Class Activities for **Chapter 16: Environmentalism**

**Class activity #1**

How aware is your institution when it comes to ecological and environmental issues? What about the students within the college/university?

Break the class into groups of 3-4. Give the students 10-15 minutes to walk around campus in their small groups to look for opportunities to be more environmentally conscious and aware, as well as to look for what the school is doing well when it comes to this issue. Make sure someone from each group is recording their findings to report to the class upon returning. Tell the groups to try to go to different places so the findings are not overly redundant.

After the groups return, use the board to aggregate the class’s findings. If there are areas for improvement that seem particularly egregious and/or were noted by multiple groups, see if the class is willing to take on an effort to bring this to the attention of some people in power at the school in order to put the wheels in motion to make that change.

**Class activity #2**

Sustainability is both a key concept in environmentalism and, as your text points out, social work. Our profession looks to find sustainable ways to alleviate problems. Rather than simply looking for a quick fix or a solution that will only alleviate the symptoms of the bigger problem, social work’s macro focus keeps members of the field interested in the kind of systemic change that can really make a difference for more people down the line, rather than just the people suffering from a given problem now. For instance, social work is in favor of public assistance to help poor families, but also wants to work on the problems in the system that produce vast inequality and large numbers of poor people so as to improve the overall society for the long haul.

With this in mind, break the class into groups and have them think about some of the strategies and programs that have been discussed in the book in previous chapters for dealing with large-scale social ills like poverty, discrimination, substance abuse, and so on. Which of these strategies represent a focus on sustainability—looking at the solution that will make a bigger difference over the long haul—and which ones are more temporary fixes (still necessary, but not liable to really work on fixing the conditions that allow the problem to exist in the first place)?   
  
Are there ways to take the solutions or programs that students identified as more short-term and less sustainable and modify them so that they make a bigger difference on an underlying/macro level to alleviate the problem for more than just individual clients?

Have students share any ideas they had to increase sustainability of social welfare offerings and services with the full class.

**Class activity #3**

Climate change is a topic that is presented by the mass media as being a source of great controversy socially, and yet, scientifically there is very little debate at all. Well over 95% of climate studies within the last few decades have identified a consistent pattern of climate change that represents real long-term problems for the planet and all things living on it if the trend continues unabated. However, because there isn’t full agreement, at times the media presents the issue as “having two sides,” implying the sides have equal evidence or data.

Given that most Americans believe in climate change, and far more scientists believe it is occurring than not, why do so many politicians continue to deny that climate change exists? Some have even gone as far as to call it the “greatest hoax” ever perpetrated on mankind. You may choose to show some videos of politicians discussing the issue on both sides.

Often, one’s political aspirations and goals can cloud one’s judgment, or perhaps simply encourage someone to say something that is clearly untrue. Break the class into small groups and have them identify potential motivations of both sides. Why do climate change deniers continue to deny it? What can they gain by doing do, in a political sense and in a concrete sense? On the flip side, if climate change were not real, what would scientists who claim it *is* real have to gain through such machinations?

After they discuss in small groups, bring the discussion to the full class.