



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.

Suggested DEA courses:		
DEA 1110	Making a Difference By Design	3 credits (audit)
DEA 1200	Art+Science: Sustainability, Multiculturalism, and Transdisciplinarity	3 credits (audit)
DEA 1500	Introduction to Environmental Psychology	3 credits (audit)
DEA 2550	Design Strategy and Management	3 credits (audit)
DEA 2730	Human-Centered Design Methods	3 credits (audit)
DEA 4500	Policy Meets Design: High-impact Facilities of the 21 st Century	3 credits
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 4220	Ecological Literacy and Design	3 credits
DEA 6250	Human Dimensions of Sustainable Building	3 credits
BSOC 2061/PHIL 2460/STS 2061	Ethics & the Environment	4 credits
One of the Following:		
ILRLR 3300	Argumentation and Debate	4 credits
NCC 5050	Critical and Strategic Thinking	1.5 credits
Suggested Electives:		
AEM 4510/ECON 4820	Environmental Economics	3 credits
ALS 4770	Environmental Stewardship in Cornell Community	3 credits
ARCH 5611	Environmental Systems I: Site and Sustainability	3 credits
ARCH 5616	Environmental Systems II: Building Dynamics	3 credits
BEE 4870	Sustainable Bioenergy Systems	3 credits
CRP 4440	Resource Management and Environmental Law	4 credits
C. Research & Design Methods courses: (choose 1 research method, 1 design method)		
DEA 6500	Problem-Seeking through Programming (design method)	4 credits
DEA 6560	Research Methods in Social Sciences	4 credits
PAM 6040	Qualitative, Survey & Mixed Method Approaches to Policy Research	3 credits
ARCH 6800	State of Discipline	4 credits
D. Behavior & social responsibility courses: (choose 1 course)		
DEA 6520	The Ambient Environment	4 credits
DEA 6550	Healthcare Innovations	3 credits
DEA 6610	Environments & Health	3 credits
DEA 6650	Poverty, Children and the Environment	3 credits
E. Design studies courses: (choose 1)		
DEA 3030	Materials for Design & Sustainability	3 credits
Various	Architectural/Art History/Anthropology ⁱ	3-4 credits
F. Studio courses: (choose 1)		
DEA 5210	Interaction Design Studio	4 credits
DEA 5540	Workplace Strategies Studio	4 credits
DEA 6000	Special Problems (project-based)	Variable credit
G. Thesis course:		
DEA 8990	Master's Thesis *	8-12 credits

Summary of Curriculum	Number of Courses	Course Credits
A. Required DEA field course	3	10
B. Required Foundational Courses for Concentration	4	11.5-14
Suggested Electives	2-3 (as required by committee)	6-10
C. Research & design methods courses	2	7-8
D. Behavior & social responsibility courses	1	3-4
E. Design Studies courses	1	3-4
F. Studio courses	1	4
G. Thesis course *	1-2	8-12
H. Minor field Courses	3	9-12
Total Courses: 18-20		Total Course Credits: 61.5-78

* Thesis credits are determined at the discretion of the thesis committee; the number of courses and credits listed merely indicate typical range.

NOTE: A minimum grade of B- will be required for courses taken within the major.

ANTHR 6401	Material Theory I: Landscape and Place	PMA 6610	Theorizing Media and Performance
ANTHR 6402	Material Theory II: Assemblage and Object	PMA 6835	Performance Studies: Theories and Methods
ARCH 5301	Theories and Analyses of Architecture I		
ARCH 5302	Theories and Analyses of Architecture II		
ART 6000	Graduate Seminar: Contemporary Theory and Art		
LA 5900	Theoretical Foundations		