Syllabus

Environmental Studies Capstone Seminar • Park Over Plastic

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1  Clarisa Diaz • clarisa.diaz@nyu.edu • Spring 2020
2  Mondays • 5:00PM–7:30PM • Washington Square SILV 402 • 4 credit hrs
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Office hours by appointment, always feel free to email me with questions or to set up a meeting.

Gitbook Repository: https://clarisadiaz.gitbook.io/park-over-plastic-capstone-seminar-nyu/

Course shared Google Drive folder, Park Over Plastic Capstone Seminar: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1fNHWJn0fY5DGRYSUer-87Ys9Z586cMAY?usp=sharing

Welcome to the capstone seminar Park Over Plastic!

Park Over Plastic is an initiative of the Hudson River Park Trust among park staff, vendors and community members to reduce the plastic footprint and improve the health of the Hudson River. The primary way of doing this is through public education on the impacts of plastic in the Park's Estuarine Sanctuary waters.

This project will assess the various ways plastic is contaminating Hudson River Park. From plastic bottles to microplastics, students will assist with data aggregation to understand where the park is

being contaminated most, and with what types of plastic. Students will also do research into the policies around plastic production and distribution in New York City. In teams, students will then combine their research to develop materials for use in the park's educational programming. These materials will be produced in the course of the project and take on media forms such as infographics/data visualizations, photography/video, or other visual means of communication for a public audience.

Intended Client

Hudson River Park Trust

Outcomes

- Data analysis of plastic pollution in Hudson River Park
- Presentation of analysis as a public resource
- Communication and visual presentation skills, in addition to honing skills in data collection and analysis
- Contribution to a growing body of knowledge on plastic pollution, particularly on the local level

Class Activities

- Skill building: Intro to graphic design, videography, photography, data visualization. This will be a combination of exercises in class and guest speakers who are highly skilled in these mediums.
- Shore cleanup: Park staff will lead a shore cleanup with students for hands-on experience with data collection and plastic pollution in the park.
- Presentations and Feedback sessions with the Hudson River Park Trust. The first will be during the mid-term and the second for the final results of the project.
- Additional guest speakers from Riverkeeper may also provide additional information about pollution in NYC waterways.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course will be structured like a project based design studio, divided into the following phases:

- Research (academic and in-practice)
- Concept and development of media, based on iteration and prototyping

- Final refinement of media and presentation

Critiques are the best way to articulate your ideas to others and get immediate feedback. The class analyzes and suggests ways to increase the impact of your project. Take notes when your work is being critiqued and do not edit the responses, whether you agree with them or not. Review your critique notes and reflect upon what was said. Ask yourself how you could combine, transform, or expand what you are doing to make your project better. However, resist the temptation to incorporate all suggestions and comments. Only utilize the ones that work for you and your project.

Rules of the Critique:

- Be Present and Engaged
- Give Feedback to your classmates
- Do NOT take feedback personally.

There will be discrete team and individual exercises and projects that require you to apply the tools, techniques, and methods presented in the lectures, discussions, readings, and other material. These fundamentals are organized according to five phases:

Phase 1: Discovery / Inspiration

- Research into plastic waste and Hudson River Park. A shore cleanup organized by the Hudson River Park Trust will provide hands-on experience with the park's plastic waste. Students will also work in groups directly with staff to learn about the park's organization and educational programming. (Keep in mind the park also offers internships after the Spring semester!)

Phase 2: Research / Ideation / Brainstorming

- Asking and listening
- Visual researching
- Materials researching
- User / audience researching and ethnographic researching
- Systems researching
- Activity researching
- Primary researching
- Scholarly researching
- Data Analysis
- Brainstorming, gamestorming, ideation

Phase 3: Design / Sketching / Mapping

- Visualizing, drawing, sketching
- Planning and mapping
- Grouping, clustering, comparing, contrasting
- Organizing and designing
- Reorganizing and redesigning
- Shaping and forming
- Discerning and revealing
- Connecting and disconnecting

Phase 4: Prototyping

- Making, building, creating
- Rapid prototyping
- Iterating
- Selecting and editing
- Breaking then repeating all of the above

Phase 5: Positioning / Pitching

- Framing and positioning
- Storytelling, engaging, communicating, selling

Students will conduct self assessments as well as be evaluated by the professor during or after midterm and at the end of the semester. Any action without reflection is meaningless. Real learning only occurs as part of a reflective process. Reflection is studying your own practice as seriously as you study anything. It involves thinking about why, what, and how you create something.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

- Schedule your time (keep a calendar of some sort)
- Come to class on time and participate (be present and engaged)
- Study outside of class (ideally with classmate(s)
- Devote at a minimum 4 to 8 hours per week outside of class, fulfilling homework assignments, reading, and studying concepts covered in class.
- Complete all assignments by due dates

- Acquire and read all assigned readings before they are due
- Action – do your absolute best
- Strive for continuous improvement
- Talk to the professor in person about issues and problems. (if your email turns into a paragraph or two that means you should be talking to me)
- Have desire amounting to enthusiasm (to learn, to explore)
- Have patience, persistence, and discipline
- Be creative
- Pay attention to detail & craft
- Have self-confidence and pride in your work
- Take risks & be fearless in your projects
- Have fun!

EVALUATION & GRADING

Attendance

- Attendance is mandatory and will be taken at the beginning of every class. Since there is so much technical, conceptual, science, and design information to absorb, regular attendance is essential.
- Unexcused absences will affect your grade. Two absences are allowed; after that, your final, overall, numerical grade will drop by 5 percent (1/2 a grade point (e.g. A to an A-)) for each additional absence.
- Be on Time. Tardiness will affect your grade. For every 15 minutes of tardiness, your final, numerical grade will drop by 0.625 percent
- According to NYU policy, absences are only excused if the professor receives notification from the Office of Student Affairs. (I do not accept requests for excusing absences without approval from the university and am not obligated to respond to emails about personal matters.)
- Attendance is mandatory for the midterm and final presentations / critiques, which will be held at the office of the Hudson River Park Trust. Because professionalism is so important when working with real-life clients, failure to attend these presentations will result in a 10% reduction of your overall grade for each instance.

Your final grade will be based on a synthesis of quantitative & qualitative rubrics:

- Makeup assignments or extensions are only available when discussed with and approved by the instructor in advance of the due date, and have resulted from excused absences by the

Office of Student Affairs.

- Each student will be judged on the commitment, fearlessness, and continuous improvement that their work shows. Incomplete or unsatisfactory work will receive a failing grade.

Quantitative Grading Overview

- 5% Class Participation
- 5% Self Assessments (2.5% each)
- 20% Class Assignments on Blog
- 30% Midterm Project & Annnotated Bibliography
- 40% Final Project & Annotated Bibliography

Qualitative Grading Overview

A. Excellent (90-100: Work of exceptional quality; Exceeds Expectations)

Performance, participation, and attendance of the student has been of the highest level, showing sustained excellence in meeting course responsibilities. Work clearly differentiates itself from other work, has memorable impact, pursues concepts and techniques above and beyond what is discussed in class. The student thoroughly understands the theory and practice behind ideation & prototyping.

B. Very Good / Good (80-89: Work of high quality)

Performance, participation, and attendance of the student has been good, though not of the highest level. Work demonstrates a better than average understanding of ideation & prototyping theory & practice.

C. Satisfactory (70-79: Average; Satisfies course requirements)

Performance and attendance of the student has been adequate, satisfactorily meeting the course requirements. Work is average and competent, showing a basic understanding of ideation & prototyping theory & practice.

D. Poor; Below Average (60-69: Deficient, but passing)

Performance and attendance of the student has been less than adequate. Work is lacking in many or most areas that show any understanding of ideation & prototyping. Problems may include lack of

interest, procrastination, poor planning and poor craft.

F. Unacceptable (59 & Below: Failing Course Requirements)

Performance and attendance of the student has been such that course requirements have not been met. Work shows no overall understanding of the course material on many levels or either a severe lack of interest.

TECHNOLOGY USE IN THE CLASSROOM

Laptop computers and other mobile devices are invaluable tools when used responsibly. However, this technology can also be incredibly distracting, especially in the classroom. When in class, you may use your laptops and other devices for any activities pertaining to the course: taking notes, researching material relevant to our readings and discussions, doing VFS homework, making class presentations, etc. However, the following uses are unacceptable: checking email, instant messaging, texting, using social networking sites such as facebook, etc. Also, during class screenings, your laptops should not be used.

ACADEMIC HONESTY

All work for this class must be your own and specific to this semester. Any work recycled from other classes or from another, non-original source will be rejected with serious implications for the student. Plagiarism, knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own work in any academic exercise, is absolutely unacceptable. Any student who commits plagiarism must re-do the assignment for a grade no higher than a D. In fact, a D is the highest possible course grade for any student who commits plagiarism. Please use the MLA style for citing and documenting source material.

ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are student with a disability who is requesting accommodations, please contact New York University's Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980 or mosescsd@nyu.edu. You must be registered with CSD to receive accommodations. Information about the Moses Center can be found at www.nyu.edu/csd. The Moses Center is located at 726 Broadway on the 2nd floor.

REQUIRED SUPPLIES

- A Notebook or Sketchbook (Analog or Digital i.e. Evernote, Paper by FiftyThree, etc.)
- Digital Camera (You can also use a smart phone.)
- Digital Storage (Thumb Drives or External Hard Drive, Laptop, etc)

REQUIRED READINGS & MEDIA

The following list of required readings may be incomplete and is subject to change. Supplemental readings may also be recommended during the course. Please see the course website for updates. You may also find readings in the course Google Drive

Articles

- Park Over Plastic Sparks Community Conversations, July 1, 2019
- Plastics Are Harming Our Waters. We're Over It, Aren't You?
- Guess What: Your Plastics Aren't Really Being Recycled - Clarisa Diaz, Gothamist/WNYC
- A Plateful of Plastic - Reuters
- How the Plastics Industry Is Fighting to Keep Polluting the World
- Wasted Potential: The consequences of New York City's recycling failure
- Virgin plastic pellets are the biggest pollution disaster you've never heard of
- The missing 99%: Why can't we find the vast majority of ocean plastic? - The Guardian
- Why Black Plastic is Bad News
- Scaling back: Graduate invents plastic alternative from fish waste
- NY lawmaker wants ban on plastic toiletry bottles in hotels
- How Fossil Fuel Companies Are Killing Plastic Recycling - HuffPost
- Vicious Cycle: Delicate Wash Releases More Plastic Microfibres - The Guardian
- Where Does All the Plastic Go? - The New Yorker
- Save Our Seas 2.0 bill moves in Congress but faces rough waters
- Albany County legislature wants airport to ban plastic water bottles
- Troy council unanimously passes Plastic Free Hudson River Act
- Get ready for the onslaught of "smart plastic incineration"
- 'Can't recycle our way out': Ex-EPA official picks apart the plastic problem at forum
- What Grocery Stores Won't Tell You About Plastic
- Dasani's new water vending machine is BYOB (bring your own bottle)
- Cured in Place? An Underground Pipe Repair Raises Questions
- Join the Reuse Revolution

- Ask Your Grocery Store To Stop Selling Things Packaged In Single-Use Plastic
- New York's Thick Plastic Bag Demands Vex Efforts to Reduce Waste
- Heartbreaking Images That Show The Impact of Plastic on Animals in the Oceans

Videos

- The Plastic Problem - PBS News Documentary
- The Story of Plastic
- What's in a (Trump) Straw?
- Asia & North America's Trash Trouble and the Real Story on Recycling
- Is Your Plastic Actually Being Recycled?

Studies

- Estuary Lab, River Research - Hudson River Park Trust
- Compostable Food Containers Could Release PFAS Into Environment - American Chemical Society
- Net Cost Impact of switching from disposable to reusable food ware items for dine-in - Clean Water Action Fact Sheet
- These tea bags release billions of plastic particles into your brew, study shows
- Three-quarters of plastic products are toxic
- Today's Special: Grilled Salmon Laced With Plastic
- Law alumna: More drinking fountains, fewer plastic bottles
- Marine plastic pollution hides a neurological toxicant in our food
- Young & Restless: BPA, Circadian Rhythms, and Hyperactivity
- Eating Even One Piece of Plastic Has Health Consequences for Baby Seabirds
- How to Eat Less Plastic
- Sequins are terrible for the environment. A greener (and sparklier) alternative is here
- The Scary New Evidence on BPA-Free Plastics
- These Popular Plastic Bottles May Be Messing With Your Hormones
- Plastic & Health: The Hidden Costs of a Plastic Planet
- Questions & Answers: Chemical Recycling
- Plastic & Climate: Center for International Environmental Law

- White and wonderful? Microplastics prevail in snow from the Alps to the Arctic - AAAS
- Marine Microplastics - Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

See Appendix

PROJECTS & ASSIGNMENTS

All due dates can be found in the calendar. This is just an overview and description of all the projects for the course. Please name ALL files as firstnameinitiallastname_parkoverplastic_sp20_assignmentname (i.e. cdiaz_parkoverplastid_sp20_assignmentname.pdf)

Projects

- Midterm Project
- Final Project

Assignments

- What is Plastic Pollution Moodboard
- Personal Plastic Consumption Photo and Written Log
- Personal Plastic Consumption Visualization
- How Many Ways Can A Number Be Visualized
- Hudson River Pollution Analysis
- Usability Testing For Communication
- Service Design & System Map Slam
- Self Assessments

SCHEDULE OVERVIEW GRID

See Appendix