**BIOL 510 The Biology of Sustainability media presentation group final synthesis assignment**

This assignment is centred on the following goal:

**Create an original, cohesive, engaging synthesis media presentation to promote some new conceptual insight or idea you have learned in this course that is worth communicating to a wider audience in terms of helping humanity to either better understand, cope with, and/or address our civilization’s sustainability crisis.**

It is a true ‘synthesis’ exercise in that students could choose to relate one or more of the course learning outcomes to this assignment. To remind you, those outcomes are that by the end of the course, the student should be able to:

1. Critically assess the constraints (ecological, economic, social, behavioural and political) that underlie society’s current responses to global change issues
2. Discuss, explain, and critique the similarities and differences between contemporary Buddhism and Indigenous cultures in fundamental philosophical concepts that relate to Biology and Sustainability such as interconnectedness and impermanence
3. Formulate clear, original, challenging, and concise thematic questions from study reading material that are likely to lead to focussed and intellectually probing seminar group discussions, student-led seminar topics, or short synthesis essay/media projects
4. Lead a stimulating, informative, and creative seminar interpreting selected material from Barash’s book *Buddhist Biology* in the context of this course’s focal question (see above)
5. Develop and present a cohesive, original, synthesis final essay/media project on the potential value of incorporating contemporary Buddhist and Indigenous philosophical perspectives on interconnectedness and impermanence to promote more sustainable living across our society
6. Use the learning achieved in this course to develop lasting personal solutions for coping with, and constructively responding to, the major environmental and social sustainability issues of the 21st century.

The exercise is aimed at encouraging you to reflect on all the conceptual insights and ideas you have encountered in this course and then to evaluate which ones you think are most valuable to communicate to the wider public. Which conceptual insight or idea that you encountered in the course was the most inspiring, challenging, and novel, and why do you think other people (e.g. students who have not taken this course, friends, family, the broader public) would most benefit from knowing?   The combination of ‘which’ and ‘why’ results in an ‘argument’. For example: **By understanding this idea or conceptual insight XXX, you the viewer/listener will benefit in the following ways...YYY, ZZZ**. What exactly is the most interesting, challenging and novel message (i.e. argument) from this course that you think worth communicating? In essence, the product of this exercise will be a media presentation of that argument which can be shared with those others. It is a very ‘application-based’ exercise – the product should have long-term value to society.

Working in groups of 3 people (sign-up sheet on the course OneDrive), you will meet and discuss those concepts, ideas or knowledge pieces that were the most inspiring, challenging and novel to you. Your top choice is likely to be worthy of broader communication, and that’s then your task in the assignment! Once you have decided on your top choice, your group will then generate a short media video or audio podcast to effectively communicate that conceptual insight or idea to others.

**Outline presentation plan:**

Please email me an outline plan for your presentation by 10 pm on the evening of **Thursday, November 14th** at the latest – earlier that week would be great. You can include as little or as much as you want – just the core idea or insight that you will focus on and some simple bullet points, or short sections of draft text to describe the structure and content of your presentation, and any queries you may have on which you want feedback from me. Please include a title for the presentation that is catchy and encapsulates your insight argument, the names of all group members, and make all text is double-spaced. I will work through these outline drafts and provide feedback, and plan to complete them for you to collect by the morning of **Tuesday Nov 19th**. These initial drafts will be worth 10% of your course grade and will be marked for ‘depth of thought’ (i.e. on the basis of ‘perceptiveness’ and ‘relevance’ – just like your seminar questions). Treat the outline submission primarily as a way to get feedback on your best ideas and original thinking – especially on the content and wording of your main focus idea or insight.

**Final presentation grading criteria:**

Media presentations will be graded as a group exercise according to the following criteria:

1. Quality of the focus idea or insight in terms of its importance in helping humanity to either better understand, cope with, and/or address our civilization’s sustainability crisis
2. Audience engagement potential -its likelihood of convincing a broad public audience of the particular special value of understanding your insight or idea
3. Evidence of independent critical thinking and originality in the concepts and linkages portrayed
4. Presentation structure, clarity and effectiveness – logical flow
5. Appeal to a broad audience - presentation creativity and energy

Please pay attention to the above criteria very carefully - They tell you what I am looking for! – The ultimate goal is an interesting, inspiring, and engaging media presentation that is likely to appeal to a broad audience, and to impress that audience of the particular value of knowing more about your particular choice of novel idea or insight.

**Timeline:**

The final presentations should be emailed to groganp@queensu.ca by 10 pm on **Wednesday December 11th**. Big files can be uploaded directly to the course OneDrive folder. I will be available to help as needed at the end of all prior seminar sessions, and especially after the course’s two final synthesis sessions that I will lead on Wednesday Nov 27th and Friday Nov 29th.

**Final presentation grading:**

* I will grade them independently, and plan to have an external second grader (a graduate student with experience in this theme), but in addition, each group will also be asked to grade the other four presentations.
* For peer-grading, each group should ideally watch the presentation together so that you can discuss, but regardless, I do want each student in every group to give their own separate letter grade for each of the 5 criteria listed above, which I will then later use to calculate the means for each criterion within each group, and the overall mean score from that that group. I anticipate that the range of grades you will assign for each criterion within each group will range from C+ to A+. Note that assigning identical or very similar high grades across each criterion, and/or across the groups is not being fair to those whose presentations really excelled – i.e. if you have some really, really good ones, then you probably should also have some weaker presentations too.
* Each student in each peer-grading group is required to write 1-2 brief sentences of feedback (in the dedicated excel grading sheet that I will circulate to you), indicating the particularly strong and the weaker aspects of the presentation. Constructive criticism will be very helpful and much appreciated by your colleagues (- and will be circulated to them anonymously after the course). Please send me your assessment of all of the presentations (in the attached excel spreadsheet) as soon as you get them all completed, but definitely not later than 10 pmon **Wednesday, December 18th**. On the basis of the other class groups’ assessments of the presentations, and my own and the external second grader’s independent marking, a final grade will be awarded (probably the mean of the three) which will be worth 25% of your overall course grade.

Notes:

1. The video/podcast presentation of your argument should be ~3 minutes in length, and definitely no more than 5 minutes. Aim to be short, concise, and most importantly original, and challenging.... leaving a ‘punchy’ take home message.
2. If you have other ideas of how to present such material in recorded media form (e.g. infographics, artwork, etc.), I am very open to considering your suggestions.
3. Your journal notes from the seminars should be very helpful in this exercise as potential sources of inspiration for identifying, and then evaluating, conceptual ideas or insights worth communicating to a wider audience. In addition, review the associated Barash chapters and Indigenous-focussed papers from the main part of the course, but do also check out the posted PDFs for Paul’s initial seminars along with the associated readings and films. Furthermore, the Course Reference list should by definition by useful, and also perhaps the Web of Science database.
4. Media presentation preparation skills training links that should be helpful:
* <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/tips_how_to/video-production-media-arts-toolkit/>
* <https://www.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/tips_how_to2/audio-recording-media-arts-toolkit/>
* <https://cdnsciencepub.com/authors-and-reviewers/how-to-prepare-a-video-abstract>

The last website above is focussed on how to prepare a video abstract of a research paper, and so only some parts are directly relevant to the BIOL 510 exercise. Below is a quick summary of the relevant parts:

**Prepare a video abstract**

Develop a script that is about 3 minutes in length. Engage people outside your field by using plain language and being succinct.

For videos that take the form of a short lecture or interview, prepare a camera-friendly environment for the video shoot. Ensure that the background is suitable, that a light source behind the camera is illuminating your face, and that background noises don’t interfere with your audio. Address the camera directly, or speak to someone just off camera.

You don’t need fancy equipment to prepare a video. If your laptop, tablet, PC, or cell phone is equipped with a camera, you can simply film yourself (or your team) speaking while sitting at your desk.

Be creative, consider incorporating other forms of media in your video.

* Provide footage of the subject topic
* Use animations, images, and text overlay
* Lots of energy and even a little humour can make it very effective
* ???? - originality greatly appreciated!

Other helpful tips:

* [Video Abstracts for beginners](http://www.universityaffairs.ca/career-advice/career-advice-article/how-to-video-abstract-for-beginners/), from University Affairs
* [DIY video toolkit](http://thescientistvideographer.com/wordpress/diy-video-toolkit/) and [Tutorials](http://thescientistvideographer.com/wordpress/tutorials/), from The Scientist Videographer
* [Create a video abstract](https://wesharescience.com/Create-Video-Abstract), from We Share Science