

Stamina for Sustainability

DIGGING DEEPER AND RELATING WIDER

with instructors Sharon Stein and Tereza Čajková

PROGRAM

Stamina for Sustainability is an experiential learning course open to undergraduate and graduate UBC students of all disciplines interested in thinking critically about sustainability. This course is hosted by the UBC Sustainability Initiative.

The course starts with a 3-day residency at the UBC Farm (April 30 – May 2), followed by two webinars over the summer (one each in May and June), and a debrief session in September. The orienting direction of this program is to develop the capacities and the stamina that we will need in order to support individual and collective well-being in the face of unprecedented global challenges.

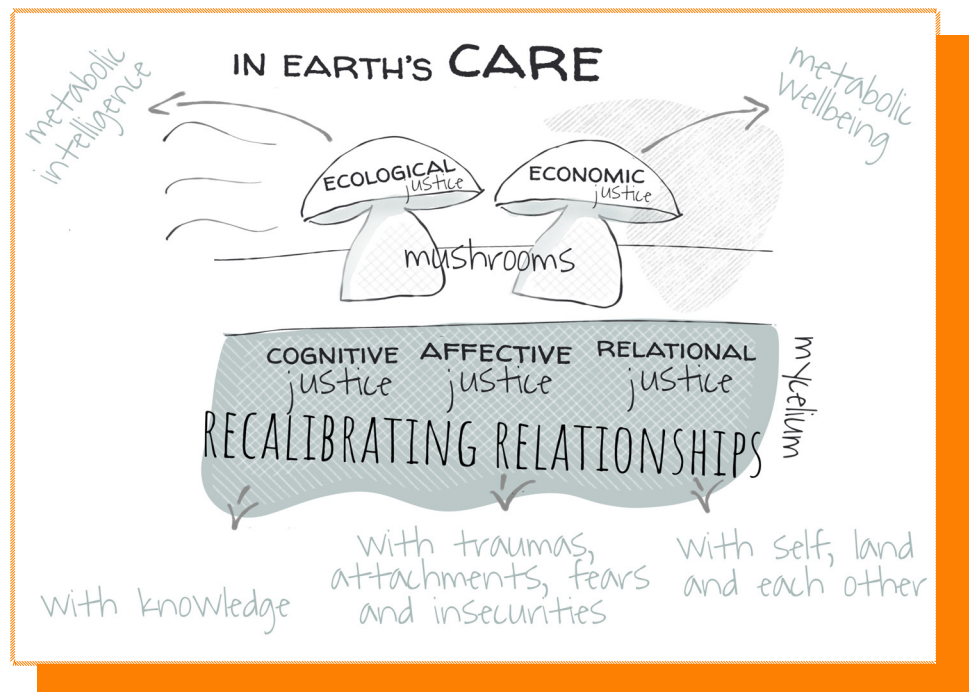
This program invites learners to: deepen their intellectual engagements with issues of climate crisis (dig deeper); address their affective responses to uncertainty, complexity, and complicity; sensitize themselves to the difficulties involved in making substantive change; and develop a more expansive sense of entanglement with the world (relate wider). We will reflect on different concepts of sustainability and on our role as agents of change by unpacking mainstream approaches to sustainability and theories of change, as well as the epistemologies (ways of knowing) and ontologies (ways of being) they are based on. The intention is to interrupt simplistic analyses and solutions, paternalistic and tokenistic notions of inclusion, and ethnocentric views of justice, responsibility, and change.

The program invites students to (re)imagine sustainability, by focusing on the following questions:

- What are the contributions, paradoxes, and limits of mainstream problem-posing and problem-solving paradigms of sustainability specifically, and or social and global change more generally?
- How can we co-create new paradigms of sustainability that may open up not-yet-imaginable possibilities for co-existence in the future?
- How can we build capabilities and stamina for sustaining difficult conversations about the ecological limits of our current socio-economic system and its systemic, historical, and ongoing violences?
- What dispositions are necessary to enable us to learn from the (inevitable) mistakes and failures of sustainability efforts and initiatives?

FRAMING

This program is designed around the [“In Earth’s CARE” framework](#) of integrative justice to support the building of capacity to engage with complex issues, develop ‘negative capabilities’ (for navigating complexities and uncertainties), and negotiate asymmetries in sustainability work.



OBJECTIVES

As part of the program, participants will have the opportunity to:

- develop more complex analyses of sustainability and related local and global challenges
- engage with uncertainty and multiple perspectives
- become more aware of how we are part of the problem and the solutions to global issues
- expand frames of reference, recognising contributions from different knowledge systems
- engage from theory to practice and practice to theory
- open our social and ecological imaginations, to imagine different futures
- re-ignite our sense of connectedness and responsibility towards each other and the planet

By the end of the program, participants will be able to:

- ask qualitatively different types of questions in relation to sustainability
- form new kinds of sensibilities and alliances that embody principles and practices of ethical solidarity
- engage constructively with the difficult issues that emerge in processes of deep learning and change
- identify strategies to work with diverse populations in dis-solving cognitive, affective, relational, economic, and ecological inequalities

STRUCTURE

I The program is made up of a combination of intellectual, affective, embodied, and relational activities and experiments that create opportunities to problematize, and interrupt enduring patterns of engagement with climate change and related issues of local and global justice so that we might learn to embrace working with uncertainty, paradoxes, and tensions without easy answers.

This process may be personally challenging and discomforting, as it aims to interrupt our usual comforts, affective investments, and perceived entitlements. Please consider that what we are trying to develop is an educational space that is not just “safe”, but also “brave” – meaning that we will learn to work collectively through difficult questions without relationships falling apart. By facing and “composting” enduring investments in the dominant ways of knowing and being that are themselves implicated in climate change, students will be invited to deepen their sense of social and ecological responsibility, and open their social and ecological imaginations to different forms of knowing and being, and to different possible futures beyond mainstream narratives of progress and change.

The program is informed by the pedagogical frameworks of the “Gesturing Towards Decolonial Futures” collective published on decolonialfutures.net. Visiting the website and exploring the frameworks upfront can help you make a better-informed decision.