

Sociology 91/190A

The Eco Vista Community in the Time of Coronavirus

Fall 2020

Fridays sometime between noon and 3, remotely taught at
<https://ucsb.zoom.us/j/2295905339>

Note: This class will be conducted in association with the General Assemblies of Eco Vista which anyone who wants to may attend. This is why the exact starting and finishing time will be decided for each Friday as we go...



Zoom link for all classes and office hours: <https://ucsb.zoom.us/j/2295905339>

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Office Hours: John's office hours will be held by Zoom meeting at <https://ucsb.zoom.us/j/2295905339> on Fridays from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m. You can also schedule other times by appointment (and I'll do lots of e-mail consultation).

Feel free to discuss your work with me by e-mail, or in office hours.

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We need to engage in whatever actions appeal to us. There is no act too small, no act too bold. The history of social change is the history of millions of actions, small and large, coming together at certain points in history and creating a power which governments cannot suppress.

Howard Zinn, "An Occupied Country" (2002),
<http://www.progressive.org/oct03/zinn1003.html>

Statement of Purpose and Course Description

This class can be taken for 1-4 units, all P/NP.¹ It is a regular group studies designed to focus our sociological imaginations on creating the kind of society that might weather the climate storm that is coming and actually come out on the other side (or more realistically in the midst of it even as it deepens) with societies far more suited to human well-being and thriving than the ones we presently have all around the world, now so evidently under stress and with our institutions so revealed in all their inadequacy by the virus.

Therefore, now in the Fall of 2020, our work is about how Eco Vista will be made relevant, useful, and life-affirming in the uncertainty of the coronavirus.

We will ground our own work together by *participation* in the exciting new multigenerational student-community project we call Eco Vista – www.ecovistacommunity.com – the transition of Isla Vista into a model eco-village

¹ 25 hours of work this quarter earns 1 unit, 50 earns 2, etc. Count all hours including class time, so there's 1 unit right there!

through our efforts in tandem with other community organizations over the next five years.

The heart of the class will be *individual or group projects* with relevant community partners in Isla Vista, either initiated by one or more members of the class or by joining an ongoing project or Eco Vista working group in the community.

We will also *discuss various readings* that provide a historical context for our work, situate Eco Vista in the literature on eco-villages, and explore a variety of cutting edge theoretical and real-world systemic alternatives that will encourage creative thinking about the problems – and opportunities – posed by the climate crisis.

Finally, we may invite *guest speakers*, based on our interests and their availability!

This course is about gaining useful knowledge and the skills to enable positive action to secure a better future.

This course is for you, about you, and ultimately by you. It is rooted in our love for ourselves, for each other, for the community, and for the planet.

And dedicated to the inspiration and beautiful presence of Michael Bean.

OUR MISSION

Our long-term goal is to establish an ongoing, multigenerational, student-led community development project for an equitable and just transition in Isla Vista.

We aim to encourage and inspire the foundation of an eco-village in Isla Vista through renewable energy, a flourishing and regenerative agro-ecology of public urban gardens, cooperative, affordable eco-housing, a circular eco-economy based on solidarity and meeting the real needs of the inhabitants, a vibrant web of visionary cultural creativity, radical self-governance, and community priorities determined by all who reside here.

We hope that Eco Vista can become a model for other sustainable communities!

Eco Vista is ... a promise, a pledge, a dream, a future.

The promise of Eco Vista is that together we might create a place that is life-affirming for all its inhabitants and that might inspire others elsewhere – particularly young people in their own communities – to use their imaginations to create the innovative future communities we all want to live in, right now!

Our pledge to you is to co-create, imagine, dream, and transform our community into a place that matches the name of Eco Vista. We want to dream and make manifest this vision together with you!

The Eco Vista dream is a communal, shared, joyful adventure – may it transport us to a place worthy of the love we feel for it.

The future of Eco Vista is ... well, that's what we hope and aim to find out!

Community values and principles

We are inclusive.
We are democratic.
We are non-violent.

We work collectively whenever possible, and all are free to organize their own activities and projects.

We are open to all points of view that are aligned with these values and supportive of the Eco Vista Mission.

We act and live out of love for the dignity of all living beings, and base this love on social and climate justice, and on radical hope.

Course Requirements² and Assignments³

OK, here's the creative part of the class process. Everyone will come up with ideas for their own or for group projects and submit a written proposal before our second class meeting. This could be you working with another class member or members, UCSB students not enrolled in the class, residents of Isla Vista, or community organizations and any others interested in a practical project that stems out of the Eco Vista process.

Project Proposal

Written project proposals will be due by noon on Friday October 9 for discussion in class that day.

Reflections on Eco Vista General Assembly meetings. 30 percent of your grade

You must attend the Friday General Assemblies of Eco Vista, from noon to 2 p.m., and post your observations [about 500 words] on at least three of them by the following Monday at noon. Feel free to write informally (and please spellcheck your work and revise once to make sure it makes sense). In our writing, we want to be respectful of other peoples' views and keep our minds open. We will discuss the form and content of this assignment in our first class meeting.

Finally, everyone is invited to volunteer to either take notes of facilitate one of the General Assembly meetings during the quarter!

Project Presentations. 20 percent of your grade

Ten- to fifteen-minute class presentations will be scheduled for Friday, December 4 and or Friday, December 11, and will count for 20 percent of your grade.

² **Note:** you are required to attend all class meetings and the meetings of the Eco Vista General Assembly during the quarter.

³ **Please note:** Please format all papers in this course with 1" margins all around, 12-point size, and double spacing (not 1.5 lines), uploading them as *Word documents* onto our class GauchoSpace.

Weekly Progress Check-ins and Final Report. 50 percent of your grade

Each week, you should write up a paragraph on your project work, indicating how it is going, what you have done, what work is next, and what, if any, challenges, obstacles or difficulties you are encountering. Please post these on GauchoSpace by midnight on Thursdays.

At the end of the quarter, you will present your project to the group and write a 1,000-3,000-word analytic essay on your project work this quarter.⁴ This will be the place where you get to reflect deeply on what you have learned this quarter.

Course Meetings, Topics, Readings

I would like us to co-construct the quarter's work as we go. Below you will find the dates of our class meetings, some possibilities for topics, and a list of some suggested readings.

Here are some possible topics:

Further Development of the Eco Vista People's Green New Deal

Eco Vista Sister City initiatives, particularly with Copenhagen, Denmark

The Isla Vista CSD, possible declaration of an Eco Vista Party, and the November 2020 elections for Isla Vista Recreation and Parks Board and Isla Vista Community Services District Board

Desirability and feasibility of the forming an Eco Vista UCSB organization/student group

Development and possible launch of Eco Vista U

NOTE: Please put your Project Proposals on GauchoSpace by noon on Friday, October 9!

⁴ If you are taking the course for 1-unit, try to write around 1,000 words; for 2 units, 1,750 words; for three units, 2,500 words; and for four units, 3,000 words.

Friday, October 2. Organizational Meeting and Project Proposals

Today we get to know each other, and carefully plan our work for the quarter.

Please come prepared to present and discuss ideas for a project you want to work on this fall.

Friday, October 9. Participant Observation at the Eco Vista General Assembly Meeting, followed by discussion of Project Proposals

Today we will attend the Eco Vista General Assembly Meeting at noon and debrief it as a group after it's over, along with discussion of your projects ideas.

Friday, October 16. Presentation/Report/Updates on Project Work

Today we will discuss projects and troubleshoot issues together. Meeting will start at noon.

Friday, October 23. Participant Observation at the Eco Vista General Assembly Meeting, followed by discussion of Project Proposals

Today we will attend the Eco Vista General Assembly Meeting at noon and debrief it as a group after it's over, along with check-ins on projects.

Friday, October 30. Presentation/Report/Updates on Project Work

Today we will discuss projects and troubleshoot issues together. Meeting will start at noon.

Friday, November 6. Participant Observation at the Eco Vista General Assembly Meeting

Today we will attend the Eco Vista General Assembly Meeting at noon and debrief it as a group after it's over, along with check-ins on projects.

Friday, November 13. Presentation/Report/Updates on Project Work

Today we will discuss projects and troubleshoot issues together. Meeting will start at noon.

Friday, November 20. Participant Observation at the Eco Vista General Assembly Meeting

Today we will attend the Eco Vista General Assembly Meeting at noon and debrief it and do class work afterwards.

Friday, November 27. No class. Thanksgiving Break

No class, but good time to put final touches on project presentations.

Friday, December 4. Participant Observation at the Eco Vista General Assembly Meeting

Today we will attend the Eco Vista General Assembly Meeting at noon and debrief it and do class work afterwards.

Friday, December 11. Final Class and Project Reports

Today we will hear your presentation on your projects, and reflect on the quarter's work and the Winter quarter that is coming. Meeting will start at noon.

NOTE: Please put your Final Reports on Gauchospace by Wednesday, December 16 at midnight!

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“In order to carry a positive action we must develop here
a positive vision.” – Dalai Lama

“It is possible that the next Buddha will not take the form of an individual. The
next Buddha may take the form of a community – a community practicing
understanding and loving-kindness, a community practicing mindful living. This
may be the most important thing we can do for the survival of the earth.” – Thich
Nhat Hanh

Readings [select list]

Readings on Eco Vista

Archive of previous class projects and final reports

Eco Vista Community Mission Statement, “Taking the Community of
Isla Vista Into the Future” (February 2019),
<https://ecovistacommunity.com/our-mission/>

Michael Bean, *An Eco Vista Sourcebook*

John Foran, “From Isla Vista to Eco Vista: A Design Project in
Community Resilience” – grant proposal (March 2018).

George Thurlow, “Isla Vista: So Close to UCSB, So Far from Good”
(Winter 2014),
http://www.ucsbalum.com/Coastlines/2014/Winter/feature_ivhistory.htm

Carmen Lodise. *Isla Vista: A People’s History*. Second edition.
2019.

Daniel Berchenko, “Building Eco Vista: a Prefigurative Praxis with
Historical Grounding” (June 2019).

Sierra Emrick’s Eco Vista video
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2L2ipE-D2E&feature=youtu.be>

John Foran. “Eco Vista in the Quintuple Crisis.” Pp. 284-291 in
Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements. Volume 12.

Issue 1 (July 2020). <https://www.interfacejournal.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Foran.pdf>

Readings on Transition Towns and Ecovillages

Our Eco Vista Transition Initiative document

Transition Network Team, *The Essential Guide to Doing Transition: Getting Transition started in your street, community, town or organization* (Totnes Transition Network, 2016).

Various Transition US documents

Samuel Alexander and Jonathan Rutherford, “The Simpler Way: Editors’ Introduction” (February 28, 2020), <https://www.resilience.org/stories/2020-02-28/the-simpler-way-editors-introduction/>

Ester Alloun and Samuel Alexander, “The Transition Movement: Questions of Diversity, Power, and Affluence,” Simplicity Institute (August 2014), <http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-08-18/the-transition-movement-questions-of-diversity-power-and-affluence/>

Diana Leafé Christian, “Starting a Successful Urban Ecovillage,” *Hopedance Magazine* #51 (August 2009), <http://www.hopedance.org/home/housing-news/1218-941>

Websites of interest

Global Ecovillage Network – <https://ecovillage.org/>

Transition United States – <http://www.transitionus.org/about-us>

The Transition Network – <https://transitionnetwork.org/>

The Eco Vista Green New Deal

“First Popular Assembly for an Eco Vista Green New Deal: A Report” (December 2019) – a report from Sociology/Environmental Studies 134EC: Earth in Crisis, Fall 2019

Systemic Alternatives

Alberto Acosta, Federico Demaria, Arturo Escobar, Ashish Kothari, Ariel Salleh, *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2019).

Pablo Solón, “What are Systemic Alternatives?” (April 11, 2019), <https://www.resilience.org/stories/2019-04-11/what-are-systemic-alternatives/>

Pablo Solón, editor, *Systemic Alternatives: Vivir Bien, Degrowth, Commons, Ecofeminism, Rights of Mother Earth, and Deglobalisation* (La Paz: Focus on the Global South, Attac, Fundación Solón, 2017), www.systemicalternatives.org

Websites of interest

Global Tapestry of Alternatives – <https://globaltapestryofalternatives.org/process/>

Systemic Alternatives – <https://systemicalternatives.org/about/>