401-01 Sustainable Development

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There is a great story about sustainable development behind this photograph!

**This course--intro**

This course is an upper-level course for the ECOS degree. It also is an elective in the Peace and Justice Studies minor. Part of the description of the course is that, among other things, it seeks to give you a “comprehensive understanding of sustainable economies.” Sustainable development is a big idea to take on, particularly since the typical way of understanding it proceeds from the big picture or top down to the local and more specific.

In an experiment in teaching and learning, we will reverse this typical journey and certainly the one that I took (more on this briefly the first day of class) and first explore what it is that makes individuals “sustainable.” The goal of sustainable development, of course, is to, in some way or another, improve individuals’ lives. Right away, you probably sense the challenges ahead. What
do we mean by a sustainable individual? Do we mean long-lived? Do we mean healthy? Do we mean happy? Wealthy? Productive? Something else? Some combination of these?

This professor
I am a fallible and subjective being who has been shaped by my family, my experiences, my reading, my students, and my friends. I welcome the fact that each of you brings a similar suite of experiences to the class. I love teaching, which for me means that I love learning. My philosophy of teaching is always emerging, as I interact with you, my colleagues, friends, family and the wild wonderful world around me. I believe that we learn most effectively with our whole bodies. This is in contrast to most of modern education that is grounded in separating body from mind.

For our purposes in the classroom, I want you to know a few more things about me. Your professor is three decades into deep questioning about sustainable development from historical, economic, spiritual, philosophical, and biological perspectives. I have found Ignatian spirituality and pedagogy very beneficial in conversation with my concerns about sustainable development. I am increasingly convinced that all of us humans in the twenty-first century United States need a lot of things that our institutions are not providing: meaningful social interaction; time for rest and reflection; outlets for effective use of our hands and feet; time and means to enact and experience our interdependence on the natural world. I am also three decades into arranging my personal and professional life to better provide some of these missing elements. The way in which I have organized and will teach this course reflects this particular stage in my journey. There is a personal and professional way in which you can begin to understand this orientation. First, you can check out my writing, poetry and photography at my website, www.theflowerwilds.wordpress.com.

Second, you can pay some attention to the assignments, use of class time and class schedule and think about the values and goals these reflect. Some of these will be clearer if you know that I am leading a nationwide effort to articulate and implement an Ignatian Pedagogy for Sustainability. This course is explicitly built to engage some of the initial ideas that are emerging out of this project. We will speak off and on about these as we proceed but certainly one of them will be obvious to you right away: there are five days built into the semester for “reflection.” This time will be spent pulling together, contextualizing, reviewing, imagining, contemplating, re-evaluating, etc. what it is we have learned so far, what it means and what we want to do about it. If you have ideas for how you want to spend this time, please let me know. I am asking you to read the Vision and Themes document that we have produced before the class begins. It is available on Canvas but also available in the initial email that also contained this syllabus.

This course—pedagogy: practices for deep learning
There are two essential elements to making this course successful, both of which will require your engagement and agreement.

First, I need you to be here, with us, in the classroom, body, mind and soul. This has two parts. The first is to center ourselves for a few minutes before we begin with class material. I will try to make this easier for all of us by leading three minutes of mindfulness exercise at the beginning of class followed by a prayer that we will say together to remind us of how fortunate we are to be
together learning. The time we have together I think of an oasis of sanity and community amidst what is too often insane and lacking in meaningful social connection. I hope that each of us will do our best to honor our space and time together. I welcome other students leading the mindfulness or introducing a prayer or quotation that aligns with these goals.

The second part is that education, in order to be successful, has to engage us as whole people, who are, at their best, striving to love, willing to be vulnerable, and willing to share enthusiasm and passion with those around them. To start, we all need to be connecting the material to our lives and the real world and sharing that with each other. My own personal experience and my teaching experience both support the fact that deeper learning takes place when more students are consistently engaged in class material. This puts a tremendous amount of responsibility on each of you to come to class ready to participate. This means that you are comfortable sharing what it is you are learning, what it is that is not clear, the connections that you are making between the readings from one day to another, readings from other classes or on your own, etc., and the disconnections that are occurring (often these are things that make you uncomfortable or worried). But it also means listening, really listening, to your classmates and from that listening responding to their ideas with your own. If you, as a class, can achieve a give and take between yourselves that does not involve me, you will have a MUCH richer experience in this class and learn far more than you would otherwise.

But it goes deeper than this. Think about the times you have learned the most and been the most engaged. My guess is that you “fell in love” with the material, with your teacher, with some of your classmates, or a combination of the above. In our society today, the phrase “falling in love” or even “love” often has a very narrow sexual meaning but I hope you all know that you can love and feel passionate about and learn and grow from a wide variety of relationships and experiences beyond a sexually romantic one. In order to make the most of our experiences together, we must be open enough to bring our full selves and our passions (not our disembodied, intellectualized selves) to this class.

One way I use to facilitate bringing our full selves to the classroom is Team-based learning. On the first day of class, you will be assigned a team to sit and discuss ideas with for the duration of the semester. Team-Based Learning maximizes student learning and leads to greater participation.

Second, I need you to leave all your electronic devices (computers, phones, and tablets) in the front of the classroom on the table when you come into class. Anecdotal and scientific evidence is pretty clear that we all learn better when we are taking notes by hand (if taking notes at all) (www.nytimes.com/2017/11/22/business/laptops-not-during-lecture-or-meeting.html?_r=1), and connecting face-to-face and in a holistic and passionate way with those around us (see article under Files on Canvas titled: hooks.Erosandpedagogy). Learning is as much an affective (emotional) as an intellectual exercise. Your devices get in the way of the kinds of learning that I want to take place when we are together.

This course—pedagogy: assignments and work
1. Field experiences (15%)
Whether professors like it or not, students learn as much, if not more, outside the classroom than inside. This is only partly a commentary on the effectiveness of your teachers, I believe. But it is certainly a commentary on the framework that supports education in the United States (more on that in my office, if you are interested). One of the great things about a university is that there are constantly very interesting people being invited to campus to speak and share their ideas with students, faculty and staff. I would like you to participate in two events on our campus or in the community that could inform our discussions in class and your learning about sustainable development. Here are some suggestions for events I am aware of in the first weeks of the semester. The events you attend should inform your thinking and writing about sustainable development.

January 10, 5:30-7:30 pm (CET Studios, 1223 Central Parkway, 45214, Parking at the Town Center Garage is $5 and exact change is required): Breathe Free Film Screening
The Columbus Crossing Borders film “Breathe Free” is a moving documentary that shares the stories of refugees and the artists inspired by those stories. Through the lens of filmmaker Doug Swift, we encounter those who fled war, violence and persecution. We witness the unease and fear surrounding U.S. border issues. And we learn how this leads to 34 artists producing a project based on forced migration.

January 11, 4-7 pm (Xavier University Art Gallery at the A.B. Cohen Center) Columbus Crossing Borders Art Exhibit
Reception starts at 4 pm. See above description for more about the exhibit.

January 16, 6-8 pm (Conaton Board Room): Report from the Border: The Kino Border Initiative
After an immersion at the Kino Border Initiative in Nogales, a panel of Xavier professors and Bellarmine parishioners will give a report of conditions at the border and share stories of their encounter with people there. There will be time for reflection and conversation. A light meal will be served.

February 6, 7 pm (place TBA): E/RS Interviews: On Capitalism
In the 6th of 6 E/RS interviews, Staff Johnson (Finance) and Tim Brownlee (Philosophy) will discuss the virtues and vices of capitalism. E/RS interviews provide an opportunity for us to get to know members of the Xavier community in a more informal way.

Saturday, April 1st, 9:00am-3:00pm Mill Creek Canoe Trip
We will meet at the circle between Smith and CLC for a prompt 9:00am departure in carpools. There is a $10 fee for the canoe rental/guide fee. This cost also covers an official membership into the Mill Creek Yacht Club and a T-shirt. We will be canoeing an approximately 5 mile section of the lower Mill Creek. Specifics TBA. Please contact Adam Konopka (konopkaa@xavier.edu) with any questions and to reserve a spot.

2. Oral reports to class about readings and field experiences (20%)
Twice in the semester, you will make a brief and concise presentation (without Powerpoint or Prezi) to the class about a field experience or reading (using some of the guiding questions below). I will expect each of you to also (at least) twice ask a GOOD question of the presenter. A good question is one that comes out of your own interest and experience and that you genuinely
want to hear her/his answer to. It is not a question that makes you look smart because of what you have read or learned. It is a question that communicates that you are here with us mind, body, and soul, striving to become a better, more integrated person.

3. **Papers on your evolving sense of sustainable development (55%)**

   On the second day of class, you will turn in an answer to the question: What is sustainable development?

   Three other times during the semester, you will turn in a short paper that reflects your evolving sense of what sustainable development could or should mean and how that contrasts or is similar to the ways in which it is employed or thought about in particular circumstances or examples.

4. **Project (25%): Investigate organization engaged in sustainable development:** For the final exam period, we will gather (with food) to share how effective we think these organizations are at promoting sustainable development. Read as much as you can. Try to talk to someone from the organization, if you can. If it is small, this might work, if it is bigger you might have to resort to an interview online or a video of a conversation (if such exists). Your final presentation can be in any format you wish that you think best conveys what it is you learned not just about your organization but about sustainable development generally, its promises and its pitfalls.

   Some possibilities include:
   
   Heifer Project
   IMF
   Serv
   Ten Thousand Villages
   World Bank
   Grameen Bank
   Women to Women International
   Kiva
   Kino Border Initiative
   Technoserv
   Better World Beans

**Key Questions**

Questions that we will be asking over and over again as we read, discuss, observe, listen, and integrate:

a. What are the values or assumptions behind this idea/particular approach/theory/concern/etc.?

b. What problem(s) are they trying to solve? What are the values and/or assumptions behind identification of that as a problem to begin with and the particular approach to the solution?

c. What are the goals of this approach?

d. How does this organization/idea/program/organization address sustainable well being at the individual level? The family level? The community level? The national level? The world level?
Student Learning Outcomes:
1. Students can evaluate and synthesize competing definitions of sustainability, development and sustainable development.
2. Students can think historically, culturally, and spatially about complex issues surrounding sustainability.
3. Students can analyze and articulate goals, values, and assumptions that underlie various ideas, projects, and theories of sustainable development.
4. Students are able to express various ways in which sustainable development is a relational concept connecting the human and natural world.

Schedule

SECTION A: IF WE START AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Monday, January 8 and Wednesday, January 10: What do you think sustainable development means? What are the common definitions out there that you can find? What are some critiques? Reading: Spend 2 hours prior to each class reading what you can find through databases, focused google searches, recommendations from other professors, readings from other classes about sustainable development. Both words in the term are “plastic,” that is, they can mean many different things. When placed together, the opportunities for multiple and contradictory meanings expand exponentially. Feel free to pull the terms “sustainable” and “development” apart and learn about each one independently before trying to put them together.

Assignment: Each day bring notes of what you learned from your reading. Make use of the Key Questions.

In class, you will share your findings with your team and be prepared to share clearly and concisely with the class what it is that you found.

Wednesday, January 17 and Monday, January 22:
We begin with a Chinese proverb

If there is light in the soul,  
there will be beauty in the person.  
If there is beauty in the person,  
there will be harmony in the house.  
If there is harmony in the house,  
there will be order in the nation.  
If there is order in the nation,  
there will be peace in the world.

And then look at some of these: [http://www.doonething.org/quotes/innerpeace-quotes.htm](http://www.doonething.org/quotes/innerpeace-quotes.htm)

And then move to look at these different scales of peace/order/wellbeing at the level of individual

Readings:


Wednesday, January 24 and Monday, January 29: Family and Community


Local politics: Benjamin Barber, “Democracy or Sustainability? The City as Mediator” Minding Nature


Wednesday, January 31 and Monday, February 5: Reflection on content so far (including students from different backgrounds)

Wednesday, February 7 and Monday, February 12: Nations/Larger Communities

Readings:

Building National from Local: Smythe, Africa’s Past, Our Future, ch. 10; Esteva et al, ch. 5


Deliberative Democracy, Gutman and Thompson, “What Deliberative Democracy Means”

Wednesday, February 14 and Wednesday, February 21: Global/International

Readings:

Development: Smythe, Africa’s Past, Our Future, chs. 8 and 9; Esteva et al, ch.2

**Monday, February 26**: Reflection on content so far

**Wednesday, February 28**: Andrew Hermann on Sustainable Development
Reading: Esteva et al, chs. 4 and 6

**SECTION B: NOW TO START FROM THE LARGER SCALE (BOTH IN TIME AND SPACE)**

**Monday, March 12 and Wednesday, March 14**: Sustainable development: A History
Reading: Rist, 3 prefaces, Intro, ch. 1 and Esteva et al, ch. 1

**Monday, March 19 and Wednesday, March 21**: Sust Dev: A History
Reading: Rist, ch. 2-5

**Monday, March 26**: Sust Dev: A History
Reading: Rist, chs. 8-11

**Wednesday, March 28**: Reflection on content so far

**Wednesday, April 4 and Monday, April 9**: Sust Dev: A History
Readings: Rist, chs. 12-15

**Wednesday, April 11**: Sust Dev and evolutionary history

**Monday, April 16 and Wednesday, April 18**: Sust Dev and evolutionary history

**Monday, April 23 and Wednesday, April 25**: Reflection on content so far and action steps

**Wednesday, May 2, 12-1:50**: Project reports