

SLS Themes for AY 2016-17

In AY2016-17, SLS will focus on four themes—and we would love to work with courses to connect you with partners and our activities around these themes. Interested? Contact SLS Director Jennifer Hirsch at jennifer.hirsch@gatech.edu or 224-392-5608.

Food, Energy, Water Systems (FEWS)

Our Fall Semester SLS Fellows Program will explore sustainable community-building through the integrated lens of food, energy, and water systems, touching on issues such as sociotechnical systems, civic engagement, and safety and security. Our FEWS program is aligned with [NSF's INFEWS program](#) (Innovations at the Nexus of Food, Energy, and Water Systems; now called FEW). The primary question driving the program will be: *How can Georgia Tech develop research, teaching, and engagement initiatives that leverage our capacities as researchers and educators to address pressing community issues concerning sustainable and equitable approaches to food, energy, and water?* Other types of questions that may be considered include:

- How does framing FEWS as a sociotechnical system open up new possibilities for interdisciplinary collaboration?
- How can big data and systems thinking enhance our understanding of critical linkages between food, energy, and water and how these linkages can support sustainable and equitable communities?
- How are communities already innovating around FEWS? What services, infrastructure, and technologies will be required to meet new challenges?
- How can we better facilitate civic engagement in FEWS through practices such as participatory research or citizen science? How can industry partners support this engagement?

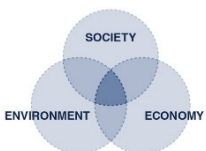
Smart Cities

Our Fall Semester SLS Fellows Program will explore sustainable community-building through the lens of smart cities touching on issues such as algorithms and governance, security and privacy, participatory sensing, social and technical infrastructures, and civic engagement. The fundamental question driving the program will be: *How can Georgia Tech develop teaching, design, research, and engagement initiatives that address pressing issues concerning smart cities?*

Environmental Justice

In AY2016-17, SLS will examine EJ through a year-long series of activities examining issues of environmental *injustice*—disproportionate environmental burdens placed on low income communities and communities of color, and links between race, class, and environmental burdens and benefits—and engaging in environmental justice efforts to address these burdens and enhance potential benefits. We will focus especially on three issues: air quality, water quality, and climate change (“climate justice”). Working with schools and offices across and beyond campus, we will co-sponsor speakers, arts programming, structural racism workshops, and citizen science projects in Atlanta and beyond. This series builds on a very successful “Coffee & Conversation” event that we hosted in February 2016, “Environment and Justice: The Water Crisis in Flint, MI,” that attracted a diverse group of 45+ students, faculty, staff, and partners and resulted in a planning committee for the series of over 20 people. See the [resource page](#) for that event to access general resources on environmental justice, including a page of [definitions](#).

Social Sustainability



As a sustainable *communities* initiative, SLS is particularly focused on the “society” circle of sustainability. In June 2016, we are hosting a satellite conference with the Integrated Network for Social Sustainability (INSS), an NSF Research Coordination Network linking engineers and social scientists, formed specifically to address social sustainability. INSS states: “Social elements remain underappreciated in this model, and we work for greater inclusion of these in planning and practice.” Unsatisfied with current definitions of social sustainability, we have developed this working definition for our conference: “Socially sustainable development aims to help human and natural communities flourish, now and in the future. It prioritizes equity and human capital development at the individual and community levels. It maximizes community assets, including community-based knowledge, history, traditions, and social networks.” We expect this conference to result in an agenda for stronger collaborative work to advance social sustainability in the Southeast region, possibly within the context of the UN’s newly issued [Sustainable Development Goals](#).