

***Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Sustainability***  
**Sustainability 300**  
**Fall 2014**

**Class: 19301**

**Room: Oviatt Library 002**

**Wednesdays: 4:00 – 6:45 p.m.**

**Office hours: See Moodle page**

**Instructors:**

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**Course Description**

This course uses an interdisciplinary approach to help students understand concepts of sustainability from multiple perspectives. Students will build skills to apply theories to real-world problems of sustainability, and develop the ability to apply sustainability principles and critical thinking skills to their personal and professional decision-making processes.

The concept of sustainability refers to decisions that take appropriate account of environment, economy, and equity so that actions taken in the present do not needlessly curtail the possibilities available to future generations. The concept is not associated with any single academic discipline. Rather, sustainability is uniquely transdisciplinary, with roots and applications in each of the traditionally compartmentalized academic fields. As such, sustainability instruction requires an interdisciplinary approach that takes account of the range of ways in which human actions affect the built and natural environment.

In order to examine sustainability from multiple perspectives, this course will be team-taught faculty from different departments.

**Required Materials**

All required readings are available at no cost via Moodle. You must check Moodle the day before class and at least one other time during the week for announcements and the posting of course material. All reading materials assigned for a class must be read in advance of that class unless otherwise specified. Please be prepared to be quizzed on assigned readings.

## Grading

There are three grade components that are worth a total of 100 points.

Weekly quizzes and assignments	30 points
Exams (3 at 15 points each)	45 points
Final (Oral argument)	25 points

The letter grade assigned will be based on this total point count as follows:

B+: 88-89.9	C+: 78-79.9	D+: 68-69.9		
A: 92-100	B: 82-87.9	C: 72-77.9	D: 62-67.9	F: <60
A-: 90-91.9	B-: 80-81.9	C-: 70-71.9	D-: 60-61.9	

## Class Attendance and Participation

This course depends upon the regular and meaningful participation of each member of the class. Since we only meet once a week, it is absolutely essential that you attend every class meeting (missing one class meeting is equivalent to missing an entire week of classes). It is also essential that you complete the required readings prior to the class for which they are scheduled unless otherwise specified. You should check the class Moodle page at least once per week for any updates. Please also make sure you are subscribed to the Moodle News Forum so that you receive notifications of assignments and class requirements in a timely manner.

We expect you to be prepared in every class meeting. Being prepared means that you are ready to discuss the readings critically and to relate course materials to current events. The class will be more productive and more fun the more you participate in a meaningful way.

If you miss class it is your duty to obtain the class notes and any instructions given out in class, and to catch up on the material covered in class. If you miss class, do NOT email the instructor asking what you missed or what the assignment is. Instead, exchange contact information with your classmates and contact them for information. The instructor does not have time to email everyone who misses class.

### Weekly quizzes and assignments (2 points each)

Each week, students can earn up to two points on a weekly quiz or assignment (weeks 1 – 15). These may take place at the beginning of a class meeting or they may take place on Moodle following a class meeting or at the start of the next class. Quizzes and assignments will assess students' understanding of assigned reading and, if taking place after class, the material that was covered in the class meeting. Note that if you miss a class in which a quiz or assignment takes place, you will miss the opportunity to earn two points towards your grade.

There is no extra credit for this course. However, there MAY (at the discretion of the instructor) be the opportunity to make up for missed weekly credit (2 points) by attending or volunteering for a designated sustainability event/learning experience.

### Exams (15 points each)

The three midterm exams are each comprised of two short answer questions on the assigned readings and topics covered in the previous four or five classes.

## **Final (25 points)**

In place of a final exam, final oral arguments will take place in class during the last two class periods. Students select the topic they would like to argue by following the appropriate assignment link on Moodle. These topics each focus on a different aspect of sustainability. The assignment guidelines will be handed out during the semester.

These arguments require that students develop a careful and critical assessment of a particular component of a sustainable system (e.g., agriculture, energy), while being able to demonstrate how that component is influenced by other parts of the system. **Students are graded not only on their understanding of a particular topic but also on their ability to demonstrate understanding of how the topic can be understood from the range of perspectives presented in class. Such synthesis is critical to achieving an effective interdisciplinary learning experience.**

Students will be required to turn in a written transcript of their oral argument. This is to ensure that students are well-prepared for their presentation, are not plagiarizing someone else's work or something from the web, and are able to provide reference sources that they would not be able to present properly in an oral argument.

## **Makeup Exam and Late Assignment Policy**

The exam and assignment due dates are indicated in the class schedule. You should not sign up for this class if you anticipate that the scheduled dates will conflict with your schedule. Makeup exams and quizzes are not given and late assignments are not accepted.

## **Student Conduct and Ethics**

Students are expected to conduct themselves in a way that is appropriate for an institution of higher learning. This includes maintaining academic integrity and refraining from any sort of behavior that is disruptive to the instructors or your fellow students. Engaging in any disruptive behavior will result in a penalty to your final course grade.

Furthermore, academic dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated. Any student guilty of cheating or plagiarism will receive an "F" for the course and will be referred to the Office of Student Affairs for further disciplinary action.

Plagiarism is a growing problem in the university. The university takes plagiarism very seriously. The university catalog defines plagiarism as intentionally or knowingly representing the words, ideas, or work of another as one's own in any academic exercise. University policy states that cheating or plagiarism in connection with an academic program is an offense for which a student may be expelled, suspended, or given a less severe disciplinary sanction. Please review CSUN's student conduct standards for more details and to ensure that you understand what constitutes cheating, plagiarism, and academic dishonesty.

<http://www.csun.edu/anr/soc/studentconduct.html>

## **Special Assistance**

Students with disabilities must register with the Center on Disabilities and complete a services agreement at the beginning of each semester. Staff within the Center will verify the existence of a disability based on the documentation provided and approve accommodations. Students who are approved for test taking accommodations must provide an Alternative Testing Form to their faculty member signed by a counselor in the Center on Disabilities prior to making testing

arrangements. The Center on Disabilities is located in Bayramian Hall, room 110. Staff can be reached at 818.677.2684.

If you have any special needs, it is your responsibility to speak to me about them at the beginning of the semester.

### **Course Website**

Readings and assignments will be posted on the Moodle website. Assignments must be turned in using this website unless otherwise specified. To log in, you will need your CSUN e-mail address and password. Final course grades will be posted on SOLAR.

### **Student Learning Outcomes for Minor in Sustainability**

1. Students will be able to define sustainability and understand how concepts of sustainability are connected to issues of social justice, the environment, and the economy at local, regional, and global levels.
2. Students will demonstrate knowledge of key concepts related to the study of sustainability, including planetary carrying capacity, climate change, and ecological footprint.
3. Students will be able to explain how sustainability relates to their lives and their values, and how their actions impact issues of sustainability at the individual, at local, regional, and global levels.

### **Course Objectives**

#### **Goal A: Building a Knowledge Base**

Students will learn about the history of the environmental movement.

Students will learn about the worldview and complex systems.

Students will learn about the Tragedy of the Commons.

Students will learn about global sustainability issues.

Students will learn about the greenhouse effect and the factors which control climate.

Students will learn about the consequences of global warming on the environment.

Students will learn about global warming legislation, emissions trading and carbon footprinting.

Students will learn about energy use and alternative energy.

Students will learn about ecotourism and sustainable design.

Students will learn about sustainable urbanism

Students will learn about land use and planning

Students will learn about environmental economics and externalities.

Students will learn about the food system and its relationship to sustainability.

Students will learn about the psychology of change and effecting change.

#### **Goal B: Acquiring Knowledge**

Students will develop skills for acquiring new knowledge.

Students will take comprehensive lecture notes during class.

Students will read journal articles and supplementary material referenced in class.

Students will research material for class discussion and debate.

### **Goal C: Acquiring Problem Solving Skills**

Students will demonstrate their ability to apply facts to their understanding of sustainability issues.

Students will assimilate knowledge from different parts of the course to understand global environmental problems including climate change, population and resource management

Students will apply critical thinking skills to tackle problems posed in class.

Students will apply critical thinking skills to participate in class discussions and debates.

### **Goal D: Communicating Knowledge**

Students will communicate the knowledge they have gained to discussing and debating issues in sustainability and the environment.

## **General Education Measurable Student Learning Objectives**

### **Social Sciences**

Students will:

1. Explain how social scientists conduct the systematic study of social relations, human experiences and patterns of change over time;
2. Analyze and explain the multiple perspectives found in the social sciences that underlie debates on important historical and contemporary issues;
3. Apply appropriate social scientific methods to collect data, analyze, evaluate, explain, and/or solve problems in social relations and human behavior;
4. Demonstrate an understanding of how social problems impact individuals, communities and societies.

### **Writing Intensive (GE Designation WI)**

Students will:

1. Develop and clearly define their ideas through writing;
2. Ethically integrate sources of various kinds into their writing;
3. Compose texts through drafting, revising, and completing a finished product;
4. Express themselves through their writing by posing questions, making original claims, and coherently structuring complex ideas;
5. Revise their writing for greater cogency and clarity;
6. Utilize adopted communication modes and documentation styles of specific disciplines (MLA, APA, Chicago, CBE, etc) where appropriate.

### **Assessment for SLOs**

Assessment of learning objectives will be done through pre and post testing, through exams, class participation assessment, and oral presentation. The writing intensive component will be met through writing assignments (in and out of class) totaling more than 2,500 words.

This writing will include written tests and a written argument which will necessitate drafting, revision and editing.

## **Your responsibilities**

1. You have made a conscious, informed choice to be a member of this class. This means that you have read the syllabus, and know the workload required. Be aware that on average, you should spend 2-3 hours on your own (reading, studying, making notes, working on assignments, etc.) for every hour that you are in class.
2. You will give the basic respect that is due to the instructor and the other students in this class.
3. You will observe basic classroom decorum. In this class that means (but is not limited to!) the following:
  - You will turn off watch alarms and cell phones.
  - You will not “text” or use your phone or its “apps.” in class.
  - You will not use a laptop computer, notebook or iPad in class other than to take notes. If you use such a device in class for any other purposes including emailing, browsing the web, social networking or other applications you will not be permitted to use it in class for the remainder of the semester.
  - If you use a laptop computer to take notes in class you agree to sit in an area of the classroom which is designated by the instructor for such use.
  - You will arrive at class on time. If you need to leave early, you will inform me at the start of class and leave with a minimum of disruption. To do this, open the door slowly, and close it slowly behind you. Don’t make a lot of noise packing or unpacking your things.
  - Do not eat “noisy” foods in class and if you eat or drink in class, please clean up after yourself.
  - Do not start to put away your things until the class is over.
  - Do not whisper or talk in class, particularly when someone else is speaking.
4. You will do all of the required reading. This means that you will often have to read something more than once in order to fully understand it.
5. You will attend class regularly and on time.
6. You will be responsible for all of the material that we cover in class. If you miss a class, you will contact another student to find out what you missed.
7. The instructors’ email is for addressing issues of concern, setting up meetings, personal correspondence, information about resources etc. Please do not email instructors to find out what you missed in class, what’s on the exam or the date of quizzes, exams etc. Please check on the class Moodle site for all information first.
8. If you do not understand material presented, you must ask the instructor to explain it. We cannot help if we are not aware that you need help. Much of the material that we will cover is cumulative. Don’t get lost early on, you may not recover.
9. If you have a question, you will ask it. You may ask during class or during office hours.

## Schedule of Classes

Week	Date	Instructor	Topic
1	Aug 27	All	Introduction. Tragedy of the Commons. History of environmental movement.
2	Sept 3	Cox	Global Sustainability Issues
3	Sept 10	Cox	Climate Change
4	Sept 17	D'Orsogna	Fossil fuels
5	Sept 24	D'Orsogna	Fossil fuels and pollution
<b>6</b>	<b>Oct 1</b>	<b>Exam I</b> Kirner	<b>In class exam – 1 hour.</b> <b>Questions from Cox and D'Orsogna</b> Traditional ecological knowledge
7	Oct 8	Kirner	Food systems
8	Oct 15	Karels	Ecosystems
9	Oct 22	Karels	The ocean
<b>10</b>	<b>Oct 29</b>	<b>Exam II</b> Lundquist	<b>In class exam – 1 hour.</b> <b>Questions from Kirner and Karels.</b> Transport
11	Nov 5	Lundquist	Urban planning and transport
12	Nov 12	Duclos	Media presentation of sustainability issues
13	Nov 19	Duclos	Marketing sustainability
14	Nov 26	No class	See Moodle for assignment
<b>15</b>	<b>Dec 3</b>	<b>Exam III</b> All	<b>In class exam – 1 hour.</b> <b>Questions from Lundquist and Duclos</b> <b>Final oral arguments (5 min oral presentation each, with 2 minutes Q &amp; A)</b>
<b>16</b>	<b>Dec 10: Final Exam Period, 5:30 – 7:30 pm</b>	All	<b>Final oral arguments (5 min oral presentation each, with 2 minutes Q &amp; A)</b>