. The Office of Sustainability is providing scholarships that will cover registration fees for students to attend this conference. Click here to learn more about the conference. The deadline for the scholarship is February 26th and recipients will be notified by February 28th. Click here to apply for the scholarship.

Both events are great opportunities to learn, practice skills, and get involved in environmental sustainability and activism!
1. **What year did you graduate?**
I graduated in 2011/12 from Grad School (11' with classes, 12' with thesis)

2. **What was your major/minor?**
My program was Masters in Regional Planning

3. **What was your co-curricular and student organization involvement on campus?**
President of Graduate Planning Student Association, member of the Sustainability Council, (non-SUNY), Capital District Planners Association Trustee, A-Cappella group “Jazz Hands” founder.

4. **What are you doing now? Where do you live?**
For the past 10 months, I’ve been working for city government at the Department of Citywide Administrative Services in NYC. Prior to that I was at the NYC Department of Health for 2 years and before that at WeCare Organics LLC in Syracuse and NYC. My future goal: to be working for city government in NYC, in the field of energy efficiency for NYC.

5. **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?**
I have definitely applied my experience. After graduating, I immediately went into a position with a company that specialized in waste reduction out in Syracuse, working on health & safety and reporting. After that at the NYC Department of Sanitation, working in the same field. My long-term career plan is to be centered around sustainability again even though in the recent years I've taken positions that were based on civil service.

*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.*