

LEADERSHIP NETWORKS FOR CLIMATE CHANGE

Creative Assessments for Climate change

Curriculum
Resource

8



Murdoch
UNIVERSITY



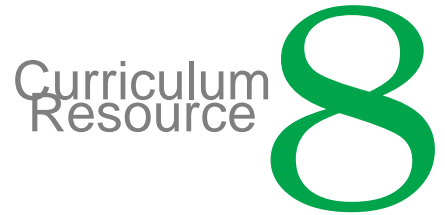
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Creative Assessments

for climate change

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Themes

- Student-led learning
- Creativity

Background

At Murdoch University climate change is both the focus of degrees (Bachelor of Climate Change Management and Bachelor of Energy Studies) and specific units (Introduction to Climate Change Studies; Climate Change Adaptation: Policy and Practice; Atmospheric Science; Greenhouse Science and Policy; Global Economics of Climate Change and Environmental, Sustainability and Climate Change Law).

In addition, a number of units use climate change as an example in their teaching. Recently, as part of these units, a number of new assessments and learning activities have been developed that focus on climate change.

This resource showcases two assessments designed to encourage students to think creatively about climate change and ways of responding to it. These activities are:

1. **Blogging on Climate Change**
2. **Creative Exhibition.**

Bloggng on climate change

Unit	Approaches to Sustainability
Level	First year
Assessment value	15 % (as part of contribution to the unit which also included tutorial participation)
Assessment task	<p>BLOG POSTS</p> <p>You are required to write one original post on one of these topics: 1) How do you feel about climate change? 2) What dilemmas do you experience in relation to taking action on climate change?</p> <p>The original post should be at least 300 words and personally and critically reflect on the topic. You are also required to moderate responses to your post and comment on at least three other posts.</p>

Excerpts from student blogs

Living sustainably with unsustainable dreams... To me, these [dreams of learning to drive and travelling] represent enormous challenges in my personal response to climate change. While always wanting to associate myself with those who care about climate change and thus act to abate it, I continue to value the freedom and independence that come with driving and travelling. Clearly there's a discrepancy here. Can I live sustainably if I pursue car ownership and overseas travel, as long as I continue to turn my appliances off at the switch and recycle my Coke cans? What if I off-set my travelling by purchasing 'carbon offsets' when I buy my airplane ticket? Or is the fact that I wish to engage in activities that have such a large carbon footprint fundamentally unsustainable in itself?

City living exposing the dark side to sustainability... I grew up on a large property just out of Byron Bay in NSW where we lived very sustainably. Growing most of our own food and getting all our energy and water needs from our land.

The community is very close knit and shares common views on ethical consumption and environmental protection. There is a real connection to nature as most of the time people are out enjoying the beaches, rainforests and swimming holes around the area.

Now that I am living in Perth I find that it is very hard to live ethically and sustainably. There is no connection to nature as I find myself indoors most of the time. Organic produce is rare to find and ridiculously priced. There are no sustainable alternatives for my day to day life that is financially viable. Compared to Byron my ecological footprint has nearly tripled!

The civil society individual approach to sustainability certainly does not work for me in Perth as there is no sense of community and I feel that I alone cannot make a difference, the Market approach does not work either as there is no affordable substitutes, and the government approach allows me to live as unsustainably as I want in this free market system, of course I try not to live unsustainably but in certain circumstances there is no achievable alternative.

Blogging on climate change

Excerpts from student blogs continued...

When I grow up... *When I was a boy (oh god, here we go) me and my mates all knew what we wanted, a Ferrari, a big house, and a wife that would always wear a bikini.*

As we got older we found out that getting all those things was unfortunately quite hard. Luckily, however, our parents and teachers came to the rescue – they gave us roadmaps. And, they were all remarkably similar.

They went something like this: finish primary school and get good grades, finish high school and get good grades, finish a commerce/engineering degree and get good grades, get a good job, be nice to your boss. Along the way, buy a bomb for your first car, move into a share house, and get a nice girlfriend.

Ok great, so where's my Ferrari, big house, and bikini-clad wife? "Well son, they'll come later".

The most important thing, is that you start on right roads. As long as you do that, you're able to plod along, upgrade every few years, and then, eventually you'll get there. The fact that we'll all probably end up in a housing estate, with a commodore, and a nice woman that never takes her clothes off doesn't really matter.

We have a road-map, and we're happy following it. So, how does this relate to climate change?

Well, because none of us have roadmaps for more sustainable lifestyles. I don't know if I'm on the right road or not – neither do my friends, or my family. Personally, I don't know if I should keep having cold showers and dream of everyone else having cold showers or I should have hot showers and dream of getting solar panels.

My dream? *We all know what a sustainable lifestyle looks like, and how to get it. We tell our kids. They're sold on the idea. We all get our road maps and plod along. We don't really care if most of us never get there – we're all happy knowing we're on the right road.*

Creative Exhibit

Unit	Global and Regional Sustainability
Level	Second year and postgraduate
Assessment value	25 %
Assessment task	<p>CREATIVE PIECE</p> <p>To achieve sustainability will require new and creative ways of understanding our relationships with each other and the world we share. In Global and Regional Sustainability the many facts and figures, scenarios and case studies may seem overwhelming. The key is to always remain hopeful and conscious that change is possible and that you can be a key player within this change. The overall intention of this unit is that you understand the issues of global and regional sustainability, recognise the potential solutions to them and find a place to personally actively engage in bringing these solutions into effect. The creative component of the unit will encourage us all along that journey. This assignment comprises two parts: a creative piece of work (15 % of total marks) and a commentary on the work (10 % of total marks).</p> <p>PART I CREATIVE PIECE</p> <p>Taking climate change as an example of a global environmental issue, put together a creative piece which responds to the challenges that the world is currently facing with this issue. You might use this creative piece to communicate data about climate change, to think outside the box with ideas for solutions, or to draw people into engaging with and responding to the climate debate; the function and style of the piece is flexible as long as you are responding critically and creatively to the issue.</p> <p>The piece will be marked on:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evidence of thoughtful and critical engagement with the issue of climate change 2. Originality and artistic merit of the work 3. Effectiveness in communicating your ideas to or evoking a response from the audience/viewer/reader/listener <p>PART II COMMENTARY</p> <p>Each student must submit a 1000 word commentary to accompany their creative piece outlining the intention of the piece and the choices that were made as well as the theoretical and creative ideas underpinning these choices. This is your safety net; if the exhibition does not 'get' your piece, you can still explain your rationale. The report must clearly explain the relationship between your creative choice and ideas/information/approaches raised in the unit. That means that it must include quotations and references that demonstrate the research that informed the work and your reflection on this project.</p> <p>Please attach a clear 6 x 4 sized photograph of your creative work to assist the assessment.</p>



Reflections

The unit coordinators responsible for these assessments had an opportunity to reflect on the assessments; these comments highlight the value of thinking creatively about climate change teaching and in particular providing students with different ways to engage with the content:

This assessment was included in the unit for three reasons:

- 1) to encourage students to be reflective about the issue of climate change;
- 2) to give students practice in writing for a public audience as a way of being an active citizen; and,
- 3) to enable students to write without being restrained by academic conventions. There was an overwhelming sense that this assessment unleashed students from the boundaries of essay writing. The posts were creative and critical to an extent that is often not seen in more traditional assessments.

(Unit Coordinator – Blogging about Climate Change)

“I was amazed by the quality of the best works produced and the amount of time and effort some students expended on them. ..Seen as a whole, the exhibition demonstrated the complex web of connection between climate change and every aspect of the way we live. Many students could see the communication power of their works exhibited together and suggested a touring exhibition to visit regional shows. Many also articulated their struggle to bring together their creative activity and academic perspectives on the issues they addressed in a short commentary. I wonder if this is a clue to the disjuncture between a rational acknowledgement of the serious issue that is Global Warming and the aesthetic drivers of our consumer behaviour? “

(Unit Coordinator – Creative Exhibition)

