

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 destructive, and long-term energy supplies are uncertain. How can we produce and utilize energy sustainably, in order to maintain a 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, spirited in-person and online discussion, illuminating readings, and compelling films. The course can be taken at your own pace, on your schedule; it can be taken in-person, online, or as a hybrid of both. The course is designed so participants can go as deep as they wish, potentially with additional study. The course can help prepare participants for sustainable energy work in the nonprofit or for-profit sector, or it can help participants to make a difference in their everyday lives..

Who Can Take the Course?

All adults (and precocious 'pre-adults') who wish 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 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.

Can You Tell Me More About What Topics Are Covered?

Course Outlines are available upon request. 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 more.

Who is the Instructor?

Steve Hoffman, Ph.D., is Executive Director of the nonprofit NW Center for Sustainability and Innovation. Steve has worked with nonprofit organizations, taught at universities, worked with government, and acted as an independent consultant on sustainability issues since 1986. At present, he spends much of his

time implementing sustainable energy solutions, and he is deeply committed to meaningful education about these extremely pressing issues. His student evaluations, received in a variety of educational settings, have been extremely positive.

How Does Sign-Up Work?

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

Online Course

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

When does the next 6-Session Course Begin?

October 1, 2011. The 6-Session Course after that begins on November 5, 2011.

Is There a Follow-Up?

Yes, there are three courses per course series (for those who wish to go deeper), and independent (guided) study for those who wish to go even deeper than that. We would like course participants to go as deep into the sustainable energy field as they wish. The following are some topics covered in Phase 2 and Phase 3 of the first three-course series:

- In-Depth Home Energy Efficiency
- Small-Scale Wind Energy
- Large-Scale Wind Energy
- Climate Change: 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

Is There A Cost?

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