

VALUES, ETHICS, AND SUSTAINABILITY
Faculty of Extension: EL 21
April 30 – May 18, 2012; 10:25 am – 11:35 am Monday-Friday
Location: Education South, Room 165

This interdisciplinary course exposes a world destined to collapse under the weight of humankind's current practices. It draws attention to the urgency for a change in how we live, work and play. What do we value and how ethical is our conduct under current trends? The course strives to provide a comprehensive understanding of what sustainability is at the local and global levels, and how crucial sustainability is to both present and future generations around the world. What are some of the economic, environmental, ecological, philosophical and legal issues associated with moving towards sustainability? How do we vision our future? Is it our hypocrisy as individuals that contributes to the *status quo*? Or, are we hypocrites because "the system" makes us such? What influences do values and ethics have on our individual and collective behaviours, our institutions, and on social policy? Who derives benefits and who takes risks as we maintain the *status quo*? What hopeful signs are there for our collective movement towards a more sustainable future?

This course is a "light" version of an interdisciplinary, graduate-level course that Dr. Soskolne coordinated for the School of Energy and the Environment in the School of Business in the Fall term of 2008 and the Winter term of 2010. It is an update of the course taught as EL 55 in 2009. The last week will be taught by David Thompson with a focus on multiple dimensions of urban sprawl, a focus from his 2010 ELLA course. It ties into the first two weeks as we consider how we plan our cities as one needed change in the ways in which we live our lives.

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Guest lecturer (for the final week):
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Respectfulness in an interdisciplinary classroom setting requires participation by carefully listening to hear all perspectives. No text messaging or cell 'phone use during class is permitted. Cell 'phones must be turned off throughout the class.

Synopsis for the Course:

Students will gain an appreciation for sustainability and its relevance to social, economic, and biophysical health the world over. Because the integrity of life-supporting ecosystems is essential to human health, well-being and civilization globally, the concept of sustainability is examined in various contexts: individually, collectively, regionally and internationally. The co-dependence of humans and ecosystems for their mutual health is explored and the disconnect between the two is addressed. Thinking outside of the box is critical to finding solutions. The policy significance of major historical declarations in hard and soft law are assessed and used for charting future directions in different professional and social contexts.

Course Outline:

This interdisciplinary course will reveal the extent to which “the system” is broken and how its overhaul can be managed. Consistent with the University of Alberta’s maxim *Quaecumque Vera* “whatsoever things are true”, this course will open our minds to the deception that we have bought into and how urgently it needs to be changed. The course will frame the issues and equip people with the means for a change in paradigm, from a world destined to collapse under current business as usual approaches, to a world that is on a sustainable path.

Two examples will be threaded through the course:

1. One current example will be used to show how the industrial influence on government concerning Canada’s asbestos policy can serve to bias decision-making away from that which is rational to that which is ideological, serving primarily financial vested interests.
2. A second current example is that of the University of Alberta’s recent award to the current Chairman of the Board of Nestle. This example will reflect on the potential effect of rewarding behaviours that are ethically questionable as examples for others, especially young students, to emulate.

No person is equipped to work towards changing the world without an understanding of sustainability and how its attainment is impacted by our values and ethics. This understanding is essential not only for one’s chosen profession, but also to help people to engage in the broader social discourse about sustainability, as voting citizens. Did the topic even arise in the recent Alberta provincial election?

Because “ethics” is not an isolated application of a checklist, but rather a thorough discussion about norms of behaviour, students enrolled in this course are expected to participate in discussions in each class. This course will make you angry as it deconstructs current narratives; it starts as a rant against the *status quo* out of which options are sought to change course from an unsustainable path to one that is sustainable.

Together, we can work towards a sustainable future, one of hope, peace, justice and happiness throughout the world. The Earth Charter is a road map – a soft-law instrument – to achieve this end. This course is for people who have an intuitive sense that all is not well with the world and are up for the challenge of imagining new paths to sustainability.

More general course outline: to stimulate some basic discussion:

Changing our current paradigm — the way we conduct ourselves, our expectations and the way we are governed — from one that is not sustainable to one that is sustainable will require radical adjustments and adaptations. With an adequate safety net, there is no need to see the change as resulting in winners and losers. Under the principle from ecological economics of “contraction and convergence,” we can all be winners. Change will be required at both the individual level and collectively, not only as global citizens, but also in our personal and professional lives.

This course deconstructs our current paradigms. In today’s world, the role of those instrumental in widening disparities — in disease production, in the causes of disability and premature mortality, and in ongoing mass extinctions — is tied to the global forces bent on accumulating capital, at the cost of endangering all life forms. Such linkages are becoming increasingly apparent also to non-health professionals and the general public. People need to position themselves to work with evidence that could bring attention to the more upstream connections that are working, directly or indirectly, against the preservation of life in all of its diversity. Decisions on the changes needed to move our ways of living onto a sustainable path could then be made in contested space.

We will explore how “Southern” voices and indigenous knowledge could be included in solutions that provide hope for the future, and that motivate change which is fundamental at all levels regardless of the context. Providing incentives and disincentives for these changes is laced with ethical and legal underpinnings and ramifications. Trade-offs will be inevitable. Values, ethics, and law (both hard and soft law) need to be considered in packaging the case for change. Approaches applied to effect change in different contexts globally, and locally, could serve as case studies for others to emulate.

The course is based on the recent 2008 book: “Sustaining Life on Earth: Environmental and Human Health through Global Governance” by Soskolne, CL et al, Lexington Books. It is available through the Bookstore at a cost of about \$55, or through the following link directly from the publisher: <http://www.LexingtonBooks.com/ISBN/0739117297> A copy is on reserve in the **Cameron Library**.

Questions addressed through this course:

This course is designed to address the following fundamental questions:

1. What is sustainability and why is it of concern?
2. What influence do values and ethics have on our behaviours?
3. What is the role of ideology in the formulation of covenants and social policy?
4. What is the role of each discipline/specialty in sustainability and vice versa?
5. What is the role of economics in moving toward sustainability?
6. What is the role of ecology in moving towards sustainability?

7. What is the role of hard and soft law in moving towards sustainability?
8. What sustainability paradigms should look like (with human health and well-being at the centre)? (Counter point: with ecological/biological integrity at the centre?)
9. Why is sustainability important to your future, both professionally and personally? And, to the future of our children and grandchildren?
10. How does concern for sustainability affect our current circumstances, including our behaviours (individually and collectively), our institutions, and social policy?
11. By what mechanisms might a sustainable path be achieved?
12. What roles do environmental stewardship, traditional knowledge, and belief systems have in sustainability?
13. How does urban planning serve as part of the problem and as part of the solution for achieving sustainability?
14. Leaders and sociopaths may have common attributes. Sociopaths are con-artists, driven by greed and with no social conscience beyond their own need for power and control. Do we know such people and how might we respond to them?

The first three to four classes will be of Colin Soskolne providing some context and frameworks for discussion. He will speak to the current ecological challenges, about ethics, and his recent book “Sustaining Life on Earth: Environmental and Human Health through Global Governance”. He will speak to six years of his work regarding the state of Canadian asbestos policy, and his recent role in protesting the honorary doctor of laws degree awarded by the University of Alberta to the Chair of the Board of Nestlé. .

Depending on student interest and because of limited time, we will permit about 2 -3 groups to identify a particular issue according to the list provided in the Appendix and spend about 20 minutes bringing the issue to attention in the framework of values, ethics and sustainability. Please select a topic from the list in the Appendix, or feel free to add something new to the list as long as you have at least a few in your group. In addition, any student who has read a recent (or, a not so recent) book that brings some perspective to any topic in any class session, please offer to mention the book by name and why it is relevant to this course.

If you provide me with your e-mail address, I will be able to send you clippings and the like of potential interest to this class and help you structure your presentation.

Some recent movies:

Journey of the Universe	2011	56 minutes	
The Story of Stuff	2008	21 minutes	
The Economics of Happiness	2011	65 minutes	
Myths for Profit	2008	59 minutes	
Call of Life: Facing the Mass Extinction	2010	60 minutes	
Toxic Trespass (NFB)	2008	53 minutes	

Links to view as a basis for class discussion:

1. TED Talk by Paul Gilding. The lecture is focused on questions like: Have we used up all our resources? Have we filled up all the liveable space on Earth? Gilding suggests we have, and the possibility of devastating consequences, in a talk that's equal parts terrifying and, oddly, hopeful. The video has been seen over 250,000 times and the comment section is also bustling.
http://www.ted.com/talks/paul_gilding_the_earth_is_full.html
2. Cameron Sinclair of Architecture for Humanity talking about his work, online at:
http://www.ted.com/index.php/talks/cameron_sinclair_on_open_source_architecture.html
3. 1992 12-year-old Severn Suzuki at the First World Summit on Sustainable Development (7 minutes) <http://it.youtube.com/watch?v=5g8cmWZOX8Q>
4. The Earth Charter (20 minutes to read) at
<http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/pages/Read-the-Charter.html>
5. The Story of Stuff (21 minutes) --- takes a couple of minutes to buffer at
<http://www.storyofstuff.org/movies-all/story-of-stuff/>
6. Calculate your personal footprint (10 minutes) and bring the results to class
http://www.royalsaskmuseum.ca/gallery/life_sciences/footprint_mx_2005.swf
7. The Dangers of Plastics (6 minutes)
<http://www.poconorecord.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080506/multimedia02/80505016>
8. http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=exponential++population++&
9. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9znsuCphHUU>
10. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mF_anaVcCXg
11. What's the worst that could happen?
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zORv8wwiadQ&feature=related>
12. http://www.peakoilandhumanity.com/LanguageEnglish/PO02_when_is_peak.pps
13. <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbpyr.html>
14. <http://www.pbs.org/moyers/journal/04032009/watch.html>
15. ZEITGEIST <http://www.zeitgeistmovie.com/> (2 hours).
16. James Howard Kunstler dissects suburbia (TED talk ~ 20 minutes)
http://www.ted.com/talks/james_howard_kunstler_dissects_suburbia.html.
17. Transition Town
 - a. In Transition 1.0 Film (~ 50 minutes):
<http://www.transitionnetwork.org/transition-movie>
 - b. The Transition Companion (book)
<http://www.transitionnetwork.org/transition-companion>
 - c. Transition Edmonton (website) <http://transitioned.org/>
18. Radiant City (entertaining film ~85 minutes) http://www.nfb.ca/film/radiant_city

19. Escape from Suburbia (film 52 minutes)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q3uvzcY2Xug>
20. The New Metropolis (film) <http://www.thenewmetropolis.com/>
21. "Social State" versus "Corporate State": FROM EUROPEAN FASCISM TO "GLOBAL MONEY-SEQUENCE ABSOLUTISM" Part X by Prof. John McMurtry; Global Research, April 20, 2012.
<http://globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=30425>
22. On bottled water: TAPPED, 2009 <http://www.tappedthemovie.com/>
23. The trailer to "Bottled Life": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czfSwjx4yYA>

If any link does not connect directly, try copying and pasting it into your browser.

Classes will be held as follows, and the topics below each is only a possibility for each class, depending on what is warranted as per class engagement.

April 30: Class #1

Introduction to Sustaining Life on Earth: values, ethics, and sustainability

May 1: Class #2

Substance of ecology–health relationships

May 2: Class #3

Substance of economy, GDP and dominant paradigms

May 3: Class #4

Movie #1 - plus discussion

May 4: Class #5

Values and ethics in the professions

May 7: Class #6

Canada's Rogue Nation position on asbestos

May 8: Class #7

The Earth Charter: values and ethics for a sustainable future

May 9: Class #8

The Nestlé award controversy: values and role models for our students to emulate

May 10: Class #9
Movie #2 – plus discussion

May 11: Class #10
Distillation of core messages and presentation from students

May 14: Class #11
Suburban Sprawl as a Keystone Issue

May 15: Class #12
Suburban Sprawl – Trends, Impacts

May 16: Class #13
Suburban Sprawl – Causes

May 17: Class #14
Suburban Sprawl – Solutions

May 18: Class #15
Course Conclusion – Getting to a Sustainable Future?

Relevant Readings

(not required; provided as primary sources for interested students)

- Anielski M. “The Economics of Happiness: Building Genuine Wealth”, New Society Press 2007
- Ashford NA and Caldart CC. Environmental Law, Policy, and Economics: Reclaiming the Environmental Agenda”. MIT Press 2008
- Boyd, DR. “Unnatural Law: Rethinking Canadian Environmental Law and Policy” UBC Press 2003
- Boyd, DR. The Environmental Rights Revolution: A Global Study of Constitutions, Human Rights, and the Environment. UBC Press, 2011.
- Brown, Lester R. (Earth Policy Institute). PLAN B 3.0: Mobilizing to Save Civilization. W.W. Norton & Company, New York / London, 2008 (398 pages)
- Brown V. et al: “Sustainability and Health: Supporting Global Ecological Integrity in Public Health”, Allen & Unwin 2004
- Brown V. Leonardo’s Vision: A guide to Collective Thinking and Action” 2007
- Brown, PG. “The Commonwealth of Life”, Black Rose Books 2008
- Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy:
http://www.steadystate.org/Files/SteadyStater_vol2_iss1.pdf
- Diamond, J. “Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed” Viking 2005

- Hurtig, M. “The Truth About Canada” McClelland & Stewart 2008
- Klein, N. “The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism” Knopf Canada 2007
- Korten, DC. “When Corporations Rule the World” Kumarian Press 1995
- Lebel, Jean. “Health: an ecosystem approach”. 2003, International Development Research Centre (IDRC), Ottawa.
- Lewis, S. 2005 “Race Against Time”. House of Anansi Press 2005
- Marsden, W. “Stupid to the Last Drop: How Alberta is Bringing Environmental Armageddon to Canada (and doesn’t seem to care)”. Knopf, Canada 2007
- McMurtry, J. “The Cancer Stage of Capitalism” Pluto Press 1999
- Meadows, DH et al. “The Limits to Growth” (The Club of Rome’s Project on the Predicament of Mankind). Potomac Associates 1972
- Michaels, D. Doubt is their Product: How Industry’s Assault on Science Threatens Your Health”. Oxford University Press 2008
- Nordhaus, T, Shellenberger M. “Breakthrough: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility” Houghton Mifflin 2007
- Millennium Development Goals (2000)
<http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/index.htm>
- Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005)
<http://www.millenniumassessment.org/en/index.aspx>
- Victor, Peter. Managing without Growth: Slower by Design, Not Disaster. Advances in Ecological Economics. Series Editor: Jeroen C.J.M. Van Den Bergh. Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, Maine: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, 2008. http://www.e-elgar-environment.com/Bookentry_Main.lasso?id=12594. For more on the book and Peter Victor check <http://www.pvictor.com>
- Waltner–Toews, David. “Ecosystem Sustainability and Health: a practical approach.” Cambridge University Press, 2004
- David Waltner-Toews, James J. Kay, and Nina-Marie E. Lister. The Ecosystem Approach: Complexity, Uncertainty, and Managing for Sustainability, 408 pages, ISBN: 978-0-231-13251-0
- Westra, L et al. “Reconciling Human Existence with Ecological Integrity: Science, Ethics, Economics and Law” Earthscan 2008

Resources

Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education
 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives
 Canadian Society for Ecological Economics
 CASSE (Steady State Economy)
 Center for Health and the Global Environment <chge@HMS.HARVARD.EDU>
 Conservation Council of Ontario
 Ecojustice – Sierra Legal Defense
 Ecological Internet's projects include:
 EcoEarth.Info -- <http://www.EcoEarth.Info/>
 Climate Ark -- <http://www.climateark.org/>

Forests.org -- <http://forests.org/>
Water Conserve -- <http://www.waterconserve.org/>
Rainforest Portal -- <http://www.rainforestportal.org/>
Ocean Conserve -- <http://www.oceanconserve.org/>
My.EcoEarth.Info -- <http://My.EcoEarth.info/>
New Earth Rising (new e-zine) -- <http://www.newearthrising.org/>
Education www.aashe.org
Environmental Health News <www.EnvironmentalHealthNews.org>
Global Development and Environment (GDAE) Institute at Tufts University
<www.ase.tufts.edu/gdae/>
Global Footprint Network < <http://www.footprintnetwork.org/>>
Google
Greenpeace
HEAL Newsletter
International Association for Ecology and Health (EcoHealth Journal)
International Centre for Integrated assessment and Sustainable development (ICIS),
Maastricht, The Netherlands
International Development Research Centre, Ottawa <www.idrc.ca>
International EcoHealth Forum <www.ecohealth2008.org>
International Society for Environmental Epidemiology
International Society for Environmental Ethics
International Society of Doctors for the Environment
Japan for Sustainability <<http://www.japanfs.org/>>
Resurgence Magazine
Sierra Club of Canada – Prairie Chapter leila@sierraclub.ca
The Conservation Council of Ontario <www.weconserve.ca>
The David Suzuki Foundation
The Earth Charter <www.earthcharter.org>
The Gallon Environment Letter subscriptions@gallonletter.ca (*Canadian Institute for
Business & the Environment*)
The New Internationalist
Trudeau Foundation www.trudeaufoundation.ca/trudeaufoundation?l=en
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
University of Alberta International <<http://www.international.ualberta.ca/>>
University of Alberta: Environmental Research Studies Centre
Villanova University, International Sustainability Conference
www.villanova.edu/sustainability/conference
V1 Magazine: Promoting Spatial Design for a Sustainable Tomorrow
<http://www.vector1media.com/>
World Health Organization (WHO)
World Watch Institute www.worldwatch.org

Appendix A

Potential Issues/Concerns for Group Discussions

- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- The Alma Ata Declaration
- The Ottawa Charter on Health Promotion
- The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
- The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer
- The Kyoto Protocol on Greenhouse Gases
- The Talloires Declaration
- The Earth Charter
- NGOs (incl. World Watch Institute, WWF; David Suzuki Foundation; Parkland, Pembina, Sierra Club, Greenpeace, Fraser Institute, USA Conservative “think” tank, others?)
- United Nations agencies (incl. UNEP, UNDP, WHO, IARC, others? IDRC)
- Ethics guidelines for your particular profession/sub-specialty
- Religious views on stewardship?
- Treaties and Conventions
- Traditional Knowledge
- Canada’s response to Kyoto
- AIDS in Africa and Western causes
- Limitations of environmental or business movements in dealing with global issues
- Post-Apocalyptic Society
- Sustainability and Pop Culture
- Traditional Knowledge
- Advocacy and Sustainability
- Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)
- Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Environmental Strategies in Oil and Gas
- Greenwashing
- The Population Factor in Sustainability
- Eco-Efficiency, Financial Markets and Sustainability
- Nitrogen use in agriculture and its contribution to Green House Gasses (GHGs) and water quality deterioration
- Depletion of non-renewable resources
- Adaptive Management of Ecosystems
- Health and Sustainability
- Others?