

Course: SES3005 Building a sustainable community

Semester 1, 2016-17

Course Lecturer: FOK, Lincoln (Dept of SES)

Global elements to be incorporated in the course

Case studies from overseas countries.

Teaching Reflection & Sharing

The course SES3005 Building a Sustainable Community by design, is an interdisciplinary course taught using local and international case studies. The course starts by linking global environmental issues with human communities using city as a unit. This is followed by the reasons why many cities, in particular those in the USA, were not sustainable. The lectures then introduce how human can revert this pattern through holistic planning and by adoption of various green technologies, which is collectively known as “Smart Growth”. Successful case studies from various cities were used to support the development of the course contents. Although the course is not written by me, the teaching materials were developed from scratch solely by myself. I had integrated various local and international examples to support the principles and practices of “Smart Growth”. Independent to the lecture content, I have also asked the students to complete an energy and water audit for their household. This exercise involves first-hand data collection, its analysis and application of the results to arrive at a solution. This exercise trained students various high-level skills including numeracy, making informed decision and effective communication. The exercise itself is also a self-learning process and entirely online using the Moodle platform. I conclude the course with a field trip to a local new town – Tin Shui Wai. This field-based activity helps student to integrate theories with reality in an authentic environment. The course has been well-received by students in the past few years.

The main challenge involved is time requirement in content development, because there is no textbook for many interdisciplinary contents, including the current course. I have spent, on average, approximately 30 hours to carry out research and compose the lecture materials and assessment exercises for every 3-hour lecture. In the preparation stage, I have included a multitude of cases, historical and contemporary, the South and North, East and West into the course to illustrate the underlying reasons and nature of the issue, the implied solutions and strategies adopted to drive

this global movement we now call Smart Growth. In addition, because the issue at hand is trendy, there are many new developments occurring around the globe every year. As a result, on top of the initial time investment, concurrent investment in time to keep the course contents up-to-date is also required. To further extend the global elements of this course, this year, I have invited a native American, Dr James Lenzer, to co-teach this course with me. His authentic experiences in the States is very different to the local culture and had further enriched the contents with reference to adoption of new US examples in the course. This is very convincing to the students for an American to tell stories about the American life style and how that have affected other countries under our globalising world. This, I think, had prompted the student to scrutinise the true meaning of sustainable development, which is not about growth, but not to growth. Acknowledgment of which may imply a paradigm shift in personal worldviews.