Description

The term “sustainable development” has become prominent in popular and academic debates over the past decade. A good case can be made that we are not living in a “sustainable” way, or alternatively that we face a real decline in social and environmental welfare in the foreseeable future, as the result of current development trends and patterns. In turn, this impending decline suggests the need to change our lifestyles in ways that will be sustainable into the future—that is, sustainable lifestyles we prefer to live—else natural and social forces out of our control compel us to become more “sustainable” in not-so-pleasant ways. But does the notion of “sustainable development” itself offer any useful content or guidance for making public policy and planning decisions, or is it merely an attractive oxymoron that different interests can agree on only at an abstract level? The goal of this class will be to explore this question in depth, focusing in particular on the issue of reconciling environmental protection with economic development.

Content / Method

The course will consider the variety of ways in which our current lifestyles both locally and globally are not sustainable, why that is so, and what we can do about it. First we will consider sustainable development conceptually, focusing in particular on the environmental aspects of sustainability. Then we will consider several more philosophical issues, including sustainability in terms of modernism, consumerism, and post-neoclassical economics. Finally, we will come back down to earth and think about how to translate these conceptual issues into practical approaches for planning for sustainable development. Tentatively, we will use the potential redevelopment of North Campus for a final case analysis.

Course Requirements

This course will be conducted as a graduate seminar with a strong emphasis on in-class participation and collaborative teamwork. The readings for this course will be extensive and students will be expected to come prepared to participate actively in class discussions.
Grading

Grading for the course will be based on the following (subject to modification):

- Course participation (instructor): 20%
- 4 papers (to be assigned): 50%
- Group project and Presentation:
  - Project grade (instructor): 20%
  - Presentation grade (instructor): 5%
  - Participation (teammates): 5%

More guidance will be given about paper and group assignments at the appropriate time. There will be no midterm or final exam for this course.

Readings

The following texts will be used for this class, all of which are available at the North Campus Book Store:

**Required:**

IN ADDITION: A course reader with required readings is available at the ISR duplicating center on Thompson street.

**Recommended (on reserve at the Media Union):**
Semester Overview

6 Jan. (T): Course Introduction
8 Jan. (Th): Sustainability and Global Climate

13 Jan. (T): Crises? Maybe Yes…
15 Jan. (Th): Crises? Maybe No…

20 Jan. (T): Sustainability and Ecosystems
22 Jan. (Th): Sustainability and Landscapes

27 Jan. (T): Planning for Sustainable Development
29 Jan. (Th): (cont.)

3 Feb. (T): (cont.)
5 Feb. (Th): First Paper Due

10 Feb. (T): Development Betrayed—A Critique of Modernism
12 Feb. (Th): (cont.)

17 Feb. (T): (cont.)
19 Feb. (Th): Second Paper Due

24/26 Feb.: WINTER BREAK

2 Mar. (T): Consumption and Consumerism
4 Mar. (Th): (cont.)

9 Mar. (T): Consumption and the Environment
11 Mar. (Th): Overcoming Consumerism / Third Paper Due

16 Mar. (T): Economics Revisited
18 Mar. (Th): (cont.)

23 Mar. (T): Sustainability and Economics
25 Mar. (Th): Ecological Economics / Fourth Paper Due

30 Mar. (T): Fun with Footprints – Wackernagel & Rees
1 Apr. (Th): Planning for Sustainability Redux

6 Apr. (T): (cont.)
8 Apr. (Th): (cont.)

13 Apr. (T): (cont.)
15 Apr. (Th): Open – Group work

20 Apr. (T): Open – Group work
23 Apr. (F): FINAL REPORT DUE / PRESENTATION
**Reading and Paper Assignments**

6 Jan. (T): Course Introduction – No reading

8 Jan. (Th): Sustainability and the Global Climate (Video)
*Read:* US Climate Action Report Ch. 1 and 6 (on coursetools)

13 Jan. (T): Crises? Maybe Yes…
*Read:* Reid (1995) Ch. 1; Chapman et al. (2000) Part II

15 Jan. (Th): Crises? Maybe No…
*Read:* Simon (1981) Ch. 11, 15, 23; Beckerman (1996) Ch. 4-7

20 Jan. (T): Sustainability and Ecosystems
*Read:* Orians (1990)

22 Jan. (Th): Sustainability and Landscapes
*Read:* Paul & Meyer (2001); Brabec et al. (2002)

27 Jan. (T): Planning for Sustainable Development
*Read:* Beatley (1995); Campbell (1996); Grant et al. (1996); McDonald (1996); Roseland (1998) Ch. 1; Wheeler (2001); Berke (2002)

29 Jan. (T): (continued)

3 Feb. (Th): (continued)

5 Feb. (Th): *First Paper Due*

10 Feb. (T): Development Betrayed
*Read:* Norgaard (1994)

12 Feb. (Th): (continued)

17 Feb. (T): (continued)

19 Feb. (Th): *Second Paper Due*

24/26 Feb.: WINTER BREAK

2 Mar. (T): Consumption and Consumerism
*Read:* Durning (1992) Ch. 1-4, 8

4 Mar. (Th): (continued)
*Read:* Twitchell (1999) Ch. 1, 8; Schor (1998) Ch. 1, 6, epilogue

9 Mar. (T): Consumption and the Environment
*Read:* Beckerman (1996) Ch. 2; Goodwin et al. (1997) Part VIII

11 Mar. (Th): Overcoming Consumerism – *Third Paper Due*
*Read:* Goodwin et al. (1997) Part X
16 Mar. (T): Economics Revisited
   Read: (Review Simon); Beckerman (1996) Intro, Ch. 1, 3
18 Mar. (Th): (continued)

Fourth Paper Due

23 Mar. (T): Sustainability and Economics
25 Mar. (Th): Ecological Economics
   Read: Krishnan et al. (1995) Part II

30 Mar. (T): Fun with Footprints
   Read: Wackernagel & Rees (1996)
1 Apr. (Th): Planning for Sustainability Redux
   Read: Zovanyi (1998)

6 Apr. (T): (continued)
8 Apr. (Th): (continued)

13 Apr. (T): (continued)
15 Apr. (Th): Open – Group work

20 Apr. (T): Open – Group work
23 Apr. (F): FINAL REPORTS DUE / GROUP PRESENTATIONS: 4-6 pm

References


