

Appalachian State University, Department of Interdisciplinary Studies
IDS 2530 Introduction to Sustainable Development (3 credits)

Class: Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 - 10:45

Room: 223 LLA

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Office hours: Friday 8 AM - 12 PM, and by appointment. Office hours are not scheduled to keep faculty occupied, but to provide students an opportunity to drop by with questions they are too embarrassed to ask in class, get additional explanations about the subject matter, ask questions about what and how to prepare for class, what the assignments are all about, for help with the mid-term project, whatever. So, make use of the opportunity.

General outline

This course is the foundation course for students interested in pursuing a minor or major concentration in Sustainable Development. The course will introduce students to the concepts and history of 'development', the origins of concerns about 'sustainability', and the marriage of these two ideas in the contested notion of 'sustainable development' (SD). From that basis, the course will then examine the understanding and use of SD principles in and from various disciplinary and multi/ interdisciplinary perspectives.

Pedagogical/andragogical approach

There is no one way of doing development in general, or sustainable development in particular. Sustainability is an emergent, ephemeral property of a system (ecosystem, social system, ...) that comes about from the interaction of multiple factors and variables in the spheres of society, economy, environment, culture, politics, religion, spirituality, etc. It is not one specific 'thing' or way of doing or going about our daily business, but a process of change and continuity to be learned and constantly worked on. Experience in this regard is the best teacher; for this reason, the course uses an active learning approach in which everyone takes roles of both teacher and learner. Attendance and active participation in all class activities is, therefore, essential and required.

Never believe anything you read, and rarely believe anything you think.

Derrick Jensen, recalling words of one of his professors at the start of a college course he took. In: A Language Older than Words. New York: Context Books, 2000, p. 331.

Course objectives

The educational objective of this course is to learn about and understand the theory and practice of sustainable development. Students successfully completing the course should be able to:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the nature of, and history behind, the concepts of development, sustainability and sustainable development.
2. Know how cultural, social, economic, religious and political institutions affect development at the individual, community and society level.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of how individual decisions affect community and societal development processes and their sustainability.
4. Understand the (scientific) principles of sustainability indicators, and how and when to use them to

measure and evaluate sustainability.

5. Be able to work cooperatively with others and participate effectively in class discussions and assignments.

Text and readings

1. Nico Nelissen, Jan van der Straaten and Leon Klinkers, eds. 2002. *Classics in Environmental Studies. An Overview of classic texts in environmental studies.* International Books.

We will read this book in sections; students will need to read the introduction to each section, and **one** assigned chapter in **each** section (see attached reading schedule).

2. Stephen R. Kellert, Timothy J. Farnham, eds. 2002. *The Good in Nature and Humanity.* Covelo, CA: Island Press.

For this book, everyone will read Chapter 1, and Chapters 15+16 in Part III. Students also have to reads the introductory remarks for parts I and II, but can pick two chapters from Part I and one chapter from Part II to read and comment. Please turn in your choice of these 2 chapters by March 2.

Selected chapters from (available on library reserve):

1. Derrick Jensen. 2002. *Listening to the Land: Conversations about Nature, Culture and Eros.* San Francisco: Sierra Club Books.
2. Derrick Jensen. 2000. *A Language Older than Words.* New York: Context Books.
3. Simon Bell and Stephen Morse. 1999. *Sustainability Indicators.* London, UK: Earthscan Publications.
4. David Reid. 1995. *Sustainable Development: An Introductory Guide.* London: Earthscan.
5. Aaron Sachs. *The Other Side of the World.* World Watch Magazine May/June 1998.
6. George Axinn and Nancy Axinn. 1997. *Colaboration in International Development.*
7. David Orr. 1992. *Ecological Literacy: Education and the Transition to a Post-Modenr World.*
8. Bob Wilkinson. 1998. *Science under Siege: The Politicians' War on Nature and Truth.*

Additional articles appearing in the press during the semester relevant to the class may be required to be read. Students are encouraged to contribute such material and bring it to the attention of the instructor and their fellow students.

Assignments/projects

1. By the start of week 2 of the semester, each student will choose an alternative practice that he/she thinks will lead to a more sustainable world and commit to implement (live) this practice during the semester (= 'walk the walk'). It should be something that you are not already doing or practicing but something that will require effort to make it a worthwhile learning experience. This can be anything one thinks will contribute to a more sustainable society (e.g., forgo fast/junk food, recycle, demonstrate for peace, volunteer somewhere, ...). Students will keep a journal about their experience living with their choice (i.e, pros and cons, difficulties, how friends and family react, whether you think it makes [or will make] any difference or not and why, ...). The first entry should be a description of the practice chosen, and the reasons why you think it will contribute to a more sustainable world. The last entry should be a reflection of the entire experience and what, if any, difference it has made to create a more sustainable society. How easy would it be to convince others to follow your example? And if they would, would that make a difference? What forces are/were aligned to work against your sustainable practice?

The journal will be assessed 3 times: January 20 to learn about your choice of practice; March 4 to check progress; the completed assignment is due April 27. There should be a minimum of 2 entries/week.

2. In pairs, students will interview one faculty member from the SD core faculty (a list will be provided) and one faculty member in their major about their definition of SD, what it means to their discipline, type of problems that their discipline addresses to further 'sustainability' with examples of how it is put into practice etc. The group will write a comparative paper about the results of the interviews, and present it in class on March 23 + 25. Presentations are 15 minutes/group (10 minutes to present, 5 minutes for questions), and should be limited to highlight to major differences and similarities between faculty/disciplines interviewed; so DON'T read your paper, select key points to illustrate.
3. Midterm exam: Working in small groups, students are to design and put together a 10-15 minute role play explaining SD (what it is, why we need it, what it involves, etc.), or some aspect of it for a general audience. Groups will perform the play during class on March 4. Students in the class will be the audience and jury.
4. Short reflection papers are due each day during the reading and discussion of the assigned book chapters and selected readings. What is the relevance of the views or approaches presented to SD? Do you agree or disagree with anyone or none of these views? Papers should **not be more than half a page** (single spaced is OK, cover pages are a waste of scarce resources!!!); this is meant as an exercise in writing concise, to the point papers. Your comments may be much longer, but save these thoughts for in-class discussions (so write these thoughts down to help you remember them). These reflection statements are due the day we discuss the readings in class, NO EXCEPTIONS. If they're late, no grade!!! (but see point 4 under 'Requirements' below; accused absences in accordance with academic policies for such absences are considered).
5. The class as a whole, in collaboration with Chuck Smith's section of this course, will organize Earth Day 2004 as a final exam project. This may involve inviting speakers
6. There will be a very non-traditional, informal final 'final exam' involving something fun, food and some serious take-home work to be completed for this.

Requirements for written papers

1. Written papers are graded on scholarly quality, mastery of the material, conciseness, organization, use of readings, grammar and spelling. Style will be a consideration in grading.
2. Papers must be word-processed; title pages, plastic covers etc. are not required. Diagrams, drawings, and tables may be used as appropriate; these can be done by hand if you have not (yet) mastered computer graphics. Papers CAN be e-mailed to the instructor, but must be received by 5pm the day they are due.
3. The personal SD project and journal will be graded based on the amount of effort and thought you have put into the assignment.
4. Any assignments turned in late will receive a lower grade; papers received more than one week late will no longer be accepted and will receive an F. **All** assignments must be turned in to receive a passing grade for the course.

Other important considerations

1. Students are expected to be aware of and follow the ASU's current "Code of Academic Integrity."
2. Incomplete grades are generally not given, and are granted solely at the instructor's discretion.

3. Students are expected to read assigned texts and other materials BEFORE class and be prepared to discuss the material.
4. Class starts at 9:30 am sharp! Late arrivals, although sometimes unavoidable especially during winter, are disruptive to the teacher and your fellow students. If they happen to frequently, or if you arrive more than 10 minutes late, expect to find a closed door.

Grading

Class attendance and participation	15 %
Midterm: Role play	15%
Faculty interviews	15 %
Personal SD project/journal	20 %
Reflection papers	15 %
Final exam + final 'final exam'	20 %
Semester total	100 %

I do grade on a 'curve', so there are no set cut-off points for specific grades. However, less than 60% for this course will mean an F.

Class schedule

<u>Date</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Readings/assignments</u>
Jan 13	Introduction to the course; assessment of what people know about 'development' and 'sustainability'	none
Jan 15	Humans and environment, humans in environment	Jensen: "Silencing" and "Neil Evernden"
Jan 20	What is this thing called sustainability?	Orr: "The Problem of Sustainability" and "Two Meanings of Sustainability." <i>Hand-in the first entry of your personal sustainability journal about what you intend to live by/up to.</i>
Jan 22	Differences of understanding and perception I	Jensen: "Sandra Lopez" and "Jeanette Armstrong."
Jan 27	Differences of understanding and perception II	Sachs: "The other side of the world. Why does anyone care about sustainability?"
Jan 29	Building bridges	Kellert & Farnham: Chapter 1
Feb 3	Changing view of nature and human's place in nature Video: Was Malthus right? (VC 11049)	Nelissen et al.: Part I-The Beginning

Feb 5	Changing view of nature and human's place in nature	Nelissen et al.: Part II-The Revival
Feb 10	Changing view of nature and human's place in nature	Nelissen et al.: Part III-The Bestsellers
Feb 12	Video: Small is beautiful (VC 9008)	
Feb 17	Changing view of nature and human's place in nature	Nelissen et al.: Part IV-The Eighties
Feb 19	Changing view of nature and human's place in nature	Nelissen et al.: Part V-The Current State of Affairs
Feb 24	The Nuts Game: simulation	
Feb 26	Measuring sustainability (or at least, attempting to): Some methods and approaches	Bell & Morse: "Sustainability and sustainability indicators"
March 2	Video: Affluenza (VC 10254)	<i>Turn in your choice of chapters to read from Parts I and II in Kellert and Farnham.</i>
March 4	Midterm exam: role plays	<i>Hand in your journals for a mid-term assessment of your personal SD journey.</i>
March 9 & 11	<u>Spring break</u>	
March 16	Scientific and spiritual perspectives of nature and humanity	Kellert & Farnham: Part I
March 18	Video: Vandana Shiva	
March 23	Presentations of faculty interviews	
March 25	Presentations of faculty interviews	
March 30	Scientific and spiritual perspectives of nature and humanity	Kellert & Farnham: Part I
April 1	Video: The Seattle Syndrome (VC 11642)	
April 6	Developing an environmental ethic	Kellert & Farnham: Part II
April 8	In-class Earth Day group work/discussion	
April 13	Artists' perceptions of the human/environment relationship	Kellert & Farnham: Part III

April 15	Changing view of nature and human's place in nature	Nelissen et al.: Part VI-The Future
April 20	Video: The next industrial revolution (VC 11626)	
April 22	Politics and the sustainability agenda	Wilkinson: "Moonwalker."
April 27	SD: Where have we come from during this semester? And how do we get from here to where we want to be, sustainability-wise?	
May 4	FINAL EXAM, 3 - 5:30 pm	