Sustainability: Principles, Concepts, and Tools
Political Science 399-4
Social Change 304-4
(Revised 12/3/015)

Times and Location:
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 2:30-3:45 pm
Ford Hall (South of the Ekstrom Library), Fourth Floor, Room 407

Instructor:
Chad Frederick, MU/EP, ABD
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University Fellow, School of Interdisciplinary and Graduate Studies
Department of Urban and Public Affairs, College of Arts and Sciences
University of Louisville; Louisville, Kentucky
Email: chad.frederick@louisville.edu

Office Hours:
Tuesdays and Thursdays, 1:00-2:00 pm, Dept. of Urban and Public Affairs (Standard Oil Building), 426 W. Bloom Street, Room 230; or by appointment.

Course Information:
The course is designed as a survey of critical issues in sustainability studies. This means that topically, the content tends to be “wide” versus “deep”. The point of a broad, transdisciplinary (that is, a field that is ‘above’ or ‘beyond’ academic disciplines) survey course is to create more opportunities for a topic to resonate with students, with the goal of sparking a connection between students’ interests and sustainability.

Resolving questions is not a goal of the course, but rather we aim to generate better questions. In other words, the course adopts the position that the goal is not to teach students what to think of the issues, but rather to increase the number of ways for how to think about the issues.

What:
The course investigates the field of sustainability from a variety of perspectives. First, a vocabulary of concepts and principles needed to begin the investigation are reviewed. We use these concepts to provide answers to the question “What is sustainability?”
When:
Using the answers to the “what” question, we locate sustainability in the historical context of the early 21st century. What other concerns occupy the same contexts as sustainability? Which sets of assumptions do the assumptions of sustainability compete with?

Why:
Locating sustainability in the larger contexts and geopolitical realities (or, as some assert, “imaginaries”) of 21st century society helps us to identify why sustainability has emerged, and to articulate and argue different points of view for and against pursuing sustainability.

Where:
Next, we explore different approaches, assumptions, pressures, and barriers for sustainability across place. What does sustainability mean in different geographical contexts? Do they produce contradictions? How does the issue of scale shape the practice of sustainability?

Who:
Once we understand the different arguments, we can identify who makes these different arguments. What are their motivations and investments, either implicit or explicit? Who has voice in the discussion, and who (and what) does not?

How:
Having mapped out the critical issues in the social landscape of sustainability, we explore the political, economic, and cultural processes and barriers to implementing sustainability policies: sustainable development.

How much:
If sustainability is a “direction,” and not a “destination,” how “fast” is the appropriate speed that society should pursue policies for sustainability? What are the costs of going too slow, or too fast? How do the concepts of risk and consequence play a role in determining the speed?

Objectives:
There are two basic goals of the course. The primary goal is to equip students with the tools necessary to engage in critical assessments (i.e. critique) of sustainability as both a theory and as a practice. Does a policy which claims to be sustainable, actually increase sustainability, or does it, for example, merely “move the problem around geographically?” However, the ability to critique sustainability (or any concept for that matter) does not necessarily mean an ability to effectively wield sustainability for particular outcomes. This is the paradox between theory and practice. Thus, the secondary goal of the course is to enable students the ability to make use of (i.e. practice) sustainability as an approach to problem-solving.
Course Structure:
This course takes an approach to course construction and pedagogy which corresponds with an education for sustainable development (ESD). In practical terms this means that, unlike many courses, considerable latitude is given to students to shape how the two objectives of the course are met: the critique and practice of sustainability. For example, you can choose which final project suits you: an exam, paper, or project. Students who desire more structure can treat the course in a traditional manner and take the exam.

Another difference: the Internet is welcome in the classroom. Students are encouraged to use technology to explore subjects being discussed in the classroom in real time.

Also, the course uses a variety of source materials. Academic literature is used to provide content. Short videos (5-10 minutes) are used to spark discussion about the content. Students are encouraged to integrate content from the readings to enrich these discussions.

Grading:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score Range</th>
<th>Grade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>69-67</td>
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Class Participation (33%)
Class participation is required, but not everybody feels comfortable speaking in public. Some people work better alone, in pairs, in small groups, in large groups, in person, or online. Therefore, several different ways of achieving class participation are provided. You choose your preferred method of participation, and you can change it if you decide to try something else. The thing being sought with class participation is engagement. How that is achieved is (largely) up to you. Details about how to achieve participation grade in these modes will be discussed in class.

Reading Assessments: Short Answer Exams (33%)
The assessments will consist of two questions to be answered with between 100 and 200 words for each question, in less than 30 minutes overall. There will be three such reading assessments conducted over the course of the semester. The quizzes are not graded on a detailed or deep understanding of the readings, but only to ensure that they have been read. Each exam is a full 11% of your grade.

Attendance (0%*)
You will not be penalized for not coming to class, or for being late. Attendance will not be taken. You may, however, be penalized if tardiness to class is frequent and disruptive.

*Keep in mind, if you do not attend, you cannot participate. Furthermore, make-ups of the Short Answer Exams will not be offered without a documented family, personal, or medical excuse.
Final Project (33%)
Students are given extreme latitude in choosing a final project, which can be done alone, or in groups, in paper form or some other medium, such as music, video, maps, applied projects in the community, etc. The projects are graded on the amount of effort put into it, the use of principles and concepts presented in the class, and the extent to which the goal of the project or paper was reached. A one-page project proposal is due March 10th. Students can also submit a 10-12 page (Times New Roman, 12pt. font, double-spaced) research paper or literature review for those who opt out of the exam and final project.

Extra Credit (10%)
Notice that it is virtually impossible to get an A+ without completing some extra credit. That said, the extra credit is not difficult: a 500-word (2-3 page double-spaced) essay detailing some examples of concepts from the class found in a documentary movie that you watch on your own time. The movie titles will be determined after class discussion. The extra credit can also be used to fill in the point gap from a missed Reading Assessment. Only one essay (10%) is available for extra credit.

Books and Required Materials:
“Thinking in Systems” by Donella Meadows
(Amazon: 82 used starting at $6.02)
- ISBN-10: 1603580557

“The Virtues of Ignorance” by Bill Vitek and Wes Jackson
(Amazon: 42 used starting at $12.85)
- ISBN-10: 0813192587

“Resilient Cities” by Peter Newman, Timothy Beatley, and Heather Boyer
(Amazon: 35 used starting at $.50)
- ISBN-10: 1597264997
Course Outline (subject to minor modifications):

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<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<th>Content</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1/7</td>
<td>Michael Wesch</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Critique</td>
<td>1/12</td>
<td>Ken Robinson</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Interdisciplinarity</td>
<td>1/21</td>
<td>Bruno Latour</td>
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<td>1/26</td>
<td>Brian Walker</td>
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<td>Noah Raford</td>
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<td>Project Discussion</td>
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*January 12: last day to add/drop classes*
*March 7th: last day to withdraw from classes*
*March 10th: final project proposals due*
*March 14-20: Spring Break*
*April 21: Reading Day*
*April 22-28: Finals Week*
*April 28: final projects due*

Videos are generally @10-15 minutes in length and will be made available on Blackboard. I upload them on a schedule in order to allow the class to focus on a progression of concepts.
Disabilities:
Whether mental or physical, please notify the professor by email of needed accommodations and also contact the Disabilities Resource Center at (502) 852-6938.

Harassment:
If you feel a fellow student, staff person, or professor is acting contrary to the University of Louisville harassment policy, then you should advise that person.

If, for any reason, you are not comfortable with asserting your discomfort personally to the harassing person, or if you feel it is not your responsibility to do so, or if you have spoken to the person about it and the behavior have not stopped, then please go to your department chair, the campus grievance officer, or another person in whom you trust and place a formal complaint.

“The main role of the Student Grievance Officer is to inform students of their rights and obligations under the University grievance procedures as listed in the Redbook.”

Dr. Joy Hart
joy.hart@louisville.edu
(502) 852-6293

Please visit <http://louisville.edu/dos/help/studentgrievance> for more information.

Academic Honesty:
Please read the University of Louisville’s code of student rights and responsibilities. It can be found at <http://www.louisville.edu/student/services/registrar/GI-5-30%20.pdf> beginning on page 26.