

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

Energy Sustainability: Critical Issues of Our Time

What is the Course About? What are the Goals of the Course?

Energy is the life-blood of today's society and economy. Yet producing and using energy can be enormously destructive, and long-term energy supplies are uncertain. How can we produce and utilize energy sustainably, in order to maintain high quality of life over the long term? In this short course, we explore critical issues of energy sustainability, utilizing an engaging set of learning tools: field and practical experience, lively in-person and online discussion, illuminating readings, and engrossing films. The course can be taken at your pace, on your schedule; it can be taken in-person, online, or using a hybrid of both. The course is designed so participants can delve deeper if they wish, with additional short courses and guided independent study.

Can You Tell Me More About What Topics Are Covered?

You can request a Course Outline. Topics covered in Phase One include An Overview of Current Energy Use, Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy (in General), Solar Energy, Climate Change, the Transition Movement, Practical Ideas About How To Use Energy Sustainably (as individuals, as communities, as societies), and many more.

Who Can Take the Course?

All adults (and precocious 'pre-adults') who want to learn more about this vitally important subject, and who wish to figure out how they can make a difference, are welcome. The course can help lay a foundation for further study and work in the field. Content is customized to participant interests and knowledge, and technical background is not required. Participants will have a chance to do further, independent (guided) study. The course can be taken in person, online, or as a hybrid of both. The in-person class has an optional online component. Scheduling is flexible.

Who is the Instructor?

Steve Hoffman, Ph.D., is Executive Director of the nonprofit [501(c)3] NW Center for Sustainability and Innovation. Steve has worked with nonprofit organizations, taught at universities, worked in government, and acted as an independent consultant on sustainability issues since 1986. He spends much of his time implementing sustainable energy solutions, and he is deeply committed to engaging education about these pressing issues of our time. His student

evaluations received in a variety of educational settings have been extremely positive.

How Do the Courses Work?

Participants either sign up for the in-person course (which includes an optional online component), or the online-only course. Courses are taught in 6-session blocks, or phases. To enroll, participants need to sign up for a 6-session phase.

In-Person + (Optional) Online Courses

The in-person course meets roughly once a week, for 2-2.5 hours, for 6 weeks. Most in-person classes involve field trips or practical experiences in or around Skagit County, Washington. In-person discussions take place at field trip sites or at the Padilla Bay Reserve in Bayview, WA. Any class that is missed can be made up online. In-person class size is limited to approx. 15 participants.

Online Component (For Both In-Person & Online-Only Courses)

The online component of the in-person course and the online-only version of the course are both available continuously. Online instruction makes use of user-friendly, engaging teaching and discussion tools. Fascinating readings and exercises are provided electronically. Participation in lively, online discussion is also a vital part of the learning process.

When does the next 6-Session Course Begin?

September 17, 2011. The 6-Session Course after that begins on October 22, 2011.

Is There a Follow-Up?

Yes, there are three courses in a series, and independent (guided) study after that. Our goal is that course participants go as deep into 'sustainable energy education' as they wish. The following are some of the topics covered in the Phase 2 and Phase 3 6-Session Courses:

- In-Depth Home Energy Efficiency, In-Depth
- Small-Scale Wind Energy
- Large-Scale Wind Energy
- Climate Change: Possible Effects on Washington State
- Sustainable Transportation
- Large-Scale Solar Energy
- Climate Change: Broader Effects
- Smart Growth
- Conventional Energy Sources: Issues and Answers

Sustainable Transport: Alternative Fuels
Solar Hot Water
Biomass to Energy
Biodiesel
Ethanol
Guided Independent Study: Participant Choice

What Do the Courses Cost?

We do need to charge tuition to cover costs. Each 6-Session Course costs \$195. We try our best to provide partial scholarships when financial need is clearly demonstrated. Please see our Course Logistics sheet for details of registration, tuition, and refund policy.