

HUMAN CENTERED DESIGN

College of Human Ecology

Graduate Study in Design + Environmental Analysis

Master of Arts in DESIGN

Two-Year Graduate Program

CONCENTRATION: Sustainable Design Studies

There are many definitions for “sustainable” as it pertains to design. In the Department of Design and Environmental Analysis, “sustainable” is understood as going beyond maintaining the things we have to retrieving the things we have lost. Through this broader, more challenging strategy for design, environmental damage related to the construction, operation, and decommissioning of the built environment not only can be lessened, it can be reversed. Design can be used as a healing enterprise, as a way to make things better. In today’s world of global environmental degradation, this new understanding of design has become an imperative.

The SDS concentration is for students who are concerned about the roles they will play as professionals in degrading the biophysical world. The prime objective of this concentration is to develop a new worldview founded on a skeptical, critical approach to reasoning, a deep sensitivity for things living, and a broad understanding of the historical and cultural contexts of the human/nature relationship. The secondary objectives are to develop a deeper knowledge of environmental issues, construct conceptual frameworks for analysis of these issues and to demonstrate how ecological knowledge can be applied to design-related enterprises through research-based thesis projects.

More specifically, the Masters of Arts concentration is for students who are interested in developing a deeper understanding of the historical and/or theoretical aspects of sustainable design. This could include studying environmental ethics and aesthetics, researching green building design typologies, testing new digital technologies for use in green design, or designing and testing new products for the built environment. Thesis topics have ranged widely and have included greening the supply-side management of furniture production, investigating the impediments to the adoption of a green building rating tool in the Russian Federation, contrasting the hospitality industry’s green certification with the USGBC’s LEED program, and designing a vertical moss garden.

CAREERS

Design professions are undergoing significant internal changes in response to the multitude of environmental crises that the planet is currently facing. Whether the pressures for “green design” are coming from the marketplace, legislation, or a sense of corporate responsibility, these professions are moving to become part of the solution rather than remain part of the problem. Graduate study in Sustainable Design puts students on the leading edge of ecological design practice through a research-based graduate degree, giving them a significant advantage in firms moving towards greater environmental responsibility. Students develop an ecological literacy that blends critical thinking with environmental ethics, ecology with economics, and technology with policy. Through this concentration, students are prepared to become effective agents for change. Graduates of this program have found diverse positions in such organizations as Leo Daly Architects, DEGW Strategic Design Consultants, the US Green Building Council and Greenstar Australia.

M.A. REQUIREMENTS/SUGGESTED COURSEWORK

For Sustainable Design Studies, students are required to build a foundation in critical reasoning, environmental ethics and history. Elective courses are selected in consultation with your graduate thesis committee and could be used to develop a minor area of study as well. Suggested courses vary considerably and students are encouraged to identify courses in addition to those listed that will enhance their focus of study. All courses are subject to change. Consult the online Courses of Study for current offerings.

A. Required Core DEA Field Courses:

DEA 6100	Studies in Design Thinking	3 credits
DEA 6200	Studies in Human-Environment Relations	3 credits
DEA 7100	DEA Graduate Pro Seminar (1 credit / semester x 4 semesters)	4 credits

B. Required Foundational Courses for Concentration:

DEA 6250	Human Dimensions of Sustainable Building ⁱ	3 credits
DEA 6500	Problem-Seeking through Programming	3 credits
ILRLR 6300	Advocacy and Debate	3 credits

C. Research Methods: ONE (1) 3-4 credit (5000-level or higher) course

Various	Research Methods ⁱⁱ	3-4 credits
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D. Statistics: ONE (1) 3-4 credit (5000-level or higher) course

Various	Statistics ⁱⁱⁱ	3-4 credits
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E. Behavior & Social Responsibility Courses: Choose ONE (1) course

DEA 6520	The Ambient Environment	3 credits
DEA 6550	Healthcare Innovations	3 credits
DEA 6610	Environments and Health	3 credits
DEA 6650	Poverty, Children and the Environment	3 credits

F. Arch/History: ONE (1) 3-4 credit (5000-level or higher) course

Various	Architectural/Art History/Anthropology	3-4 credits
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G. Studio Courses: Choose ONE (1) course

DEA 5210	Interaction Design Studio	4 credits
DEA 5540	Workplace Strategy Studio	4 credits
DEA 6000	Special Problems (project-based)	3-4 credits
DEA 6406	Generative Design Studio	4 credits

H. Thesis Courses:

DEA 8990	Master's Thesis ^{iv}	8-12 credits
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I. Minor Courses:

Various	Courses for minor varies: typically 2 or 3, 3-or 4-credit courses	6-12 credits
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Summary of Curriculum	Number of Courses	Course Credits
A. Required DEA field course	3 ^v	10
B. Required Foundational Courses for Concentration	3	9
C. Research Methods	1	3-4
D. Statistics	1	3-4
E. Behavior & Social Responsibility Courses	1	3
F. Arch/History	1	3-4
G. Studio Courses	1	3-4
H. Thesis Courses	1-2	8-12
I. Minor field Courses	3	6-12
Total Courses: 15-16		Total Course Credits: 48-62

ⁱ Suggested Alternative – PADM 5418: Strategic Stakeholder Engagement

ⁱⁱ A list of grad-level methods courses can be found at: <https://socialsciences.cornell.edu/methods-courses>

ⁱⁱⁱ e.g: BTRY 6010, BTRY 7180, ILRST 5100, ILRST 6100, PSYCH 6750, HD 6750.

^{iv} Thesis credits determined at the discretion of thesis committee; the number of courses and credits listed merely indicate typical range.

^v Includes DEA 7100 as 1 course (but is required to be taken 4 times (1 credit each))

NOTE: A minimum grade of B- will be required for courses taken within the major. If a grade lower than a B- is received on a course taken within the major, the student will be required to retake the course.

Course offerings may change year to year. Consult the Courses of Study for current offerings.