

The Stories we Live By: a free online course about sustainability and the role of language in shaping society

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Teaching, learning and assessment



What is it?

'[The Stories we Live By](http://www.storiesweliveby.org.uk)' is a free online course that explores the role of language in either promoting unsustainable behaviour or inspiring people to help build a more sustainable society. It is underpinned by ecolinguistics, which emphasises the importance of language in influencing how we think, talk and act. From advertising to economics and politics, the underlying messages behind the words that are chosen can be very powerful. The course examines a wide range of texts from advertisements, lifestyle magazines and economics textbooks to surfing guides, Native American sayings and Japanese animation. In each case, the question is whether the stories that underlie texts encourage us to care about people and the ecosystems that life depends on. The online course is fully asynchronous and supported by 22 volunteer tutors from around the world, offering support in 11 languages for participants who wish to discuss the course content and the issues it raises. The course materials can be used for self-study, in staff development programmes or in modules.

The **Intended outcomes of the course** are to enable participants to:

- 1 Become critically aware of the role of language in shaping society and its contribution to unsustainable practices and entrenching inequalities
- 2 Gain skills in searching for inspirational forms of language which can help build a more sustainable world.

Who is it for?

The course is applicable to everyone, but within a higher education setting may be used in the following ways:

- 1 As part of a staff development offer that introduces Education for Sustainability
- 2 Academics could offer the course to their students within a module or as an extra-curricular offer.
- 3 Students' Unions (or other student representative bodies) could use the course within their student groups to develop awareness of how language influences sustainability issues.

Guidance

The course offers a range of resources that staff can use within their own teaching including videos, exercises, PowerPoint slides, notes and readings. Because the course is fully asynchronous anyone taking it can work through it in their own time and get in touch with tutors when they need advice or to discuss their answers to exercises.

Useful resources

The course can be found at www.storiesweliveby.org.uk

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