

**Facilitating Community Sustainability:  
Environmental and Social Justice and German Language**

A Graduation Contract in The Johnston Center for Integrative Studies

University of Redlands

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## Facilitating Community Sustainability:

### Environmental and Social Justice and German Language

For as long as I can remember, I have sought out community. Like many people across a variety of cultures, I have been raised in a family that values relatives as the first and most important community in a person's life. During elementary and middle school, I attended an experiential education school that further developed my sense of community. This school is very small and sees each classroom and educational team as a community of learning. The school's philosophy is that learning occurs not only inside the classroom, but also, and of equal importance, outside of it. It created a program that took me on a journey of learning and exploring the world around me with a strong community that both supported and challenged me. During this time, I began to attend an all-girls summer camp each year. This camp forms a tightly-woven community of women and operates on a philosophy called "four-fold living." Four-fold living is the idea that a person's life is made up of four equally important components: mental, physical, social, and spiritual. Through my experiences there, I gained an understanding that intentionality in balancing my life brings me greater satisfaction and an enhanced ability to create positive change in the world. Additionally, my experiences at this camp reinforced the pedagogical philosophies of my elementary and middle school. Community is vital to each individual's development and that life cannot be compartmentalized, rather it should be integrated.

When I went to high school, I attended the public school in my district. While my education there was excellent, the philosophies driving it left me wanting more. This school viewed education as occurring only in the classroom, an idea with which I could not disagree

more. This experience strengthened my appreciation for the ideas instilled in me during my childhood and taught me not to take this perspective for granted.

During high school, I took an African-American Studies course with a team of teachers whose educational philosophies are similar to my own. They challenged the class to recognize systems of racial privilege and targeting through a historical perspective. For the first time in my life, I began to recognize some of the racial privileges I receive because of my white racial identity. My teacher and mentor recommended that I participate in a program called the Anytown Youth Leadership Institute. The institute seeks to raise awareness of systems of oppression and dismantle them by empowering young people to become change agents. I was intrigued, took the advice of my teacher, and attended the program. In doing so, I embarked on what I quickly realized was a turning point in the way I understand and interact with the world around me.

Even now, I struggle to describe the extent to which Anytown shaped me. I began to recognize the ways that my actions and feelings fit into systems of oppression at individual, institutional, and societal levels. I started to understand my privilege in a more personal way, and found myself analyzing my daily existence in this new context. The director of Anytown is fond of referencing a song by the musical group Sweet Honey in the Rock, in saying that “I’m gonna stay on the battlefield till I die.” At the institute, she invited the participants to join her as soldier on the battlefield for social justice. I have taken this to heart, although I approach it not as a battle, but as compassionate outreach. I see this work as an integral component of my life goals.

After Anytown, I worked on a wide variety of social-justice activist projects. These have included a political campaign against a state constitutional ban on same-sex marriage, organizing

my high school's Gay-Straight Alliance and diversity clubs, conducting my schools involvement in national Day of Silence for non-heterosexual solidarity, facilitating dialogues about racial and socio-economic class privilege, becoming an Anytown facilitator, and participating in Planned Parenthood of Missouri's Teen Advocates for Sexual Health group (advocating for comprehensive and medically accurate sex education in St. Louis schools). Through my experiences, I have realized that the support of a community helps me not only on a personal level, but also as I seek to create change. During high school, I immersed myself in my Unitarian Universalist church community. As I prepared for college, a sense of community in education was my top priority in choosing my educational path. Johnston thus has been the best fit I could have imagined. I am fortunate to participate in a unique program that encourages and celebrates the educational philosophies I have been developing throughout my whole life.

When I began my Johnston education, I knew that I wanted to pursue my activist work through my education and community experience. I had already been active in gender and sexuality issues of oppression and expression, so I spent my first year in Johnston taking courses in this subject area. At this time, I was planning to go into sex therapy. However, I began to consider the life that this career might bring for me and realized that it would make it very easy for me to remain within a bubble of my racial and class privilege. This was very troubling for me, and I knew that I needed to think bigger.

When I went home over the summer after my first year, I saw the film An Inconvenient Truth. I remember driving home that night and realizing that I had to do something. I was reeling with the implications of global climate change. I spent the next few days considering the relationship between my passion for social justice and my new concern for environmental issues. I recalled the scene in the film that depicts the potential flooding that might occur should a large

part of the Antarctic or Greenland ice sheets to break off. I saw that the flooding would affect many of the most densely populated and impoverished areas of the world, and the connection to social justice became clear. With the possibility of environmental refugees, who would have resources to deal with the extra duress? Those who hold socio-economic and political power would likely hold the resources to cope with the situation while the majority of people would not. From that moment on, I have believed that to fight for social justice, I must fight for environmental justice. The two goals are inextricably intertwined, each dependent on the other to achieve success. From my experiences thus far, I know that community is central to meeting success in these goals.

All of this is taking shape in Johnston as my emphasis, which I have come to understand in a very Johnstonian fashion. I see the emphasis as an intentionally integrated combination of my life experiences, particularly community involvement, and my academic endeavors. I believe that my time here is my opportunity not only to pursue my passions, but also to chart a preliminary course for my life direction.

### **Community Involvement:**

I came to Johnston for the community and my belief in its strength and potential has only increased. During my first year (2005-2006), I attended and facilitated community meetings and regularly volunteered to help run activities. I also tried to be intentional about my daily actions in the context of community development. I came to believe very strongly that community cannot be built behind closed doors and worked hard to encourage the community to explore the possibilities of open doors. At the end of my first year, I applied to become a community assistant (CA) for my second year.

In the CA role this year (2006-2007), I have found incredible opportunity and resources to develop community. I spent much of the first semester working to build a strong sub-community on my floor. Second semester, I hope to use my CA role to catalyze the community to both be more intentional within ourselves but also in our greater local and global communities. I am hoping to help students develop into better global citizens who think beyond themselves and seek to create positive change in the world.

I plan to go abroad in the fall of my third year (2007-2008) and then return to the community in a more informal role. I hope to build relationships and initiate greater involvement from the Johnston community in the communities outside of our campus. This will also be a year of many changes in the administration of the community, and I hope to help make these changes go as smoothly as possible. I see this year as an opportunity both to reinforce positive traditions and culture within the community and as an opportunity to learn from new voices (administrators, first-year students). My ideal for the community would be an inspired inspection of itself and a revitalization of intentional living and learning. During this time, I would also like to integrate an academic independent study focusing on theories of community development. This would help me to be more constructively critical of Johnston processes and would help me build a more dynamic and pluralistic notion of community.

I plan to apply to be the community director during my fourth year. I would like to use the role as a way to help create a vision for the community and facilitate its exploration of that vision. Whether or not I receive the opportunity to serve the community in this role, I plan to build on the goals I set out during my previous years. I would like to use my fourth year to gain a more practical application of the theories I will study in my third year. I want to leave the

Johnston Community having offered much and become better empowered to develop community wherever life may take me.

### **Academic Endeavors:**

In my academic endeavors, I plan to seek a balance between personal and community aspects of my education, ideally finding integration between the two.

I plan to pursue social justice primarily through contracting in most of my classes and the courses I completed during my first year. This makes a lot of sense for me because I work daily to see the world through a social justice lens. This means that I try to consider and be mindful about the ways in which my identities shape the way that I see and experience the world. I work to do this in my classes as well, striving to bring different perspectives to discussion and contracting to do assignments that will allow me to further apply and develop my understanding of these issues. Although I already do these things to a certain extent in an academic context, I would like to be more intentional about my use of contracting to pursue these goals.

Environmental Justice is an area in which I have less experience and prior knowledge. Because of this, I plan to focus on taking many classes in the environmental studies department. I plan to use contracting to bring in social justice issues, particularly in these classes. This will help me gain a more dynamic understanding of environmental justice as an interdisciplinary field. I hope to participate in Johnston seminars relating to this subject. I want to deepen my understanding of community sustainability.

I'm very excited to continue my study of German language and culture. Communication is, as is etymologically implied, critical to community development. I believe that to work with community to the best of my ability, I need to be exposed to more perspectives than those of my own culture. Furthermore, international communication is the only thing that makes formation

of any global community possible. It is also a particularly vital tool to help create socially just communities because inherent in that task is inclusion of everyone. In order to include everyone, one must be able to communicate. I love language, and take genuine pleasure in working toward being able to communicate with more of the world's people. A large part of my German study will be my semester abroad during the fall of 2007 in Freiburg, Germany with the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES). I will spend a month prior to the IES program at the Goethe Institut in Schwäbisch Hall, Germany doing an intense language study program. While in Germany, I plan to use whatever resources I have available to me to study the other aspects of my education through a German perspective. After my study abroad, I will continue to study German on campus each semester, working through a combination of independent study and course work. It should be noted that this program runs through mid-January (to cooperate with the German academic calendar), so I plan to use contracting and independent studies to negotiate my slightly delayed semester beginning.

I plan to study community development through an independent study and contracting in other classes. I would like to do an independent study about different community development models and methods of incorporating social and environmental justice into communities. The key to this is social capital development. Therefore, I also want to learn more about how to facilitate formation of social capital.

I believe that part of community sustainability is learning to put into practice ways to be compassionate toward individuals, as individuals make up communities. I have found that in order for me to be intentional and compassionate to the extent that I would like to be, I must take care of myself. This means finding a balance in my life between all of my commitments. One aspect of this is being conscious of not overextending myself academically. I have learned

through the years that I perform at a higher level when I try not to take on unreasonable amounts to course work. Therefore, I will try to refrain from taking much more than 16 credits in a given semester. I will also remain intentional about including in my schedule classes that develop this personal balance. One of these things is pursuit of vocal music performance. I plan to continue to take voice lessons and participate in choir for the duration of my studies at the university. Swimming is another course that will help me achieve my goal of life balance. I believe that this will help me lead a more compassionate and intentional life.

## Course Listing by Chronology

<i>Course ID</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Units</i>
<b>Advance Placement</b>		<i>Total: 24</i>
HIST-121	American Civilization I	4
HIST-122	American Civilization II	4
ENGL-122	Short Fiction	4
CMS1TR-0001	Math/Science Lab Transfer	4
GERM-201	2 <sup>ND</sup> -Year German	4
GERM-202	2 <sup>ND</sup> Year German	4
<b>Fall 2005</b>		<i>total: 19</i>
FS-036	Flags, Fences & Mirrors	4
GERM-301	Readings in German	4
JNST-000I	Forbidden Love	4
SPAN-101	1 <sup>ST</sup> Year Spanish	4
MUSI-111	University Choir	1
MUSI-125A	Class Pop Guitar I	1
MUAP-108	Classical Voice	1
<b>Spring 2006</b>		<i>total: 18</i>
JNST-000R	Queer Activism & Theory	4
PSYC-100	Intro to Psychology	3
MUSI-110	Opera Workshop (had chorus role in Norma opera)	2
GERM-302	Adv. German Conversation	4
MUAP-108	Classical Voice	2
WMST-232	History of Sexuality in the US	3
<b>May 2006</b>		<i>total: 3</i>
JNST-000H	Community Study	1
SSRV-101	Residence Life 101	2
<b>Fall 2006</b>		<i>total: 14</i>
PEAC-0LS	Swimming	1
GERM-404	Germany Today	4
MUAP-108	Classical Voice	2
MUSI-112	Chapel Singers	1
JNST-000L	Yoga	2
EVST-240	Global Environment	4
<b>Spring 2007</b>		<i>total: 17</i>
EVST-305	Ecology for Evst Scientists	4
EVST-260	Conservation in Practice	3

<i>Course ID</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Units</i>
GERM-445	Topics in German Lit: 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Short Stories	4
MUSI-112	Chapel Singers	1
MUAP-308	Classical Voice	3
JNST-000Y	Native American Flute	2
<b>May 2007</b>		<i>anticipated total: 5</i>
JNST-	Survival: Urban, Wilderness (Catalog addition pending)	3
JNST-	Individualized Study: Reading & Journal of Globalization, environment, and culture issues	2
<b>Fall 2007</b>		<i>anticipated total: unknown</i>
	Goethe Institute	4
	IES Study Abroad Freiburg	unknown
<b>Spring 2008</b>		<i>anticipated total: 16</i>
JNST-	Individualized Study: Deutsche Nachricht (German News)	4
JNST	Individualized Study: Community models and Environmental Justice	4
EVST-225	California Plants: Taxonomy And Ecology	4
MUSI-112	Chapel Singers	1
MUAP-208	Classical Voice	2
PEAC-0LS	Swimming	1
<b>May 2008</b>		<i>anticipated total: 3</i>
EVST- 260	Travel: Costa Rica (consider contracting to add a photography component)	3
<b>Fall 2008</b>		<i>anticipated total: 16-18</i>
JNST	Individualized Study: Prepare to teach JNST Seminar: Pedagogical methods, ecofeminism	4
EVST-450	Environmental Design Studio (contract in basic statistics, perhaps attends some statistics classes)	4-6
GERM-404	German or individualized study	4
MUAP-208	Classical Voice	2

MUSI-112	Chapel Singers	1
PEAC-0LS	Swimming	1

<i>Course ID</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Units</i>
<b>Spring 2009</b>		<i>anticipated total: 16</i>
JNST	Senior Project: Teach course on Ecofeminist Communities	4
ECON-355	Environmental and Resource Economics	4
GERM-445	German or individualized study	4
MUSI-112	Chapel Singers	1
MUAP-208	Classical Voice	2
PEAC-0LS	Swimming	1
<b>May 2009</b>		<i>anticipated total: 3</i>
JNST	The Geography of Wine	3

## Course Listing by Discipline

<i>Course ID</i>	<i>Course Title</i>	<i>Units</i>
<b>Social Justice</b>		
FS-036	Flags, Fences & Mirrors	4
JNST-000R	Queer Activism & Theory	4
WMST-232	History of Sexuality in the US	3
JNST-	Individualized Study: Reading & Journal of Globalization, environment, and culture issues	2
<b>Environmental Studies</b>		
EVST-240	Global Environment	4
EVST-305	Ecology for Evst Scientists	4
EVST-260	Conservation in Practice	3
EVST- 260	Travel: Costa Rica (consider contracting to add a photography component)	3
EVST-450	Environmental Design Studio (contract in basic statistics, attend some statistics classes)	4-6
ECON-355	Environmental and Resource Economics	4
<b>Community Studies</b>		
JNST-000H	Community Study	1
SSRV-101	Residence Life 101	2
JNST	Individualized Study: Community-based Environmental Justice	4
JNST	Individualized Study: Prepare to teach JNST Seminar: Pedagogical methods, ecofeminism	4
JNST	Individualized Study: Senior Project: Teach course on Ecofeminist Communities	4
<b>Language and Culture</b>		
SPAN-101	1 <sup>ST</sup> Year Spanish	4
GERM-201	2 <sup>ND</sup> -Year German	4
GERM-202	2 <sup>ND</sup> Year German	4
GERM-301	Readings in German	4
GERM-302	Adv. German Conversation	4
GERM-404	Germany Today	4

GERM-445	Topics in German Lit: 20 <sup>th</sup> Century Short Stories	4	
IES Study Abroad Freiburg			
JNST-	Individualized Study: Deutsche Nachricht (German News)	4	
GERM-404	German or individualized study	4	
GERM-445	German or individualized study	4	

### Music

MUSI-125A	Class Pop Guitar I	1	
JNST-000Y	Native American Flute	2	
MUAP-108, 208, 308	Classical Voice	1,2,3	(seven semesters)
MUSI-110	Opera Workshop (held chorus role in opera Norma)	2	
MUSI-111	University Choir	1	
MUSI-112	Chapel Singers	1	(five semesters)

### Personal Balance Development

PEAC-0LS	Swimming	1	(four semesters)
JNST-000L	Yoga	2	
JNST-	Survival: Urban, Wilderness (Catalog addition pending)	3	
EVST-225	California Plants: Taxonomy And Ecology	4	
JNST	The Geography of Wine	3	

### History

HIST-121	American Civilization I	4	
HIST-122	American Civilization II	4	

### Literature

ENGL-122	Short Fiction	4	
JNST-000I	Forbidden Love	4	

### Quantitative Reasoning

CMS1TR-0001	Math/Science Lab Transfer	4	
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### Psychology

PSYC-100	Intro to Psychology	3	
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