VISITING THE WORLD: SUSTAINABILITY DIARY

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GENERAL GUIDE

In this experience, students write a diary entry every day or week reflecting critically on their thoughts, experiences, and insights regarding sustainability. The experience makes sustainability personal, facilitates learning and transformation, and creates a paper trail of learning, transformation, challenges, and questions that instructors and students can review and evaluate.

“When you are thinking critically, you are not just thinking passively and accepting everything you see and hear. You are thinking actively. You are asking questions about what you see and hear, evaluating, categorizing, and finding relationships.” - University of Canberra, 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Level: 200; can accommodate group size: 2-100+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>May seem like a tedious task at first but students will soon begin to see development and appreciate if they take it seriously.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>Intellectual growth and development after gaining experience in writing. It is a way to personally connect to sustainability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustments</td>
<td>Few adjustments necessary. Professor may need to make time to read entries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>Helps instructors discern how deeply students think about topics, and how much they are learning about sustainability.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Compare and contrast how course concepts and theories relate to realities observed. [SYSTEMS THINKING]
- Identify cause and effect of sustainability problems encountered. [SYSTEMS THINKING]
- Analyze personal roles (real or potential) in sustainability problems and solutions. [SYSTEMS THINKING]
- Envision sustainability strategies for problems discussed in class, taking into account barriers, unintended consequences, and evidence-based success stories. [FUTURE THINKING]
- Constructively critique possible solution options encountered through or inspired by your own activities or strategies employed by organizations. [STRATEGIC THINKING]

ACTIVITIES

Keeping a sustainability diary can help students think critically about observations, experience, insights, as well as nurture personal growth in sustainability research and practice (Hiemstra, 2001). Students record their entries in a notebook. Students turn in the notebook, or specific entries every few weeks, or keep it to refer to during class discussions and hand in at the end of the semester. It may take a few entries for students to become comfortable and used to the process of observing and reflecting on their own thoughts, ideas, perspectives, fears, and practices. Instructors can use diaries to evaluate students’ comprehension of course material and intellectual and emotional growth throughout the class (Hung, 2011).

The students’ role is to think critically; it is not enough for students to simply record their observations, experiences, or insights, they must engage with them critically. The table below lists mental tasks that are generally indicative of critical thinking (The University of Canberra, 2013):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpreting according to a framework</th>
<th>Asking questions</th>
<th>Synthesizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relating theory to practice</td>
<td>Evaluating</td>
<td>Comparing and contrasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making a claim and supporting it</td>
<td>Predicting</td>
<td>Categorizing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using appropriate evidence</td>
<td>Describing</td>
<td>Establishing cause and effect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making links between ideas</td>
<td>Analyzing</td>
<td>Identifying problems and solutions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The instructor’s role is to help students understand the difference between critical and uncritical thinking, as well as to differentiate and perform these various critical thinking
tasks that are generic to many fields. They should also help students understand what critical thinking looks like in the field of sustainability. For example, how to identify problems as sustainability problems or determine when a problem is not a sustainability problem, how to establish cause and effect in coupled social-ecological systems, how to use appropriate evidence to justify a sustainable solution option, how to synthesize information from various disciplines and stakeholders, or how to ask questions that avoid “descriptive-analytical” traps and instead launch the asker into solutions-oriented thinking.

Before
- Write a clear description of the goal the diary is aiming to achieve.

During
- Check in weekly to make sure students are completing journal entries.
- Find time to read diary entries.

After
- Discuss with students what they gained from keeping a journal.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT
Use a Likert-scale to determine if students achieved all, most, some, little, or none of the learning objective of the diary RWLE and of the class. Develop a rubric with examples of answers that demonstrate students have achieved all (5), most (4), some (3), little (2), or none (1) of the objective.

TAKE THIS EXPERIENCE TO THE NEXT LEVEL!
- **Simulating the world:** Have students keep a journal as if they were a key stakeholder in one of the sustainability problems studied in class.
- **Engage the world:** Have students keep a journal during internship, service learning, workshop, research, or other real-world learning experience.

BIBLIOGRAPHY & RESOURCES


Resources:
- Example 1: Sustainability Solutions Diary
VISITING THE WORLD: SUSTAINABILITY DIARY EXAMPLE

SUMMARY
Students write a diary entry once per week to record and explore personal thoughts, experiences, and insights regarding sustainability solutions. The experience makes sustainability solutions personal, facilitates learning and transformation, and creates a paper trail of learning, transformation, challenges, and questions that instructors and students can review and evaluate.

“When you are thinking critically, you are not just thinking passively and accepting everything you see and hear. You are thinking actively. You are asking questions about what you see and hear, evaluating, categorizing, and finding relationships.” - University of Canberra, 2013

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Analyze personal roles (real or potential) in sustainability problems and solutions. [SYSTEMS THINKING]
- Envision sustainability strategies for problems discussed in class, taking into account barriers, unintended consequences, and evidence-based success stories. [FUTURE THINKING]
- Constructively critique possible solution options encountered through or inspired by your own activities or strategies employed by organizations. [STRATEGIC THINKING, VALUES THINKING]

ACTIVITIES
In this experience, students write a weekly diary entry about their personal thoughts, experiences, and insights regarding sustainability solutions. The purpose of this activity is to enlist structured and unstructured real-world experiences students have outside of the classroom to help students develop sustainability solution-oriented thought and practice (Hiemstra, 2001). It is also intended to allow instructors to evaluate students’ comprehension of the concept of sustainability solutions (what are they / what are they not, what do they look like, what is the difference between solutions and solution options) and their intellectual and emotional growth throughout the class (Hung, 2011).

Entries should be legibly handwritten in a notebook of the students choosing, at least 500 words, demonstrate insightfulness and critical thinking about sustainability solutions, and be turned three times per semester so instructors can read and respond to students’ entries. Alternately, they could be submitted weekly to discussion threads on Blackboard created by instructors for each student. It may take a few entries for students to become comfortable and used to the process of observing and reflecting on their own thoughts, ideas, perspectives, fears, and practices.
Before
- Write a clear description of the assignment including learning objectives.
- Discuss the concept of sustainability solutions (and solution options) with students.

During
- Check in weekly to make sure students are completing journal entries.
- Read diary entries periodically and address students’ observations, questions, and ideas in class lectures and discussion.

After
- Discuss with students what they gained from keeping a journal.

ASSIGNMENTS AND ASSESSMENT
Use a Likert-scale to determine if students achieved all, most, some, little, or none of the learning objective of the diary RWLE and of the class. Develop a rubric with examples of answers that demonstrate students have achieved all (5), most (4), some (3), little (2), or none (1) of the objective.

TAKE THIS EXPERIENCE TO THE NEXT LEVEL!
- Simulating the world: Have students keep a journal as if they were a key stakeholder in one of the sustainability problems studied in class.
- Engage the world: Have students keep a journal during internship, service learning, workshop, research, or other real-world learning experience.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RESOURCES


Resources
- Diary Guide
VISITING THE WORLD: SUSTAINABILITY DIARY ASSIGNMENT

SUMMARY:
In this experience, you will write a weekly diary entry about your thoughts, experiences, and insights regarding sustainability solutions. The purpose of this activity is to enlist structured and unstructured real-world experiences that you have outside of the classroom to help you develop sustainability solution-oriented thought and practice (Hiemstra, 2001). It also allows instructors to evaluate your comprehension of the concept of sustainability solutions (what are they / what are they not, what do they look like, what is the difference between solutions and solution options) and your intellectual and emotional growth throughout the class (Hung, 2011).

INSTRUCTIONS:
• **Find** a small notebook to use exclusively for this assignment.
• **Complete** one entry per week. Entries should be legibly handwritten in a notebook of the students choosing, at least 500 words, demonstrate insightfulness and critical thinking about sustainability solutions, and be turned three times per semester so instructors can read and respond to students’ entries.
• **Bring** your journal to class every week to use during discussion.
• **Turn in** your journal three times per semester for grading (Feb 1, March 1, and April 1).

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:
• Track and analyze your personal roles (existing and potential) in sustainability problems and solutions.
• Identify and constructively critique solution-oriented practices, activities, strategies, and organizations.
• Take a solution-oriented approach in study and discussion of sustainability.

You will be evaluated on how consistently you write quality entries, how often you bring your journal to class and use it to support your contributions to discussion, and how far it demonstrates your achievement of the learning objectives above.

REMEMBER:
It may take a few entries for you to become comfortable and used to the process of observing and reflecting on your own thoughts, ideas, perspectives, fears, and practices - this is okay, just keep writing and it will become easier!