

UEP 246: Sustainable Oxy

Course Topic: Food Waste at Oxy

Fall 2025

T 3:00-4:55pm

INSTRUCTOR

Sharon Cech, MA Urban Planning
cech@oxy.edu
she/her
Office hours: by appointment

EIA

Agustin Fernandez
afernandez3@oxy.edu

Canvas

All readings and supplemental media will be available on the course Canvas site:
<https://oxy.instructure.com/courses/5945>

COURSE OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVES

Course Summary & Goals:

The goals of *UEP 246: Sustainable Oxy* are to give students the experience of planning and implementing projects that advance sustainability initiatives on the Occidental campus and surrounding community. This year's class will explore the topic of Zero Waste at Oxy with a focus on food waste. The course will cover a range of topics from recycling and plastic alternatives to an exploration of campus food waste and potential on-site compost systems. As a community based learning course, we will be hearing from community partners and go on several field trips to learn about local systems and initiatives. This year we will also partner with LA Compost to learn about Oxy's compost hub operations. For our main project, students will conduct a comprehensive food waste characterization audit here at Oxy, analyze the findings, and develop recommendations.

Class Structure & Format:

UEP 246 will focus on learning key concepts through lectures, discussions, and occasional guest speakers in the classroom. It will also feature a series of field trips to see waste systems in action and learn from community organizations and other professionals in the field. Our class project will be an analysis of food waste here at Oxy. Over the course of the

semester, students will conduct a food waste audit (working with the Office of Sustainability and Campus Dining), analyze the data, and share key findings with the Oxy community in a final presentation.

EXPECTATIONS AND GRADING

UEP 246 is a 2-unit course. It is expected that students in this class on average will devote at least six (6) hours a week to class activities (including in-class time). Letter grades for the course are assigned according to the following table.

A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	C-	D+	D	F
93-100	90-93	87-90	83-87	80-83	77-80	73-77	70-73	67-70	63-67	0-63

Grades for the course will be determined according to the following criteria.

1. Participation – 35%

As a community based learning course, class participation is a primary focus of the class. The participation grade is based on class engagement and attendance. Students are responsible for attending and participating in class, being prepared to discuss readings and materials with the group, and having questions prepared for guest speakers or field trip hosts. Students are also responsible for engaging in respectful, open, and thoughtful discussion with each other, the professors, and community partners.

We understand that circumstances are sometimes beyond a student's control in terms of class attendance. Please let me know as soon as possible if you will need to miss a class. A makeup assignment may be available, and several extra credit opportunities will also be offered throughout the semester.

2. Food Waste Audit – 20%

The UEP 246 class will be conducting a post-consumer waste audit in Oxy's Market Place the week of September 29th. The purpose of this audit is to understand more about Oxy's food waste so that we can make informed recommendations for waste reduction on campus. The data collected will directly inform one of the group projects (see below) in the second half of the semester.

All UEP 246 students are required to participate in the waste audit. We will go over specific details during class, but as an overview, all students will be expected to sign up for 1-2 shifts during the lunch hour, arrive on time, follow all protocols, and record detailed information in the summary form.

3. Group Projects – 45%

The class will break into two groups for a semester-long project. **Group A** will conduct an in-depth analysis of the food waste audit data, and **Group B** will explore the potential for expanded on-site composting systems at Oxy. In the first half of the semester, each group will be required to 1) develop a detailed work plan outlining who will do what, and 2) conduct supplementary background research. During the second half of the semester, groups will 1) interview specific Oxy staff, professors, and/or community partners, and 2) summarize their findings and recommendations, and 3) give a final presentation on the last day of class for an audience of the Oxy community and other community partners. All assignment details are posted on Canvas.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Below is the week-by-week schedule for the UEP 246 class. You can also reference [Oxy's 2025-2026 academic calendar](#) for more information on College-wide dates and deadlines.

Week #1	Tue 8/26	Introduction + Group Project Assignment
Week #2	Tue 9/2	Overview of the Waste System
Week #3	Tue 9/9	Plastics & the Oil Industry
Week #4	Tue 9/16	Bioplastics + Food Waste
Week #5	Tue 9/23	Food Waste Audit Training (at Campus Dining)
Week #6	Tue 9/30	FOOD WASTE AUDIT WEEK — NO CLASS MEETING
Week #7	Tue 10/7	Waste Policy from Oxy to California
Week # 8	Tue 10/14	FALL BREAK
Week # 9	Tue 10/21	LA Compost Workshop #1: Compost Basics
Week #10	Tue 10/28	LA Compost Workshop #2: Under the Microscope
Week # 11	Tue 11/4	Field Trip (tbd)

Week # 12	Tue 11/11	Field Trip (tbd)
Week # 13	Tue 11/18	LA Compost Workshop #3: Campus Solutions
Week # 14	Tue 11/25	Final Presentations

COURSE/CAMPUS POLICIES & SUPPORT SERVICES

Learning Environment & Responsibilities

Professors and students share the responsibility of creating the space and stimulating enthusiasm for learning.. Students are responsible for attending and participating in class, completing assignments in a timely manner, and being prepared to discuss readings and material in class. Students are also responsible for engaging in respectful, open, and thoughtful discussion with each other, the professors and community partners. In order to ensure open, honest, thoughtful, and respectful learning, teaching, class and community discussions please:

- Inform the professors when you may have to arrive late or leave early with advanced notice when possible. As this class is community based, all guest lectures are mandatory. If you are absent for these classes, an alternative assignment must be discussed ahead of time.
- Engage in active and courteous listening to other students and community partners and contribute respectfully to class and community discussions.

Credit Hour Policy.

UEP 306 is a 4-unit course. On average, you should expect to spend at least twelve (12) hours a week (including in-class time) on this course.

Mid- Semester Progress Reports

For [Fall 2023](#) Mid-Semester Progress reports are available from October 9-22 and Advising Week is October 23-27.

GUIDANCE ON COVID

The most recent guidance on COVID-related policies can be found here:

<https://www.oxy.edu/back-oxy>

- **COVID-Specific Policy on Masks.**
Faculty still maintain the authority to require masks in their classroom, even at times when the College does not have an indoor mask mandate.

- **Importance of Not Coming to Class When Ill.**

Your health and well-being, and that of our community, are essential. If you are feeling any symptoms of illness, please refrain from attending class until you receive a negative COVID test or it has been 10 days since your symptoms began. Please work with Emmons and the COVID Operations team to confirm when and how you can end your isolation. Similarly, if you have been identified as a close contact of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, please follow all applicable College policies, and wear a high-quality mask when around other individuals for 10 days.

- **Mental Health Implications of Missing Class.**

Your mental health and emotional well-being impacts learning and academic success. Symptoms like depression, anxiety, and trauma may cause loss of motivation, difficulty concentrating, and other issues that make learning difficult. Emmons Counseling staff are committed to supporting the mental health needs of our students. Emmons counseling services are available M-F from 9a-4p and include individual and group therapy, drop-in chats, case management, and referral consultations. Walk-ins are available M-F from 2-4p. All of these services are offered in person and via teletherapy. Students can also utilize the 24/7 confidential hotline at (323) 341-4141. To get connected to any of the free, confidential services at Emmons call (323) 259-2657.

Statement of the Shared Academic Integrity Commitment

Academic Integrity is a shared community value. It is built around trust and respect between members of the Occidental Community, and embodies a commitment to honesty and integrity in every aspect of one's academic life.

All members of the Occidental community are committed to uphold the highest degree of academic integrity. Unless stipulated otherwise, the academic work done for all assignments is expected to be the student's own; students are expected to give proper credit to the ideas and work of others.

Signing the Academic Integrity Commitment at the beginning of every semester represents a student's affirmation to uphold the shared values of honesty and integrity. When signing the Integrity Commitment associated with work in a course, students are affirming that they have not cheated, plagiarized, fabricated, or falsified information; nor assisted others in these actions.

[Link](#) to Student Handbook (which includes the framing of the commitment, definitions of Academic Ethics, and Process for alleged violations of the commitment).

Civil Rights & Title IX

In the event that you write or speak about having experienced discrimination or harassment on the basis of a protected characteristic or sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, dating/domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation or any other form of sexual and/or gender-based harassment), as a designated Responsible Employee, I must inform the Civil Rights & Title IX Office. They will contact you to let you know about resources and support services at Oxy, as well as reporting options both on and off-campus. You have no obligation to respond to the Civil Rights & Title IX Office or to meet with them to discuss support services and reporting options.

If you do not want the Civil Rights & Title IX Office contacted, instead of disclosing this information to your instructor, either through conversation or a class assignment, you can speak confidentially with:

- Oxy's Survivor Advocate, Project SAFE (survivoradvocate@oxy.edu)
- Emmons Counseling (For appointments, call: 323-259-2657)
- Rev. Dr. Susan Young, Office of Religious and Spiritual Life (young@oxy.edu)
- Oxy 24/7 Confidential Hotline (323-341-4141)

The College's civil rights policies, along with additional resources, can be found at: <https://www.oxy.edu/civil-rights-title-ix>. If you would like to contact the Civil Rights & Title IX Office directly, you may email Civil Rights & Title IX Coordinator Alexandra Fulcher at afulcher@oxy.edu or call 323-259-1338.

Special Accommodations/Learning Differences

All academic and housing accommodation requests are managed by Disability Services & Student Support (DSSS). It is a student's responsibility to contact DSSS if they need accommodations or additional support. Any student who has, or thinks they may have, a physical, learning, or psychological disability may contact Disability Services at accessibility@oxy.edu to learn about available services and support. More information is available at <http://www.oxy.edu/disability-services>.

Accommodations for Reasons of Faith and Conscience

Consistent with Occidental College's commitment to creating an academic community that is respectful of and welcoming to persons of differing backgrounds, we believe that students should be excused from class for reasons of faith and conscience without academic consequence. While it is not feasible to schedule coursework around all days of conviction for a class as a whole, faculty will honor requests from individual students to reschedule coursework, to be absent from classes that conflict with the identified days. Information about this process is available on the ORSL

website: <https://www.oxy.edu/student-life/resources-support/orsl/academic-accommodations> “

Equity & Justice in an Inclusive Learning Environment

Drawing from the [Shared Academic Integrity Commitment](#) and the [Office of Student Conduct](#), Oxy's commitment to academic integrity is fundamental to being an educational community. It represents our commitment to respectfully engage with each other and with ourselves. This is especially important when we discuss relevant topics and issues that are unfamiliar and/or at times, uncomfortable. In these situations, it is essential to guarantee the open and thoughtful intellectual exchanges that provide the foundation for teaching, learning, research, and knowledge production, and as such it reflects the high value we place in the processes and products of education at Oxy. With that in mind, classroom exchanges must be grounded in the values of trust, honesty, and respect. Ad hominem attacks are considered a violation of the Code of Student Conduct.

This classroom is a place where you will be treated with respect, and I welcome individuals of all ages, backgrounds, ethnicities, gender identities and expressions, national origins, political affiliations, religious affiliations, sexual orientations, abilities, and other visible and nonvisible identities. The wide array of perspectives that each of us contributes to this class is a resource that will strengthen and enhance our intellectual community. All members of this class are expected to co-create and engage in a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive environment for every other member of the class. In this context, we may speak as individuals or we may choose to represent ourselves as a member of a group. You need not represent any group, only yourself, though you may choose to represent a group, if you wish. Additionally, part of equity & justice work is to dismantle barriers to success for all people, particularly those who belong to groups that have been marginalized and minoritized. If there are aspects of the design, instruction, and/or experiences within this course that result in barriers to your success or accurate assessment of achievement, or if there are ways we can improve the effectiveness of this course for you personally or for other students or student groups, please let me know. Your suggestions about how to improve the value of justice, equity, inclusion, and diversity in this course are encouraged and appreciated.

Laptop Lending Program

Students may request a loaner laptop via this form:

<https://oxy.freshservice.com/support/catalog/items/108> and check it out via the Library Information Desk at the Academic Commons. The laptops are Dell PCs and set up with access to the virtual computer lab software (e.g., SPSS, STATA, Matlab etc.).

Student Academic Support Resources

Occidental has an array of available student support services found here:

<https://www.oxy.edu/academics/student-success>

- Students who need support with their time management/organizational skills, online learning strategies, and other study skills, can schedule a I:I meeting with our Academic Success Coach. If interested, please email to academiccoaching@oxy.edu to schedule an appointment. In your email, please share what you'd like to work on, and an academic success coach will schedule an appointment with you within a few days.
- The Library's Teaching, Learning, and Research Support (TLRS) offers [library research consultations](#). We also offer peer-to-peer support for learning technologies in the Critical Making Studio on the ground floor of the library (contact Samantha Hilton hiltons@oxy.edu for more information).
- Peer Tutors are available to assist students on discipline-specific peer tutoring for coursework, and content review and study skills support in a variety of academic departments. Information and schedules for drop-in tutoring in [languages](#) and in [all other subjects](#) can be found on their respective websites linked here.
- The Writing Center offers opportunities to work on all forms of writing for any class and other writing tasks such as personal statements, proposals, fellowships, senior comprehensives, and more. We offer peer-to-peer consultations with knowledgeable Writing Advisers and sessions with Faculty Writing Specialists. We are located on the ground floor of the Academic Commons. See the [Writing Center website](#) for more information about our hours and how to drop-in or sign up for appointments. Please contact the Writing Center Director Prof. Prebel (jprebel@oxy.edu) for more information on Writing Center resources.

Intercultural Community Center (ICC)

The ICC aims to reduce institutional barriers for marginalized communities through intentional and meaningful programming, identity-specific services and accessible resources. At the ICC, we practice collective care as an act of rebellion as those of us on the margins fight against attempts to weaponize our oppression and silence our activism. To learn more, contact icc@oxy.edu, or reach out directly to Vanessa Gonzalez-Wright, vgonzalez2@oxy.edu.

Emmons/ Student Health

Your health and well-being has always impacted learning and academic success, and this reality is only heightened as we enter a new season of the pandemic and transition back to

campus. Symptoms such as anxiety, depression, loss of motivation, difficulty concentrating, strained relationships, and feelings of not belonging can occur. Emmons Counseling staff are committed to supporting the mental health needs of our students. Due to the nature of our work and the safety for all, Emmons counseling services will continue via teletherapy. Emmons will provide ongoing individual therapy, walk-ins, support groups and consultations through a virtual platform. Emmons staff will also support students with finding local therapy referrals. In case of an emergency or a crisis, there will be counselors onsite to assist the Oxy community. All students continue to have access to the 24/7 confidential hotline at (323) 341-4141. To get connected to any of the free, confidential services at Emmons call (323) 259-2657 or schedule an appointment online at <https://myhealth.oxy.edu> using your Oxy login credentials.

Lived Name Policy

Occidental College seeks to provide an inclusive and non-discriminatory environment by making it possible for students to use [a lived first name](#) and pronouns on college records when a legal name is not required. Students are encouraged to use Zoom to display their lived name and pronouns.

Land Acknowledgement.

Occidental College sits on the traditional territory and homelands of the Tongva people. Please click through to read more about the [Gabrielino-Tongva tribe](#) and about the practice of [land acknowledgement](#).