

## Sense and Sustainability: How Intellect and Action Can Contribute to a Promising Future

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Dear CAU participants,

The topics of sustainability and climate change are often synonymous with narratives of catastrophe and anxiety. We know the science and we see the present and glimpses of a grim future in a 24-hour news cycle of reportage and graphic images. Ecological grief and bereavement is now a field of mental health research.

But what if we looked more closely at the true breadth of sustainability? How do the sciences *and* the humanities contribute to initiatives intended to improve our lives and environments? How can design and history provide tools to sharpen our perception of physical and cultural landscapes? A week of presentations by a wide range of experts, discussions, and field trips will make clear that we are living in an extraordinary time of awareness, investigation, and innovation.

The project of slowing climate change, reducing our carbon footprint, and embracing new strategies for responsible living is a multidisciplinary endeavor. Science and technology are developing new tools to preserve and improve natural and built environments. The problems of resource depletion, social/geographic inequities and forgotten histories are large and complex, and proposed solutions are emerging from the efforts of experts representing a breadth of fields.

But sustainability is fundamentally human-centered, and scientific advances must be coupled by human change. Diverse disciplines are showing us how to live healthier, kinder and more informed lives. The humanities can inform a shift to sustainable behaviors by highlighting the relationship between human and natural worlds, our past actions, and possibilities for future change. Environmental history, film, children's literature, and science fiction all play a role in a broader, more grounded path to sustainability. And design, the interface between humans and the natural world, is a critical tool. It is where we turn for everything from safe and energy-efficient shelter and protection from rising sea levels, to the preservation and enhancement of public spaces, so critical for our social and personal wellbeing.

Our course gathers experts dedicated to creating an environmentally and socially sustainable world. We will begin with words – clarifying the meaning(s) of the word **sustainability** and examples of a related vocabulary. With this foundation, we will look at some of the major topics in sustainability work today – technology and power sources, water, agriculture, the humanities,

and design. Finally, we will consider how we learn and how individuals and communities can be informed about, and contribute to, a promising future.

Our goal is to consider the theory and practice of sustainability, as it addresses the interplay of nature, technology, and humanity. Without denying the seriousness of climate change, our awareness of the breadth of sustainability work offers hope and a map for personal action.

Please feel free to contact me with questions or suggestions.

Cordially,

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