

## Examples of Active Student Participation at Uppsala University

**WHAT** Student-led seminars and the 30 Day Challenge in the course Global Challenges and Sustainable Futures

**INSTITUTION / FACULTY** Centre for Environment and Development Studies (CEMUS), Institution för Geovetenskaper

**WHICH STUDENTS PARTICIPATE** Students from all faculties at UU, students from SLU, exchange students participate in CEMUS courses. Many take the course as a supplement to their degree, as well as a few working people since it is an evening course.

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### **DESCRIPTION** 30 Day Challenge

This is an assignment where each student chooses something to change in their everyday life to live a more sustainable lifestyle, and tries it for 30 days. (Examples include, becoming vegetarian, avoiding plastic, and zero waste lifestyle). At the end, they are asked to share their experiences in a creative way (e.g. video, poster, booklet, sculpture, etc.). Some of their work was presented at the CEMUS Sustainability Winter Festival (<http://www.web.cemus.se/festival/>).

#### **Student-led Sessions**

Following a 1-hour lecture by the guest lecturer, each time a different group of students (maximum 6 students per group) organizes an interactive discussion activity based on the topic of the day. The discussion activity is asked to engage all students, involve the guest lecturer, relate with the literature, and encouraged to use participatory pedagogical methods.

Both Assignment Instructions are available at:  
<http://www.web.cemus.se/gcsf/>

### **PURPOSE / BACKGROUND** 30 Day Challenge

Developed by previous course coordinators, this activity is aimed to have a fun and engaging assignment that is reflective. It was inspired by a TED talk: "Try something new for 30 days - Matt Cutts"

#### **Student-led Sessions**

"What would education look like if students designed it?" General CEMUS courses show one answer, where students and recent graduates are hired to coordinate courses. We decided to open this up further, by giving the

students who are taking the course the opportunity to co-create it. We were curious to see what students would come up with, and we trusted that if we give them more responsibility, they would deliver. Moreover, we believed that it would be an inclusive way to give students that are not as out-spoken the opportunity to lead discussions in class, and overall be an empowering learning experience.

### **PROS 30 Day Challenge**

- Students engage, and explore their own role both in causes and in solutions for sustainability issues, relating to them at a personal level.
- Encouraging examples: e.g. produced only a jar of waste during 3 weeks (!), almost completely off-setted their carbon footprint from their flight by changing their lifestyle...
- Transformative and personal development: e.g, a student felt better about herself by changing from a shopaholic.

### **Student-led Sessions**

- Students have organized creative activities, bringing in prior experience: e.g. discussion in small groups on hypothetical or real cases, debate on ethical issues, stakeholder role-play debate.
- Students seem to generally enjoy these discussions, seen in written feedback given to organizing groups, and it is helping to build a positive class atmosphere. Definitely is giving opportunities for different students to contribute and speak up.
- "Missing" topics have been brought up in the sessions: e.g. future technology and ethics, using real case of head transplant.

### **CONS / 30 Day Challenge**

- CHALLENGES**
- It is a bit tricky when approving the challenge proposals, to decide what challenges are meeting the assignment aim and which challenge ideas need to be changed.

### **Student-led Sessions**

- Involving the lecturer, since the students don't know the detailed lecture topics and lecturer, the activity sometimes felt disconnected with the lecture. Ideas for improvement include: sharing slides beforehand to organizing group.
- How to have students integrate the literature more.