NEW SUSTAINABILITY COURSE OFFERED IN SPRING

Houston, December 10, 2010 – Students get the chance to personally make a difference in sustaining the university as well as the city of Houston with a new course offering in the spring. Sustaining the City: Researching Houston (HON 4397H, 24024) gives students the opportunity to get hands on experience and work with government and nonprofit agencies as well as programs and groups within the university dedicated to sustainability.

“Sustainability is not just about recycling,” said Dr. Daniel Price, Research Assistant Professor and one of the instructors for the course. “It’s about the systems that sustain us – our communities, our physical surroundings, our economic system – and what keeps them going.”

Price, along with Dr. Barry Lefer, Associate Professor for the Department of Earth & Atmospheric Sciences, and Emily Messa, Assistant Vice President of University Services, will co-teach the open Honor’s course. Lefer said he wants to teach the students the relationship between sustainability and his two primary research areas: air quality and climate change.

“It is really important to me that UH students realize that they (by their day to day actions) are currently contributing to these problems but that we all can become part of the solutions to these complex environmental issues by making sustainable choices,” Lefer said.

The course is open to all enrolled UH students interested in signing up for the course. The course will be spent outside of the classroom experiencing real world issues through internships and then meet for an hour on Friday mornings.

“The theme of this course is active learning about sustainability through real-world experiences in internships throughout the city of Houston,” Messa said. “I am looking forward to watching the students grow in this model of a living-learning lab on sustainability!”

Some students are expected to work in Houston’s Housing and Community Development Department alongside city personnel taking on the efforts to sustain local communities through economic development, real estate policies, architecture and urban planning. There are also possibilities of assisting the city’s Bureau of Air Quality.

The university has its own sustainability projects as well that the enrolled students will have the opportunity to participate. For example, students may have the opportunity to learn about sustainability through nurturing a sense of history of the community by working on such projects
as UH research professor Carroll Blue’s community initiatives in the Third Ward. Price said opportunities will also be available in environmental science, UH’s sustainability office as well as in the history of Houston’s environment and urban development.

“Through internships, students learn things that you can’t get in books, and one of the main purposes of the course is to bridge the academic and the practical – it’s central to any possibility of sustaining the university as a part of the city,” Dr. Price said.

Course materials include a packet of readings focusing on the science and politics of city and campus life, and understanding and improving the social, environmental and technical infrastructure. Sustaining the City: Researching Houston will be offered on Fridays from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.

About the University of Houston

The University of Houston is a comprehensive national research institution serving the globally competitive Houston and Gulf Coast Region by providing world-class faculty, experiential learning and strategic industry partnerships. UH serves more than 38,500 students in the nation’s fourth-largest city, located in the most ethnically and culturally diverse region of the country.