

*Who Do You Want to Be in the World?*



# SEMESTER *in* DIALOGUE

*[sfu.ca/SemesterInDialogue](http://sfu.ca/SemesterInDialogue)*



# What is SEMESTER IN DIALOGUE?

*“Dialogue might include, as we’ve learned... some awkward pauses. These breaks in conversation provide room for more soft-spoken participants to take a moment to gather their thoughts and contribute, and also give the whole group time to reflect on what was said. Dialogue ultimately provides a space to bring together diverse viewpoints, explore these differences, and work towards understanding them better.”*

## *Who Do You Want to Be in the World?*

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The SFU Semester in Dialogue is a one semester, full time program designed to inspire students with a sense of civic responsibility and encourage their passion for improving society.

Each semester the program offers an original, interdisciplinary experience that bridges with the community and creates space for students to reflect on what they are doing and why it matters. Our approach to learning helps students to better define their personal and professional goals while gaining effective skills in areas such as communication and group work.

We believe that universities should inspire students to take responsibility for and contribute to the world around them, and provide the ability to communicate and be effective through tools such as dialogue. There is no more important task than encouraging young Canadians to care about the world around them, and to provide them with the tools they need to be effective ambassadors for positive change in our communities.



# History of Semester in Dialogue

*"The emphasis is on a different kind of listening, not looking for others' mistakes and pouncing but collecting perspectives of others. I became more interested in what everyone had to say than picking them apart."*

In 2002, Professor Mark Winston founded the Semester in Dialogue to expand the boundaries of traditional education to create deeper, experiential learning opportunities that would provide students with the inspiration and tools necessary to become active citizens.

He wanted to provide more mentorship opportunities and deeper connections to the community. The Semester in Dialogue is unique as it is the only undergraduate program at SFU that is outside of the traditional Department and Faculty administrative structure. Dr. Janet Moore joined the Semester in Dialogue team in 2006 and is the current Director. She also co-founded and co-directs CityStudio. Sean Blenkinsop from the SFU Faculty of Education joined the Semester in Dialogue as third full-time faculty member in 2012 for a 5 year secondment.

## How does it work?

The Semester in Dialogue consists of a full semester course load (15 credits at SFU). The semester is presented as one seamless unit, but for grading purposes is divided into three simultaneous courses: DIAL 390 (Art and Practice of Dialogue), 391 (Written Assignments), and 392 (Final Project). Students are in the program Monday through Friday during normal working hours, either for formal class time or to work collaboratively with their peers.

Faculty members curate a unique learning experience each semester, with themes emerging through consultations with community advisors. Offerings to-date have included broad topic areas such as The Urban Experience; Health Issues and Ethics; Social Enterprise and Sustainable Community Development; Art and Community; and Nature, Environment, and Society. Both traditional university faculty and community experts participate together as teachers and dialogue facilitators. A typical week is spent in dialogue with Thought Leaders, meeting with faculty, conducting research, attending public events, going on field trips, and working on individual or group projects.

Students participate in conversations with thought leaders rather than listening to lectures. They design projects that explore issues of personal and civic importance and receive intensive feedback and mentorship from peers and faculty. The course is co-taught as an intensive, interdisciplinary learning cohort.

## What is dialogue?

Dialogue is a form of respectful conversation, where deep listening, mutual understanding, collaborative process and empathy act as alternatives to more adversarial approaches. Faculty members challenge students to let go of judgment and remain curious while exploring issues from a variety of perspectives.



## Program Goals

- Inspire students with a sense of civic responsibility while encouraging their passion and commitment to discover who they want to be in the world; and,
- Model the spirit of concentrated conversation among equals and deep listening that is the essence of dialogue, in an environment encouraging mutual understanding between diverse perspectives.



## Learning Goals

1. Hold space for open-minded conversation through dialogue.
2. Design and participate in dialogue-based public events.
3. Engage community groups and decision-makers with skill and confidence.
4. Gain confidence in speaking and writing for a public audience.
5. Develop and apply skills in collaborative group work.
6. Develop and apply critical thinking and problem solving skills for projects.
7. Develop skills for personal reflective writing and goal setting.
8. Understand complex public issues associated with semester topics.

*“Instead of only reading about our city, we hosted a community dialogue on Vancouver’s history and invited the public to share their stories. In uncovering Vancouver’s story, I discovered new parts of my own. Most of all, the Semester in Dialogue taught me that to tell a good story, you first have to be a good listener.”*

Our

# APPROACH

*“Thanks to the Semester in Dialogue, I now look at the world and see my ability to transform it.”*

## 1 Dialogue-based communication

Dialogue involves deep listening and learning to discover meaning among diverse participants. Dialogue-based processes aim to build meaningful relationships through free expression of views and respectful exploration of differences.

The dialogue is structured to encourage conversations in which students are on equal footing with guests, rather than standard lectures or question & answer formats. A debrief follows each session and provides space for students to probe how the conversation proceeded, how the facilitator’s process design and interventions influenced the outcome, and what the class might have done differently to improve interactions and build trust.

## 2 Experiential education

Experiential education emphasizes learning through doing. Students apply skills in the real world, reflect on the results and use this learning to provide context for normally abstract theories. Whether submitting an op-ed to a local newspaper about the local food movement,

hosting a public art competition or visiting a Vancouver courthouse to learn about the intersection of the mental health and justice systems, student engagement with the broader community is a key aspect of the Semester in Dialogue.

Site visits include the Museum of Vancouver, walking tours, urban farms, green buildings, healthcare providers and City archives.

## 3 Community engagement

The Semester in Dialogue engages the community in a variety of ways, including partnering with community organizations on projects, convening community dialogues to address pressing issues and hosting community thought leaders in the classroom.

Each semester, students conduct community-based projects in small groups. These projects are not the typical role-playing exercises found in most university courses; projects are expected to have the potential to impact the world outside of the classroom.



## Our Impact—Alumni & Network

The Semester in Dialogue continues to have transformative impacts on its students, while creating rich partnerships with the wider community. Extensive student feedback indicates that Semester in Dialogue alumni leave the program with new understandings of leadership, better communication skills and a renewed sense of who they want to be in the world. Through hosting public dialogues, visiting with Thought Leaders, and leading projects, students develop networks of contacts and discover new interests and opportunities.

The Semester in Dialogue and Semester at CityStudio alumni are now all over the world, bringing their experiences into their lives as active and engaged citizens. Some have become City staff, others started projects and organisations, and many have continued their schooling.

As of May 2016, the program has graduated 643 alumni and hosted 646 community Thought Leaders.

## Metrics

- 35 Unique Semester in Dialogue Courses since 2001
- 36 Instructors involved
- 643 Alumni graduated from Semester in Dialogue
- 646 Thought leaders participated in Semester in Dialogue
- 18 Public Dialogues hosted



# Spring 2015 SEMESTER IN ENERGY FUTURES

faculty DR. SEAN BLENKINSOP • DR. TOM GREEN • DR. LAURA PIERSOL

*"I like the practical skills element of the program. I'm feeling a lot more confident about applying for jobs. I have already begun to work differently in networking for my career."*

The history of energy in the Western world is tightly coupled to the history of industrial development, of cultural expansion, of changing lifestyles, and, now unavoidably, of environmental degradation, unsustainable behavior and climate change. How we, as citizens of the twenty-first century, supply, transmit, use, conserve, and price the energy of the future will have significant implications for the well-being of ourselves and the planet now and into the future. This semester examined the question of energy from all possible angles, with a particular focus on community energy and its implications and possibilities for Vancouver and beyond.

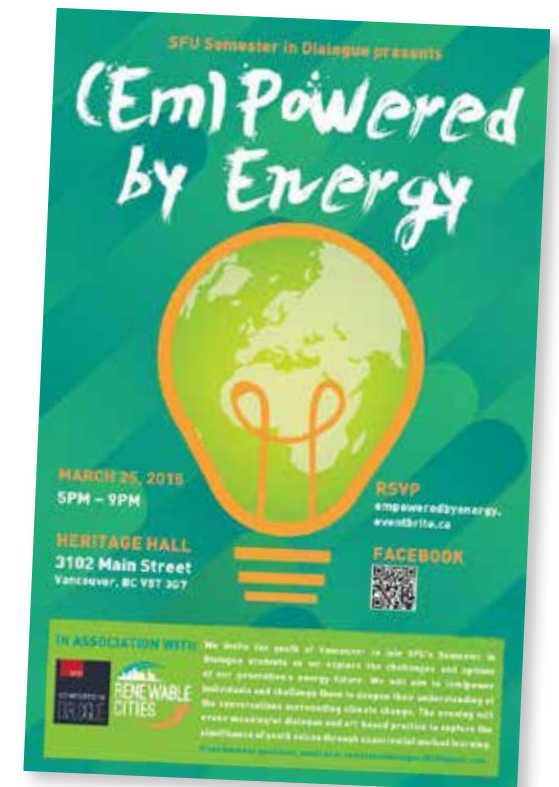
The course was designed in conjunction with many of BC's leading sustainable energy thinkers identified in consultation with BC's Ministry of the Environment's Climate Action

Secretariat. Students worked alongside some of the key thinkers and doers in Vancouver and BC related to energy, sustainability, climate action and the future of urban life.

(Em)Powered by Energy was a successful event that helped Semester in Dialogue 'Energy Futures' highlight the information, ideals, and conflicts learned throughout the course. By providing the youth of Vancouver an avenue to engage with topics surrounding renewable energies, we were able to identify the key thoughts and concerns that our generation faces. Those who attended our public dialogue are now aware of a vast spectrum of methods that enable their voices and opinions on energy futures to be heard. We also deepened our understanding of community involvement and learned its importance in making positive societal change.

## Guest List, Spring 2015

- Chris Baber, City of Vancouver
- Rob Baxter, Vancouver Renewable Energy
- Ross Beaty, Alterra Power Corp
- Alex Boston, Boston Consulting
- Michael Byers, University of B.C.
- Karen Campbell, Ecojustice
- Adriane Carr, City of Vancouver
- Ben Clark, Government of BC
- Lee Coonfer, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
- Isabelle Deguise, Innergex Renewable Energy
- Ben Finkelstein, Government of BC
- Anne Giardini, Simon Fraser University
- Mike Harcourt, QUEST Quality Urban Energy Systems of Tomorrow
- David Helliwell, Pulse Energy
- Amy Huva, Climate Access
- Karen Inglis, Covanta Burnaby Renewable Energy ULC
- Mark Jaccard, SFU School of Resource Management
- Sadhu Johnston, City of Vancouver
- Lenora Jordan, General Fusion Inc.
- Matt Kennedy, Innergex
- Marc Lee, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
- Carol Linnitt, Desmog Canada
- Aaron Malkin, Life and Depth
- Geoffrey Morrison, Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers
- Anthony Perl, SFU Post Carbon Institute
- Kenneth Porter, Government of BC
- Fiona Rayher, Gen Why Media
- Andrea Reimer, City of Vancouver
- Sally Rudd, Vancouver Renewable Energy
- Andy Skuce
- Merran Smith, Clean Energy Canada at Tides Canada
- Mike Soron, Sustainable SFU (Student Society)
- Kennedy Stewart, Gov. of Canada
- Ben West, Forest Ethics Advocacy



# Summer 2015 SEMESTER OUTSIDE IN THE CITY

faculty LENA SOOTS • DR. LAURA PIERSOL

—with support from DR. JANET MOORE • DUANE ELVERUM • LINDSAY COLE • DR. SEAN BLENKINSOP

This semester focused on the exploration of an outdoor learning site in Everett Crowley Park in South East Vancouver. The Outdoor Learning Project is a collaboration of the Vancouver Park Board, CityStudio, SFU Semester in Dialogue, BCIT and the Everett Crowley Park Committee and is supported by a \$20,000 grant from the Vancouver Foundation. The project was created in response to the opportunities described in the Biodiversity Strategy and the Rewilding Action Plan—how can we build deeper connections between people living in Vancouver and their place? How can deep and meaningful experiences with nature become part of the day to day lives of people living in the city?

Students engaged deeply in the site and learned about the history, context, place, ecology and communities that engage with it. Students worked with community towards a temporary intervention that encouraged learning about the place. Students engaged with concepts of outdoor learning, urban ecology, urban wilderness, aesthetics, ecosystem restoration and living in place. Students considered the terms public space, wild space and what

access to nature could look like 100 years in the future. Students explored Vancouver by foot, bike and kayak and investigated complex systems, deep connections and wild places. Students spent approx. 3 days per week in the park in a fully immersive experience.

Students identified a need for infrastructure to support outdoor learning in the following ways: to gather and pause; encourage stopping, being, and noticing the space around us; inspire wonder and sensory engagement; have minimal impact on the natural world; and provide shelter and amenities.

Students hosted a public event to showcase the interventions in the event titled “Nature Show: Nature Tell”. The students had a series of projects that led participants around the park and included fresh food and dialogue. The attendees included public school students from a local school, thought leaders, City of Vancouver and Parks Board employees and local residents. A video showcasing the Outdoor Learning project is found at: <https://vimeo.com/137498352>



## Guest List, Summer 2015

- Jaime Adams, Forest and the Femme
- Brad Badelt, City of Vancouver
- David Bradley, Bird Studies Canada
- Lindsay Cole, City of Vancouver
- Anita Georgy, Stanley Park Ecology
- Jennifer Groves, Sunshine Coast Nature School
- Catriona Hearn, Lees & Associates
- Sharon Kallis, Artist
- Stanley King, Co-design Group
- Margot Long, PWL Partnerships Landscape Architects Inc.
- Jane Loughheed, Museum of Vancouver
- James MacKinnon, 100 Mile Diet Society
- Nick Page, City of Vancouver Park Board
- Camila Ramos Bravo, Vancouver Biennale
- Robyn Rankin, Outdoor Council of Canada
- Jennifer Sheel, City of Vancouver
- Bren Simmers, Vancouver Outdoor School
- Lori Snyder, Indigenous Plant Talker
- Jil Weaving, Vancouver Park Board
- Tracy Williams
- Ken Wylie, Mountains for Growth
- David Yule, Everett Crowley Park Committee





# Fall 2015 SEMESTER AT CITYSTUDIO

faculty DR. JANET MOORE • DUANE ELVERUM • ANDREAS EIKEN • DAVID HATFIELD • DR. MARK WINSTON

*"I have never experienced anything like it; the Semester in Dialogue gave me the skills, confidence and know-how to go out and make my passion into my career."*

Semester at CityStudio brings together bright, innovative students from diverse backgrounds, disciplines and universities to collaborate with The City of Vancouver on demonstration projects. CityStudio is an immersive, team learning environment combining interdisciplinary skills with the complexity of collaborating within a group setting. The SFU course combines dialogue and design elements, and requires students to engage with communities, research existing urban interventions and design projects to improve the world around them. By focusing on current issues that matter in Vancouver, students have an opportunity to develop innovative solutions that assist The City of Vancouver in reaching its goals. Students cultivate the skills necessary to conduct student led dialogues, public presentations, and to engage in multi-stakeholder processes with policy makers and City of Vancouver staff. The course offers field experiences, on-the-ground training, leadership development, group process, and project management skills.

## The CityStudio Challenge

Each student group launches a project that achieves the 5 S's below, in the context of partnerships that ensure successful projects will continue after the course. Final projects include a poster, a report, a digital submission and a public presentation.

- **Staff:** Co-create and collaborate with a key staff contact and specific stakeholders.
- **Support:** Mobilize funding, support and resources
- **Site:** Find and work on a real site in the city
- **Stewardship:** Develop specific relationships for ongoing project stewardship
- **Scalability:** Execute the project so that it can scale for impact.





## Guest List, Fall 2015

- Dale Bracewell, City of Vancouver
- Chris Bruntlett, Modacity
- Chris Diplock, Ponder Research
- David Eaves
- Ginger Gosnell-Myers, City of Vancouver
- Tadhg Healy, City of Vancouver
- Sadhu Johnston, City of Vancouver
- Melina Laboucan-Massimo, Greenpeace
- Mukhtar Latif, City of Vancouver
- Mike Magee, City of Vancouver
- Jane Pickering, City of Vancouver
- Amanda Pitre-Hayes, City of Vancouver
- Kevin Quinlan, City of Vancouver
- Andrea Reimer, City of Vancouver
- Sandra Singh, Vancouver Public Library
- Charles Tsai, Ashoka Changemakers
- Mary Clare Zak, City of Vancouver



*“My final project helped me get into grad school and provided inspiration for my master’s thesis. Getting feedback and one-on-one mentorship from professors in the program was highly valuable.”*

## Fall 2015 Student Projects

**East Van Skill Share Fair**, a day long skill sharing event to connect individuals and ultimately continue to build a more self reliant community.

**The Lighter Footprint Project** created a toolkit which enables motivated individuals to act as Ambassadors and equip their neighbours with the knowledge and resources needed for one-planet living.

**placeLAB** exists to create more shareable and inviting public spaces by addressing the issue of competing needs of cyclists and pedestrians. It is a collaborative experiment in research, design, and dialogue.

**Summit the City** aimed to connect and engage community around seven existing parks in South East Vancouver. The creation of this 11 km route, adopts the Grouse Grind concept in our urban landscape to form an ‘Urban Trail’.

**YIMBY**, a pay-it-forward initiative with four local business partners along East Vancouver’s Commercial Drive.





*"This program has changed my perspective about how to operate in the real world."*

## Semester Themes

### 2015

Fall 2015: Semester at CityStudio—Emergence  
Summer 2015: Semester Outside in the City  
Spring 2015: Semester in Energy Futures

### 2014

Fall 2014: Semester at CityStudio  
Summer 2014: Governance for the Twenty-First Century  
Spring 2014: Semester at CityStudio #100yearsfromnow

### 2013

Fall 2013: Conflict and Governance  
Summer 2013: Leading Social Change  
Spring 2013: Semester in the City II (CityStudio)—Healthy City Strategy

### 2012

Fall 2012: Health Issues and Ethics  
Summer 2012: Sustainable Food Systems  
Spring 2012: Semester in the City

## SFU Semester in Dialogue Staff



**Brenda Tang**  
Manager



**Linda Bannister**  
Undergraduate  
Secretary



**Gerilee McBride**  
Design &  
Communication



**Kala Harris**  
Manager



**Kelvin Chan**  
Budget Assistant

## SFU Semester in Dialogue Faculty



**Janet Moore** is an Associate Professor and the Director of the Semester in Dialogue. Janet is also the Co-Founder and Co-Director of CityStudio. Janet has spent 20 years conceptualizing, imagining and designing the future of the university classroom.



**Sean Blenkinsop** is an Associate Professor of education at SFU. Sean grew up in Northern Ontario and spent 15 years as an outdoor, environmental, and experiential educator. His doctoral work in philosophy of education was completed at Harvard and focused on existentialism with a deep interest in the concepts of choice, dialogue, community, and freedom.



**Mark Winston** has had a distinguished career researching, teaching, writing and commenting on bees and agriculture, environmental issues, and science policy. More recently, he has utilized dialogue in classrooms, corporations, non-profit organizations, government, and community settings to develop leadership and communication skills, conduct strategic planning, inspire organizational change, and thoughtfully engage public audiences with controversial issues.



## SFU Semester in Dialogue Visiting Faculty



As Co-Founder and Co-Director of CityStudio, **Duane Elverum** aims to create innovations in education by connecting students directly to urban sustainability and public issues through real-world projects on the ground. He has taught design at university for 18 years, holding the positions of Assistant Dean, Assistant Professor in design, and Academic Advisor at ECU. He is a visiting faculty with SFU's Centre for Dialogue.



**Tom Green** is a Vancouver-based sustainability expert with a track record of contributing solutions to resource management issues and sustainability challenges. He offers advanced knowledge in factoring ecological constraints into socio-economic analysis so as to identify pathways to lasting prosperity and human wellbeing and to make the business case for investments in sustainability.



**Laura Piersol** is a SFU instructor, educational researcher and wanderer within the Fraser River and Chapman Creek Watersheds. She has worked as an ecological educator for 20 years.



**Andreas Eiken** is an award winning interdisciplinary User Experience & Service Designer focused on human-centered design and strategic innovation. He has three years experience designing for governments, entrepreneurship and sustainability. He holds a Masters in Design and is an active educator.



**David Hatfield** is a leadership consultant and facilitator specializing in the design and delivery of transformative, experiential education. His long-standing areas of focus are masculinity, conflict transformation and rites of passage. David also teaches group facilitation and instructs improvisational a cappella singing internationally.





*Want to learn more about Semester in Dialogue?*  
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