

# Marketing Green Homes

NYU Environmental Studies Capstone Seminar  
ENVST-UA 900, Spring 2019  
Mondays 5:00 - 7:30 pm  
Instructor: John Oppermann  
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Office hours: By appointment, 285 Mercer Street, 10th Floor

## Course Description:

The green building industry has grown substantially over the past several decades. There are currently 1.6 million residential units registered or certified with LEED. There is also ample evidence that demand exists for sustainability features like those provided by green buildings. 42 percent of North Americans say they are willing to pay extra for sustainable products and services from companies that are committed to positive social and environmental impact and 70 percent of home-buyers are more inclined to buy a green home in a down economy.

Despite the increasing supply and evidence of potentially high demand, there has been a lack of overall marketing and education efforts around the residential green building market, which even the USGBC admits as it has focused most of its efforts on the commercial market. A variety of factors have led to an underdevelopment of the green residential real estate market, including a lack of awareness and education amongst real estate professionals (brokers, appraisers), a lack of standardization in how to appraise the value of green home features, a general ambivalence amongst real estate professionals about whether or not green features add value to a home's sale price, and a misunderstanding of how best to market green features to potential buyers (as green credentials get a cursory mention in any marketing materials and when green credentials are discussed the focus is entirely on benefits to the planet but there is no mention of how green features might benefit the health and wellness of inhabitants or save owners money.)

All of this means that money is being left on the table when it comes to green homes. Existing green homes are not capturing the values they could when they are sold. The result is that developers do not receive a strong demand signal for green houses and apartments and therefore have less incentive to build green homes.

Students will conduct a review of the overall market for green homes (single-family houses and units in multi-family buildings), familiarizing themselves with the various green standards that exist. They will assess the various strengths and weaknesses of each standard (in terms of sustainability, marketability, and scalability). Finally, drawing on the expertise of sustainability marketing professionals, students will create marketing and educational plans that aim to build visibility and demand amongst the public for green apartments and houses.

## Course Structure:

Capstone seminars are problem-based, project-oriented courses for senior Environmental Studies students. They require self-initiated, collaborative, interdisciplinary, and integrative student work. The capstone entails students working for a client (actual or hypothetical) and

using an applied approach to problem solving. Students work collaboratively on a current environmental problem, including characterizing the problem, analyzing possible solutions, implementing solutions, and publicly presenting the results.

The aim is to improve a student's ability to synthesize and integrate material from a range of disciplines while deploying diverse methodologies and vocabularies in a problem-solving context. The capstone relates theoretical knowledge and skills to practical problems, while students work collaboratively in real world situations to research and communicate results to a variety of audiences.

Each capstone works as a single team under the leadership of an instructor. Capstones meet once weekly. Much of the work will be done outside of class in interviewing stakeholders, analyzing data and visiting sites. Experts may be brought in to brief the seminar on particular aspects of the problem under discussion. At the end of the term, projects are presented to the client, students, NYU Faculty, and interested members of the community.

### **Project Teams and Topics:**

Students will be divided into teams at the first class meeting and will be assigned subtopics which will be the focus for your team throughout the semester. Teams are responsible for organizing their work and dividing the work fairly. This will require communicating regularly and meeting outside of our scheduled class time.

Each student will be a part of one of three teams, each focused on a different marketing angle for green homes: environmental sustainability, human wellness, and economics. The environmental sustainability team will focus on how to market the aspects of green homes that create a smaller negative environmental footprint, a more positive and regenerative positive impact, and thus make them better for the environment and society. The human wellness team will focus on how to market the aspects of green homes that reduce residents' exposure to potentially harmful health factors and increase exposure to positive health factor, thus making a green home a healthier living space for residents. The economics team will focus on how to market the financial benefits of living in a green home, including anything from lower operating costs to higher resale values.

Each team will focus on their specific marketing angle while the class as a whole will discuss and determine what they believe to be the strongest and most promising angles for marketing green homes. This will include the class also considering which green building certifications might be in the best position to appeal to potential homebuyers. The overall consensus will be integrated into the final report and summary of the the class' findings.

Each team's final report will be structured as:

- A one-page executive summary.
- A six-page analysis of their specific topic area's marketing potential with regard to green homes, including consideration of the topic area's strengths and weaknesses as a marketing angle, an overview of the hypothetical target personas of individuals with whom this angle would most resonate,
- A three-page package of actual marketing and educational materials (language but not

design - this is not a graphic design course so students are not expected to lay the marketing materials out graphically) that could be used to promote green homes to the public (specifically the target personas you developed) using the characteristics that fall within your topic area.

### **Outcomes:**

1. Review of various green-building standards, including LEED, WELL, Passive House, among others.
2. Identification of the strengths and weaknesses of the various green building certifications and their existing marketing efforts.
3. Development of marketing and educational plans to build visibility amongst the general public about the benefits of green buildings with the aim of stimulating demand for green buildings.

### **Grading**

- **Class Attendance and Participation:** Class attendance is mandatory and students are expected to read all assignments prior to class and be prepared to discuss. Many reading assignments will involve open-ended research and ask students to identify relevant issues and find answers to the questions laid out in the pre-class assignments. Students should conduct sufficient research to answer those questions and be prepared to participate actively in the class discussion on each week's topic. (15 points)
- **Class Discussion Facilitation:** Each student will lead class discussion during one class meeting. This includes doing additional research into the topic in order to provide additional background information and context to the rest of the class and preparing a list of 5+ discussion questions, which should be e-mailed to professor by 5:00 pm ET the day before class. (10 points)
- **Workplan:** Teams will produce a two-page single-spaced document elaborating initial thoughts on their assigned topic and how the team will work together to complete the shared work going forward. This will include a list of all aspects of green buildings they will look at which they believe to fall under their specific assigned topic, a proposed work schedule with dates by which tasks should be accomplished, and assignments for individuals for accomplishing each task. Due by 5 pm ET on Wednesday, February 6. (10 points)
- **Draft Executive Summary and Outline:** Teams will provide a draft one-page executive summary and one-page outline of what they will cover in their final report. These should guide the team's work in creating the final report, but teams need not conform entirely to this draft executive summary and outline in the final report as the team's thinking and conclusions might evolve as they continue to research their topic and draft the final report. Due by 5 pm ET on Wednesday, March 27. (10 points)
- **Final Report:** See breakdown of contents of the final report Project Teams and Topics section above. Due by 5 pm ET on Wednesday, April 26. (35 points)
- **Draft Presentation Slides:** Teams will put together draft presentation slides in preparation

for the final presentation at the end of the semester. Slides should summarize the findings and suggestions covered in the final report. Due by 5 pm ET on Sunday, April 28. (10 points)

- Final Presentation: Students will present their overall findings at the end of the semester. Students will have 10 minutes allocated for presenting and 15 minutes for questions from the audience. To take place on Monday, May 13. (10 points)

## Course Policies

- All written assignments should be in the form of single-spaced 12-point Calibri font Word documents e-mailed to professor.
- Students are expected to spend time outside of class organizing with their own teams to accomplish the work assigned. This will include research beyond the assigned readings and self-directed organization and time management.
- Refer to CAS's guidelines for plagiarism and academic integrity: <http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity>
- Disability Disclosure Statement: Academic accommodations are available to any student with a chronic, psychological, visual, mobility, learning disability, or who is deaf or hard of hearing. Students should please register with the Moses Center for Students with Disabilities at 212-998-4980. NYU's Henry and Lucy Moses Center for Students with Disabilities 726 Broadway, 2nd Floor New York, NY 10003-6675 Telephone: 212-998-4980 Voice/TTY Fax: 212-995- 4114 Web site: <http://www.nyu.edu/csd>
- Reading assignments are subject to change based on the course's progression, guest speakers' contributions, and the direction taken by students' work.

## COURSE MEETING SCHEDULE AND ASSIGNMENTS

**Monday, January 28, 2019** Introduction - Overview of the issue.

*Pre-class assignment: Identify the takeaway points from these articles. What are the key lessons we should draw from attempts at messaging around environmental issues? At first glance, what do the green building standards have in common? How do they differ?*

Reading:

- [Why Isn't the Brain Green?](#), Jon Gertner
  - [Climate psychology in cartoons: clues for solving the messaging mystery](#), Jonathan Hiskes
  - [Connecting on Climate: A Guide to Effective Climate Change Communication](#)
  - Review the USGBC, IWBI, and Passive House websites.
  - [The Passive House in New York](#), Alison Gregor
  - Take a look at the [LEED credits](#) obtained by one residential tower in Williamsburg. Familiarize yourself with what each of the credits means.
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**Monday, February 4, 2019** - Overview of the residential real estate industry, green/healthy homes, and how they're being marketed.

*Pre-class assignment: Identify the key findings in these reports below that would be relevant to our consideration of how to market green homes. What would the trends discussed here say about what we're hoping to do?*

Reading:

- [SmartMarket Brief: Green Multifamily and Single Family Homes 2017](#)
- [National Association of REALTORS Home Buyer and Seller Generational Trends Report 2017](#)

*Pre-class assignment: How are green homes marketed across a variety of categories? By USGBC? By IWBI? By Passive House? By individual buildings and developments? Do your own research online into each of these buildings. Look at what you can find that discusses the sustainability, wellness, and money-saving aspects of these buildings. What do their websites tell you? What do press articles tell you? What do other resources tell you? Approach these buildings as if you were an interested buyer looking to see what sustainability, wellness, and money-saving characteristics these buildings have.*

Reading:

- Review websites and marketing materials for green buildings:
  - 565 Broome in Soho
  - 210 Pacific Street in Cobble Hill
  - The Edge in Williamsburg
  - 21W20 in Chelsea

**WORKPLAN IS DUE BY 5 PM ET ON WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2019.**

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**Monday, February 11, 2019** - Introduction to green marketing.

*Pre-class assignment: What basic themes can we pull out of these readings regarding green marketing in general? What seems to be working? What industries have successfully transitioned to sustainability/wellness marketing?*

Reading:

- [The New Rules of Green Marketing](#), Jacquelyn Ottman, Chapter 2
  - [The problem with sustainability marketing? Not enough me, me, me](#), Solitaire Townsend and Elisa Niemtzow
  - [Wellness Is The New Luxury: Is Healthy And Happy The Future Of Retail?](#), Deborah Weinswig
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**Monday, February 18, 2019** (NYU Closed, NO CLASSES — Presidents' Day)

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**Monday, February 25, 2019** - Deeper dive into real estate marketing.

*Pre-class assignment: What features are highlighted in current residential real estate marketing in general (regardless of whether or not the listings are for greener/healthier homes)? Which amenities or characteristics of listings do you find most often cited in these residential real estate marketing? When green/healthy real estate is discussed, how is it discussed? What features are most cited?*

Reading:

- Review the Compass website for real estate listings in New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco.
- Review Streeteasy listings for the same.

*Pre-class assignment: How is residential real estate discussed by the media? What features are highlighted most often? When green/healthy real estate is discussed, how is it discussed? What features are most cited?*

Reading:

- Research coverage residential real estate by Curbed.
- Research coverage of residential real estate in the Real Deal.
- Research coverage of residential real estate by the New York Times.

Guest visit: Real estate marketing specialist.

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**Monday, March 4, 2019** - Lay out framework for final report.

*Pre-class assignment: How should a final report be structured? Who is the target market? What profiles can we create for each of the potential target markets? How should we lay out a marketing plan for each potential marketing focus?*

- [Why Your Customers' Social Identities Matter](#), Guy ChampnissHugh N. WilsonEmma K. Macdonald
- [The Best Way to Understand Your Customers](#), Peter Merholz
- [A Smart Way to Segment Green Consumers](#), Jacquelyn Ottman

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**Monday, March 11, 2019** - Deeper dive into green marketing in sustainable food sector.

*Pre-class assignment: How are sustainable food brands marketing themselves to consumers? What are they emphasizing? What values are they highlighting? How is sustainable food being talked about by others?*

Reading:

- Review websites and marketing materials for sustainable food brands and traditional food brands trying to build up their green credentials:
  - Sustainable food brands:

- Whole Foods
- Chipotle
- Earthbound Farm
- Lundberg
- Organic Valley
- Traditional food brands with green initiatives:
  - Mars (\$1 billion sustainability initiative)
  - Ben & Jerry's
  - Cabot Cheese

*Pre-class assignment: Why do we think people seek out sustainable food? Environmental aspects? Health? Cost? Other issues?*

Reading:

- [Organic Food: Is it worth it?](#)
- [The New Food Fights: U.S. Public Divides Over Food Science](#), Cary Funk and Brian Kennedy

Guest visit: Sustainable food marketing expert.

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**Monday, March 18, 2019** (NO CLASSES — Spring Recess)

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**Monday, March 25, 2019** - Deeper dive into green marketing in sustainable fashion sector.

*Pre-class assignment: How are sustainable fashion brands marketing themselves to consumers? What are they emphasizing? What values are they highlighting? How is sustainable fashion being talked about by others? What language is being used by the brands themselves and others to talk about these brands? Is it the language of sustainability? Or something else (e.g., luxury, innovation, trends, wellness, belonging)?*

Reading:

- Review websites and marketing materials for sustainable fashion brands and traditional fashion brands trying to build up their green credentials:
  - Sustainable fashion brands:
    - Eileen Fisher
    - Zady
    - Rothy's
    - VEJA
  - Traditional fashion brands with green initiatives:
    - H&M
    - Madewell
    - AYR (Aloe jeans)
    - G-Star (Parley collaboration)
- [Sustainability Is Back in Fashion](#), Suzy Menkes

- [What Is Slow Fashion? We Explain](#), Hayley Phelan
- [3 Designers Creating Clothes for Life — Not the Runway](#), Amanda Fortini
- [Fashion's Interest in Alternative Fabrics Keeps Growing](#), Astrid Wendlandt
- [What if Your Environmentally Correct Shoes Were Also Cute?](#), Tariro Mzezewa

Guest speaker: Sustainable fashion marketing expert, Maxine Bedat (founder of sustainable fashion brand Zady and the New Standard Institute).

**DRAFT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND OUTLINE IS DUE BY 5 PM ET ON WEDNESDAY, MARCH 27.**

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**Monday, April 1, 2019** - Deeper dive into WELL buildings and their marketing efforts.

Reading:

- Materials to be provided by Angela Spangler closer to the date.

Guest speaker: Director of Market Development for the International WELL Building Institute, Angela Spangler.

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**Monday, April 8, 2019** - Visit LEED building. To be confirmed closer to the date based on building availability.

Reading:

- Marketing materials to be provided by the building's management and development team.

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**Monday, April 15, 2019** - Visit Passive House building. To be confirmed closer to the date based on building availability.

Reading:

- Marketing materials to be provided by the building's management and development team.

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**Monday, April 22, 2019** - Synthesize students' findings into final report.

Students will use this class session to work together as a whole class to synthesize their work into one cohesive report. Students will work together to work out any final edits to the report and will have several days following this class to make final edits and compile final report for submission on April 26.

**FINAL REPORT IS DUE BY 5 PM ET ON WEDNESDAY, APRIL 26.**



**DRAFT PRESENTATION SLIDES ARE DUE BY 5 PM ET ON SUNDAY, APRIL**

**28.** \_\_\_\_\_

**Monday, April 29, 2019** - Final review and questions. In-class discussion of the findings of the final report and run-through of the draft presentation.

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**Monday, May 6, 2019** - Presentation practice.

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**Monday, May 13, 2019** - Final public capstone presentations.