

# Law, Resilience and the Environment: Social Learning and Civic Volunteering

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## RATIONALE FOR THE MODULE

- The focus of the poster is on a new module under development that seeks to combine in an innovative way, learning about the environment, law and community led projects.
- As part of the module students will volunteer to work with local environmental groups on projects. The approach is based on social learning. Social learning focuses on the interactions and the learning that develops through a shared understanding that emerges through these interactions.
- Social learning will enable students to learn about how voluntary organisations operate (governance), of the value of working with and learning from others (employability) as well as the importance of a healthy environment to communities (social) and the underpinning legal and regulatory frameworks(legal).
- It builds on research from environmental and social studies and seeks to a) promote student learning in a non-traditional setting, b) promote better understanding through working with others, c) reflection on the process of working and learning and d) develop more resilient individuals and communities.

## BACKGROUND

Civic engagement is central to environmental conservation. Equally, civic engagement focused on building on our love of nature (*biophilia*) and of place (*topophilia*) can be harnessed to build, and rebuild, communities damaged by neglect, social inequality and natural disasters ( for example, flooding etc). Derelict neglected urban sites impact on local communities and evidence suggests that it impacts negatively on how people view their community, their safety and thereby on their general well-being.

At a higher level, climate change is increasingly affecting the weather, increasing periods of drought, and impacting on food production. Environmental regulation will increasingly be used to manage our response to the changing climate and its impact. To understand the interrelationship between our daily lives, what we consume, and to learn about how to conserve our natural resources and our environment, the module will draw on a) social science, b) environmental science and c) national and international approaches to the environment.

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- LO1: To develop a critical understanding of the principles underlying national and international environmental law.
- LO2: To critically reflect on how the legal principles can be applied in local, urban settings to enhance community resilience.
- LO3:To critical review and consolidate your knowledge about the environment and community resilience and to apply your new knowledge in a volunteer setting.
- LO4: To work with others, students and non-students, to bring about change, and new thinking.
- LO5: To reflect on the process of combining your academic learning with working with other people and the insights that arise from this process of situated learning.

## LEARNING AND TEACHING



- Formal lectures and tutorials – invited speakers from across the university.
- Field visits to learn more about the environment from specialists.
- Working with others.

## SELECTED REFERENCES

- Chawla, L 2008 'Participation and the Ecology of Environmental Awareness'. In *Participation and Learning: Perspectives on Education and the Environment, Health and Sustainability*, ed. A Reif, BB Jensen, and J Nikel, 98 – 110. New York: Springer-Verlag.
- Gadgil, M, Olson, P, Berkes F, and Folke, C 2003 'Exploring the Role of Local Ecological Knowledge in Ecosystem Management: Three Case Studies'. In *Navigating Social Ecological Systems: Building Resilience for Complexity and Change*, ed. F Berkes, J Colding and C Folke, 189 – 209. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Levy, L, Shankumaran D and Whitecross, R W 2014 *What Works to Reduce Crime: A Survey of the Evidence*. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government.

## ASSESSMENT

A mix of assessment approaches is currently being considered:

1: An essay of 3,000 words chosen from a selection of three titles. The essay will focus on the students academic understanding of the environmental and legal issues raised in the module and their ability to conduct research to prepare their essay.

AND

2: A Reflective Portfolio based on volunteering with a local community based environmental group or community allotment.

The Reflective Portfolio should present the student's own personal experience of the volunteering, describe the project and what the student learnt from the project.

The Reflective Portfolio should be approximately 2,000 words and can be illustrated as appropriate. It should locate student learning and experiences in the broader academic literature on civic ecology and volunteering.

OR

3: If the student choses not to do a volunteering project a second essay based on a topic of their own choosing (subject to approval). The essay will be approximately 2,000 words.

## FEEDBACK

All feedback and suggestions welcome!

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