



BESTPRACTICE2020

Distance education

Titel:

Blekinge Tekniska Högskola, Best Practice

Numrering:

21 / 2020



Elaine Daly & Pierre Johnson

Reflections on teaching a transdisciplinary introduction to sustainability course online

About the course:

Both Pierre and I would like to invite you to join us for our webinar where we discuss our online course which we have been running together for 5+ years now.



In the course Foundations for Strategic Sustainable Development, we teach about the global sustainability challenge and a science-based framework that has been developed and improved over a 30-year period.

It is a masters 7,5 ECTS course that is run at 50% which attracts a mix of current Master program students looking for additional credits and professionals looking to upskill in the field of sustainability. It is taught in English and although most (90%) of our students are resident in Sweden, we have a hugely diverse set of backgrounds and culture within our student group. We also get 2-3 students who then go on to apply for our full campus masters program each year, so this course stands as a beacon to attract students to our style of teaching and learning environment.

Our course is broken into weekly modules which each have assigned readings, videos, a weekly reflection assignment and live webinar with Elaine and Pierre. Along with our weekly reflections, we have one online presentation where a student makes a 15-minute presentation with another 2 students to get direct feedback from a staff member (by far the thing that students enjoy the most), one group project (4-5 team members for 4 weeks) 2 online multiple-choice tests and one final take-home essay-based open book exam. We have curated this design over a number of years and adapt it annually to try to optimize it to the online environment.

Sample Feedback from course participants this year:

- "This is the third of my distance courses, taken at different institutions, and this is by far the best!! The structure has been great, the information and the way Elaine and Pierre conducted the webinars were great! Keeping up the energy and motivation and showing their commitment to the subject, it's been a real inspiration. It must have been hard to look into a screen week after week, but I felt like we were close and present all the time! Great thanks!"
- "The structure was great! So good to have weekly seminars to keep the energy up throughout the course. Tuesday lunch was an as good choice, gives the Monday for reading and then the remaining week for reflection and assignments. Good info is given on canvas! Well structured and thought through. A real help. It was well structured building up knowledge little by little adding on new facts with some repetition and new ways of using the gained knowledge.
- "It was wonderful. I studied in Sweden for many years and this is the first time I engaged in such a well done, perfectly organised course."
- "Fantastic webinars, teachers have been so motivating! Score 10/10 for teacher quality. Totally unprecedented in any other online course I have attended."



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Some Questions that we are sitting with:

- How can you create interactive moments with students you have never met?
- Can you create social capital online?
- How do you beat Zoom fatigue?
- How do you capture the silent ones (the people who never speak online or interact)?
- How to balance activities that increase student learning (feedback etc.) with course admin duties (email, Canvas tech glitches etc.)?

About Elaine: (edy@bth.se)

Elaine's work focuses on education in the field of sustainability and leadership with 7+ years of experience teaching in higher education. She is a member of the core team which facilitate and run our award-winning International Master's program in Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability and is course responsible for two of the core courses within this program also for another distance course offered by the TISU department. She also has six years' prior experience working as a consultant with a focus on training, leadership, international development, modeling and financial support. Her current role is as an adjunct lecturer at the Department of Strategic Sustainable Development at BTH. She holds a B.Eng. in Mechanical and Manufacturing Engineering from Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, and a Master's in Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability from BTH.

About Pierre: (pxj@bth.se)

Pierre works alongside Elaine as a core team member of the International Master's program in Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability program and is course responsible for the Innovation for Sustainability course and co-lead for many other courses the department runs. Pierre is an adjunct lecturer at the Department of Strategic Sustainable Development at BTH. He has a B.Sc. in electrical engineering from Carleton University, Canada, and a Master's in Strategic Leadership towards Sustainability from BTH. He has extensive experience in strategic management work in companies and municipalities. His career has been a progression from technical work in computers towards management, communications, and education as well as a transition into the domain of sustainable development. His interest in sustainable development originated from my community activism which began over 20 years ago. He has a natural affinity for roles involving training, facilitation, communications, and teamwork.

Material:

Slides_sustainability course.pdf

Distance Course_ Foundations for Strategic Sustainable Development.pdf

Links:

MSLS: <http://www.msls.se>

BTH: <https://www.bth.se/kurser/G5808/20202/>