



Helsinki, Finland

(Source: Ahanen, Eetu, 2016, City of Helsinki, <https://materialbank.myhelsinki.fi/images?query=kauppatori&sort=relevance&openMediaId=1149>)

URB 691 – URB 497

Comparative urban sustainability

Summer 2023

International Field School, Simon Fraser University

Syllabus is subject to change

COURSE TIME AND LOCATION

- Preliminary sessions in Vancouver in May/June (SFU Harbour Centre)
- Field school in the Helsinki region (August 1-12, 2023)

This international field school consists of learning periods in Canada and Finland. First, four preliminary sessions will be held at Simon Fraser University in May/June, followed by field school travel to the Helsinki region of Finland on August 1-12. This field school draws on ongoing research cooperation between academics in the Nordic countries and at SFU, as well as on the learning outcomes of a sustainability workshop organized in cooperation with Nordic experts in Spring 2020 (supported by a Teaching and Learning Development Grant Project, G0309), two virtual field schools at SFU in summer 2020 and 2021, and first in-person field school in summer 2022.

COURSE OVERVIEW

This field school in the Helsinki Region in Finland focuses on comparative *urban sustainability*. Nordic countries are often referred to in relation to “best practices” in the realm of urban sustainability. This circumstance often leads to Nordic terms, policies, and practices being adopted globally. However, while a great amount of literature focuses on Nordic urban sustainability practices and outcomes, this field school offers a “real life” opportunity to go beyond the textbook and explore those understandings on the ground. In this field school, you will experience how sustainability practices reside in the linguistic and cultural context of their origin. By bringing together native speakers and experts on such practices, you will get to experience the differences that culture and history make to sustainability understandings and outcomes, and place them in comparison with the Vancouver region.

The overarching learning objective of this field school is to advance the understanding of sustainability beyond your familiar knowledge and context. We will ask: what can we learn from new places and languages, and how can these learnings enrich our understanding of urban sustainability? Helsinki is known as a site of innovative urban planning education and ideas. Sustainability is a significant part of planning and policymaking at multiple scales in the Helsinki region, and offers a unique and interesting comparison to the Vancouver region, where sustainability is also a widely-discussed concept. During our time in Canada, you are expected to do readings and group work to prepare you for the time in the field. These preliminary sessions offer you a chance to make connections, get to know the team, and be introduced to comparative aspects of sustainability.

Our field school program in Finland is tailored to compare and contrast mutual understandings of urban sustainability, and will include visits with guests, site visits, and interactions between locals and visitors, exploring specific themes in urban sustainability. Guests for this field school include academics and practicing professionals who work on sustainability themes. Site visits will include planning departments, neighbouring cities, university campuses, an eco-urban neighbourhood, community gardens, and new master-planned developments, among others. You will have a chance to interact in university settings and in other institutional visits to libraries and museums. Led by local experts, you will have the opportunity to experience the city using public transportation (tram, metro, bus, ferry) and by walking.

The field school will encourage you to think beyond your local context, individual ideas, and cultural biases around sustainability. Through interdisciplinary discussions, we will make advanced comparisons between places and concepts, and engage with global issues in an active and practical manner. Your observations of different sites will push us to think more critically about sustainability and challenge often taken-for-granted understandings. These experiences are meant to aid you in your academic and professional life far beyond the field course.

As this is an international field school, learning will largely happen as we travel. Course readings and assignment work will help contextualize the places we will visit during the field school. During the field trip we will learn through new places, people, languages and a wider cultural context together.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To gain a background understanding of urban trends and history in the Nordic region and Finland in particular, including from experts and locals.
- To develop and articulate an understanding of urban sustainability and urban sustainable development in international urban policy practice, development and social and cultural trends.
- To advance the understanding of sustainability as a set of values, ideas, and practices situated within particular urban contexts, including contexts that are outside of students' cultural familiarity.
- To develop competency in applying a comparative and critical framework for thinking about cities, socioeconomic and cultural conditions in terms of processes and outcomes of sustainable development.
- To experience a new city, reflect on your experience, and share these reflections with others in written and oral forms in a foreign setting.
- To encounter specific urban projects, policies, and settings in Helsinki that are on the forefront of urban sustainability action and to relate these encounters to other experiences and encounters.
- Through encounter and interaction with locals in Helsinki, to develop skills of intercultural respect, communication, and diplomacy as a visiting international student.

CREDITS

- Graduates 6 credits, Undergraduates 9 credits.

LETTER GRADE CONVERSION

A+	>96	B+	78-79	C+	68-69	D	50-59
A	86-95	B	73-77	C	63-67	F	<50
A-	80-85	B-	70-72	C-	60-62		

PLAGIARISM AND INTELLECTUAL DISHONESTY

SFU takes academic integrity and honesty very seriously. Students engaging in any form of academic dishonesty will be dealt with strictly in accordance with University's Academic Honesty and Student Conduct Policies (Policy S10) available at <http://www.sfu.ca/policies/Students/index.html>. As a requirement for this class, students must familiarize themselves with these policies, including SFU's academic integrity requirements for students and the forms of academic dishonesty.

SCHEDULE

Meeting times	Topic	Assignments
- Preparatory session #1	Introduction to “Comparative Urban Sustainability”	
- Preparatory session #2	Seminar and local field visit	
- Preparatory session #3	Seminar and local field visit	
- Preparatory session #4	Getting ready to travel	Due: Sustainability Perspectives draft - for comments
Late June to the end of July: Preparation for the Finland field school – Reading list and materials posted on Canvas. Assignment deadlines as follows:		
June 30		Due: Readings and Discussion Facilitation draft (grads only)
June 30		Due: Position Paper (undergrads only)
August 1-12 - Helsinki	Field school	
		Due: Sustainability perspectives presentation (timing TBD with instructors) Due: Blog post (during travel, August 1-12) Due: Readings and Discussion Facilitation (grads only, timing TBD with instructors)
August 15		Due: Photo Journal

UNDERGRADUATE EVALUATION:

Sustainability perspectives (team work)	20
Position Paper (individual work)	20
Photo journal (individual work)	30
Blog (individual work)	10
Participation	20
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	100%

GRADUATE EVALUATION:

Sustainability perspectives (team work)	20
Readings and Discussion Facilitation (individual work)	20
Photo journal (individual work)	30
Blog (individual work)	10
Participation	20
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	100%

ASSIGNMENTS:

See details on Canvas.