Cities of the 21st Century
The Political Economy of Urban Sustainability
Senior Seminar

Geography 478-01 | Environmental Studies 478-01
Macalester College

Artwork by Ali Mahad ’18: Sharing Habitat and Building Resiliency

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Office Hours: Tues 9-10:30 am, Wed 12-1:30 pm, Thur 1-2 pm, and by appointment.

Fall 2022
T/R: 3:00 – 4:30 pm CT
Classroom: Carnegie 05
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Course description

The purpose of this seminar is to understand practices and concepts that constitute the movement for sustainable cities and investigate the ways in which urban sustainability initiatives are generated and how they vary geographically. The course adopts a political economy perspective to trace the complex interactions of institutions, politics, and economic systems that shape initiatives seeking more sustainable cities. You will work initially to enhance your understanding of core concepts and best practices that constitute the professional field of sustainable urban development and assemble a framework for analyzing the ways in which sustainability initiatives are put into practice. This work will complement and inform a semester-long research project on a topic and question related to urban sustainability. The project will culminate in a final product that you will share with a public audience.

Learning goals

Satisfactory work in this seminar will help you develop capabilities that you will use after college, whatever path you follow.

Through full participation in the work of this course you will:

1. examine analytical frameworks and apply them to real world situation in order to understand better how sustainability interests shape and are shaped by urban development agendas;
2. explore possibilities for creating more equitable and sustainable cities;
3. develop your collaboration and communication skills through peer teaching and seminar- ing;
4. design and execute an independent inquiry related to the process of developing sustainable cities and share what you learned with a public audience;
5. grow in your ability to articulate ideas through writing, speaking, and creating; and
6. engage in self-reflection as a way to integrate learning.

By the end of this class you will be able to:

(a) evaluate the ways in which political-economic relationships shape the possibilities of moving toward more sustainable cities;
(b) identify opportunities and challenges in policy and practice for fostering more sustainable urban development;
(c) conceptualize and complete complex writing and/or creative projects;
(d) demonstrate engaged learning through inclusive participation in class discussions;
(e) support your and others’ growth and learning through collaboration in small + large group discussions;
(f) reflect upon your learning process and outcomes in this course.

We will pursue these aims in a variety of ways, including interacting with course content, working on assignments, and supporting each other in this work. There are multiple principles, norms, and expectations that help to ensure that our engagement rests on an inclusive and supportive foundation.
Seminar format and capstone expectations

Cities of the 21st Century will use a mix of in-class and out-of-class activities, adapted to follow the format of a research seminar. As such, learning from each other is a high priority, which you will do through discussions, workshops, and sharing your independent research. Furthermore, I expect that you will take charge of your own learning outside of our class meetings through independent research for your capstone project. This is not meant to be an isolating experience, however. Talk to your fellow classmates about successes and complications, they will have helpful insights and suggestions. And, of course, I invite—and expect—you to meet with me and discuss your project at key moments in the process.

This class is also designed to provide a capstone experience. The assignments in this course are intended to create a culminating experience in which you draw on what you have learned over the past semesters. As part of the capstone experience, you are required by the college to make a public presentation.

In order to prioritize the independent research experience at the heart of the capstone project, the assignments in our course are focused on helping you advance your research project in measured and timely ways. I have dialed back the reading load in order to accommodate this priority and I have built in time for meetings and activities that are aimed to support you in the common endeavor of completing a capstone project. The first few weeks are preparation-intensive classes, however. I have chosen sources to reflect divergent viewpoints on particular subjects as well as materials that offer you a solid foundation on which to build your understanding of urban sustainability. It is thus important that you complete the preparations for a given day in order to ascertain the full breadth of a topic. Furthermore, it is imperative that you complete the preparations so that you can most effectively participate in synchronous activities.

Supporting participation during the pandemic

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic means that it is possible and perhaps likely that at some point during the semester we will be unable to attend in-person class due to illness or quarantine protocols. If you are unable to attend an in-person class but are otherwise able to participate, we can support your participation through a remote connection to the in-person class. Advanced notice will ensure I can respond in time to have the necessary equipment ready. It is also possible that I may be unable to attend class, in which case we will shift to meeting over Zoom. I anticipate giving advanced notice in the event that such a situation arises. Both situations demand our adaptability and I fully expect we can manage it. Online meetings will take place through this Zoom link, which should work for the duration of the semester:

https://macalester.zoom.us/j/5418383089 | Meeting ID: 937 1894 9973

In sum, I expect that you do your best to stay current with course readings and assignments. This means completing assigned activities by their stated deadlines and showing up on time to synchronous meetings, prepared for the day’s tasks. I will communicate detailed steps for completing these activities in Moodle
Moodle

Moodle will serve as a virtual home for our class. I will post copies of the syllabus and assignments on Moodle and use its announcement forum. Any post to the announcement forum will also be sent to your e-mail. Following the schedule outlined in this syllabus, there is a link to a separate page for each class day, which lists relevant class activities, including resources to review and tasks to complete. All assignments are turned in via Moodle. Feedback is shared via Moodle as well. I will do my best to remind you of tasks and assignments during our scheduled meetings. That said, a best practice will be checking our course Moodle page regularly each day to see any announcements and review tasks to complete so that you are prepared for the day’s activities.

Communication

I will make regular announcements to our class through Moodle. I will do my best to reiterate these announcements during regularly scheduled meetings. You may reply to announcements issued through Moodle, however these replies are sent to everyone in the class by default. Take care using this feature.

For one-on-one communication, I invite you to contact me via email or schedule a time during my office hours. I will also be available for ~10 minutes after our synchronous meetings are completed. This will enable casual or impromptu conversations, either on Zoom or in-person, if we are able to do that.

Please allow for a 24-hour response time to your email messages during the week and a 48-hour response time for messages sent on the weekend. Generally speaking, I plan to reply to email messages during my weekday office hours, or shortly thereafter.

Office Hours – what are they for?

I office hours as an extension of our class. These offer an opportunity to work through something challenging or perplexing and/or a chance to share connections, realizations, and excitement about the course or related material. They also afford an opportunity for us to get to know each other better. Last but not least, we can also use this time to discuss how to get the most out of the work of the course, perhaps by discussing how your own goals can be advance through specific assignments, etc. Above all, I understand that coming to my office hours is an act of trust. I pledge to respect you and earn your trust through careful listening and thoughtful support.

My office hours will be held in Carnegie 104e. We can also arrange to meet via Zoom instead, but we will have to communicate in advance to make this happen. My office hours are scheduled for Tuesdays 9-10:30 am, Wednesdays 12-1:30 pm, and Thursdays 1-2 pm. I will not hold office hours during the October and November breaks. If these times do not work with your schedule, don’t hesitate to contact (via email or otherwise) and we can set up an appointment for an alternative time.

How to show up for office hours

You must first claim or sign up for office hours by navigating to my google calendar: https://calendar.google.com/calendar/selfsched?sstoken=UUdZZm5wZURDYXBhfGRIZmF1bHR8ZjQ5MjlmNTdmMTAzYmU1ZDlhODkxYmZjODQ0Yzc3ZWU
Scroll through the calendar [top left side, use the < and > buttons] to select a day and time to meet. You can do this in advance or, if there’s an open slot, you can do in the moment. Appointment slots are 15 minutes long. You are welcome to drop by my office hours without making an appointment in advance, but I will prioritize meeting with those who have scheduled an appointment. On this point, I encourage you to check my google calendar before you stop by to make sure I am available.

Inclusivity

I am committed to providing a safe and equitable learning environment that welcomes and supports everybody. We as learners and teachers all bring various experiences and life contexts to this course. These differences will emerge in class and be part of what we negotiate and benefit from as a developing community.

I acknowledge that academic institutions have evolved within a historical context that privileges certain students over others and certain perspectives and knowledges over others. In this classroom, I will do my best to be aware of how these inequities may manifest.

I hope you will feel comfortable coming to me to express any concerns or suggestions; this is an iterative process that requires the collaboration of all. Indeed, I resolutely believe that the work of anti-racism is essential to inclusion. Furthermore, this work is an ongoing process in which we must strive to understand and unpack inherited assumptions and create more emancipatory and egalitarian practices so that we might dismantle systems of oppression and exclusion wherever we encounter them.

Accommodations

I am committed to ensuring access to course content for all students, including those with disabilities. If you have a disability, please meet with me early in the term to discuss your accommodation plan. If you have not yet obtained a plan or are unsure if you have a disability that requires accommodation, please contact Disability Services: disabilityservices@macalester.edu, or call 651-696-6974.

Public Health Expectations

When we are in class together on campus, we will follow the Mac Stays Safer Community Commitment.

If you do not feel well, please do not come to class. This includes if you are experiencing common cold symptoms. If you miss class, we can make arrangements to cover missed material, activities, and assignment deadlines.

Attendance

Being there plays an essential role in learning. I encourage and expect you to attend all scheduled class meetings. Attendance will be important not only for your learning, but also for our ability to build a community together and maintain a sense of connection and commitment to one another.
Your presence in class matters. And to re-iterate, support is available for you to attend class via remote connection if needed.

I recognize that there are unavoidable circumstances that sometimes make it impossible for you to attend class. Although I hope it isn’t the case, those unavoidable circumstances may be more common during this term given that we are still in a pandemic. If you will not participate in class for any reason, it is your responsibility to inform me via email. It is also your responsibility to make up work you missed in your absence.

If you anticipate missing a scheduled class, for instance for religious observance, please let me know as soon as possible and before the add/drop period so that we can plan to accommodate your absence.

Accumulation of more than 4 unexcused absences (the equivalent of two weeks or 14% of the course) will result in a letter grade reduction for the maximum grade achievable in the course.

**Academic Honesty**

Academic honesty is expected at all times. All work for this course must be your own. You must properly cite any work on which you draw in your written assignments. Plagiarism or cheating will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the course. Furthermore, such behavior will be reported to the Dean of Students and may result in suspension or even dismissal from the college. Please see me if you have questions about what counts as plagiarism.

**Changes**

As the term unfolds, there may be reason to make changes to the course. I will announce any changes to readings, topics, or the schedule in class and via Moodle. It is your responsibility to keep up with any changes.

**Why I am teaching this course**

As a scholar of urban planning and social movements to advance equity and social justice in cities, I’m always looking for ways to stay engaged in this topic and to engage others in learning about it. “Sustainability” is inherently future-oriented and I think its valuable and interesting to consider how we can create better – more just, equitable, workable, resilient, and respectful to non-human nature – cities. Because I believe everyone is a teacher and a learner, I greatly value the opportunity to learn from my students’ interest in this matter as well. You can learn about some of my latest research on urban planning and sustainability here and here.

**College Resources**

*Personal health and well-being*

Here at Macalester, you are encouraged to make your well-being a priority throughout this module and your career. In fact, research shows that health and wellness are integral to your learning and personal growth and development. Investing time into taking care of yourself will help you engage more fully in your academic experience. It is important to acknowledge any stressors you may be
facing, which can be mental, emotional, physical, cultural, financial, etc., and how they can have an impact on your academic experience. I encourage you to remember that sleeping, moving your body, and connecting with others can be strategies to help you be resilient. If you are having difficulties maintaining your well-being, please don’t hesitate to contact me and/or find support from other resources, including those listed on the Hamre Center for Health and Wellness: [macalester.edu/healthandwellness](http://macalester.edu/healthandwellness)

**Title IX concerns**

Macalester is committed to providing a safe and open learning and living environment for all students, staff, and faculty. If you (or someone you know) has experienced any form of sexual misconduct, including sexual assault, dating or domestic violence, or stalking, please know that you are not alone, and that help and support are available.

It is my role as a professor to make sure our learning environment is as safe as possible for everyone in our community. *I am a mandatory Title IX reporter.* This means that I can serve as a resource for you, but I am required by law to report any violations, including sexual assault, to the Title IX office. For a list of confidential resources, see the Title IX office’s support resources page. For more information about Title IX, see Macalester’s [Title IX website](http://macalester.edu/healthandwellness).

**Academic Excellence**

Support with writing projects is available through the Macalester Academic Excellence (MAX) Center. I consider the MAX Center to be a fantastic complement to any course you take at college as its mission is to support your ongoing growth and development as a critical thinker, reader, and writer. Whenever you want to boost your skills and abilities, I fully recommend connecting with the helpful and supportive folx at the MAX Center.

**Curriculum**

**Assigned Readings**

We will be reading a number of scholarly articles and book chapters, organizational websites, watching videos, and listening to podcasts. This diversity allows us to explore a variety of communication styles, perspectives, and cases. These readings are referenced in the schedule by last name of the author, hyperlinked to external source, and are also available 24 hours a day through our course Moodle page. Let me know if you have any problems accessing this material in a timely manner. Please have a personal copy of any assigned readings available to you during a synchronous meeting that is scheduled to work with that material.

**Assignments**

1000 points total. Your grade in the course will be based on performance in the following assignments (I will provide detailed instructions and grading criteria for each one at an appropriate
This syllabus lists specific due dates for each assignment. Please take time to list these due dates in your personal calendar or craft another strategy to help you stay aware of the deadlines.

**Research project**
900 points total. You will conduct research to examine the politics and process of implementing a sustainability initiative (or failing to do so). Research will focus on an initiative that has found expression in either a policy or bricks-and-mortar development project that endeavors to create a more sustainable city. The initiative may be located in any metropolitan region in the world. Progress on the research project will unfold through a series of contributing projects and milestones:

- Proposal (50 points) – due by Sept 20
- Research Design (50 points) – due by Sept 29
- Revised proposal (100 points) – due by Oct 11
- Annotated bibliography (75 points) – due by Oct 27
- Outline (25 points) – due by Nov 3
- First draft (50 points) – due by Nov 10
- Peer review (50 points) – completed during class session on Nov 15
- Public Presentation (200 points) – delivered by TBD date, Dec 1 - 8
- Final Product (300 points) – due by 5 pm Dec 15

**Peer Teaching**
100 points total. You will form a small group with your peers and together co-lead a class session on a particular topic of your choosing. Groups will be formed on October 11 and will be arranged so that people with complementary research interests are together. I will meet with your group during a tutorial session and will assist you with preparing for the peer teaching session. Tutorials and Peer Teaching sessions take place October 18 – November 8 and will be scheduled in class on October 11.

**Deadlines & Tokens**
Deadlines for assignments are firm. If you have obligations that conflict with this class’ scheduled assignments, you must communicate this to me no later than Friday, September 9th so that we can discuss appropriate accommodations.

Each participant will begin the semester with five “Tokens,” which are intended use to create flexibility in meeting course expectations and/or support wellness. Tokens may be used to excuse an absence or extend a deadline; one token will disqualify an unexcused absence; one token will extend a deadline for a low-stakes exercise (< 100 points); and two tokens will grant a 48-hour extension on a high-stakes writing exercise (>100 points). The presentation and peer teaching deadlines cannot be extended.

**Grades**
Your final grade will be based on performance in all parts of the course. Letter grades will be assigned according to the following distribution:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excellent (1000-930)</th>
<th>Good (899-880)</th>
<th>Satisfactory (799-770)</th>
<th>Unsatisfactory (699-680)</th>
<th>Failing (NC &lt; 600)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>A- (929-900)</td>
<td>B (879-830)</td>
<td>B- (829-800)</td>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>B+ (899-880)</td>
<td>C (779-730)</td>
<td>C- (729-700)</td>
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<td>D+ (699-680)</td>
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<td>D (679-630)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>D- (629-600)</td>
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List of Assigned Readings


Barber, B. (2013). TED Talk: Why mayors should rule the world. 
https://www.ted.com/talks/benjamin_barber_why_mayors.should_rule_the_world


## Schedule of Readings and Assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Assigned Materials</th>
<th>Deadlines</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| 1    | Sep 1| Capstone Foundations        | **Lecture:**  
− Welcome and framing  
**Interactive:**  
− Discuss pivotal perspectives in the debate about urban sustainability.  
− Set community ground rules  
− Meet in small groups to share interests and review website options | □ Barber  
□ LaDuke & Cohen  
□ UN New Urban Agenda |                    |
| 2    | Sep 6| Evaluating Sustainability   | **Peer teaching:**  
− Work in assigned groups to instruct your peers on the definitions and frameworks presented in one of the readings, as assigned  
  
**Interactive:**  
− React, discuss, and rank the frameworks | □ Butters  
□ Newman et al  
□ Hodson & Marvin  
□ Sze & Yeampierre  
□ Titz & Chiotha |                    |
|      | Sep 8| Evaluating Sustainability   | **Meet in Harmon Room in Library**  
**Interactive:**  
− Share website appraisals | | Explore 3 websites and appraise 1 |
| 3    | Sep 13| Defining Sustainability    | **Lecture:**  
− Defining Social Sustainability in Amman  
**Interactive:**  
− Scenarios of Sustainable Development | □ Agyeman  
□ Vallance et al.  
□ Evans et al. | |
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<tr>
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<th>Deadlines</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sep 15</td>
<td>Defining Sustainability</td>
<td><strong>Interactive:</strong>&lt;br&gt;− Debriefing sustainability definitions&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Peer Teaching:</strong>&lt;br&gt;− Report on a selected sustainability initiative</td>
<td>□ Yin Chapter 1 &amp; skim 2</td>
<td>Report on sustainability initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sep 20</td>
<td>Beyond Sustainability?</td>
<td><strong>Interactive:</strong>&lt;br&gt;− React to Benson and Craig&lt;br&gt;− Reflect on how talk about “sustainability” appears in the media environment of your life and find one example to share.&lt;br&gt;− Debate: Is “sustainability” a dead idea?</td>
<td>□ Benson &amp; Craig&lt;br&gt;□ LIFT Economy podcast&lt;br&gt;□ Newell &amp; Mulvaney</td>
<td>Proposal due</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sep 22</td>
<td>Research Support</td>
<td><strong>Meet in the Library, room 206</strong>&lt;br&gt;− Meeting with librarians&lt;br&gt;− Understanding case study research&lt;br&gt;− Considering your options for selecting appropriate methods&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>Lecture (asynchronous):</strong>&lt;br&gt;− Research design and methods</td>
<td>□ Berg</td>
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<td>Week</td>
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| 5    | Sep 27| Analyzing sustainability | Lecture: Understanding the Political Economy Perspective (PEP)            | □ Logan & Molotch  
□ Mossberger  
□ Rosol et al. |           |
|      |       |                      | Interactive:  
- Discussion of political economy of urban sustainability  
- Consider how PEP relates to your project and/or the initiatives you profiled  
- Share your topic and research |           |           |
|      | Sep 29| Sustainability in Practice | Field Trip                                                                 | Research Design                                      |           |
| 6    | Oct 4 | Thinking Critically  | Interactive:  
- The sustainability ranking game |           | Research Design |
|      | Oct 6 | Analyzing sustainability | Lecture: Feminist and poststructuralist critiques of PEP  
Interactive:  
- Further discussion of political economy urban sustainability in light of feminist critiques.  
- Consider how PEP critiques and alternatives relate to your project and/or the initiatives you profiled | □ Gibson-Graham Ch1 & 5  
□ LIFT Economy podcast |           |
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Oct 11</td>
<td>Peer Teaching</td>
<td>Interactive:</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>– Sorting out peer teaching responsibilities and schedule</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Oct 13</td>
<td></td>
<td>No class</td>
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<td>Revised Proposal</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Connect with your peer teaching group and/or advance your research project</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Oct 18</td>
<td>Tutorial A</td>
<td>Members of Peer Teaching group A meet with Dan, all others, advance your research project</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Oct 25</td>
<td>Peer Teaching A</td>
<td>Peer Teaching Session – led by group A</td>
<td>□ TBD</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oct 27</td>
<td>Tutorial B</td>
<td>Members of Peer Teaching group B meet with Dan, all others, advance your research project</td>
<td></td>
<td>Annotated bibliography</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Nov 1</td>
<td>Peer Teaching B</td>
<td>Peer Teaching Session – led by group B</td>
<td>□ TBD</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Nov 3</td>
<td>Tutorial C</td>
<td>Members of Peer Teaching group C meet with Dan, all others, advance your research project</td>
<td></td>
<td>Outline</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Nov 8</td>
<td>Peer Teaching C</td>
<td>Peer Teaching Session – led by group C</td>
<td>□ TBD</td>
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<td>Week</td>
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| 11   | Nov 10 | After Macalester                   | **Lecture:**  
− best practices and valuable resources for charting your postgrad future  
**Interactive:**  
− Discussing postgraduate pathways |                    | First draft |
| 12   | Nov 15 | Peer Review                        | Meet in peer review groups & exchange reviews                            |                    |             |
|      | Nov 17 | Write well                         | **Lecture:**  
− preparing a memorable presentation  
**Interactive:**  
− Discuss hallmarks of effective communication  
− Set communication goals for your project  
− Decide on presentation format | □ Orwell □ Tufte   |             |
| 13   | Nov 22 | No class                           | Advance your research project                                            |                    | Second draft|
|      | Nov 24 | **Thanksgiving Break**             |                                                                            |                    |             |
| 14   | Nov 29 | What does a sustainable city look like? | **Meet in the Library, Idea Lab**  
**Interactive**  
Seminar shake-up with the Idea Lab |                    |             |
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Dec 1</td>
<td>Public programming: sharing your research</td>
<td><strong>Meet in Harmon Room in Library</strong></td>
<td>Schedule TBD on Nov 17</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Dec 6</td>
<td>Public programming: sharing your research</td>
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<td>Dec 15</td>
<td>Final capstone project due by 5 pm</td>
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