Course Description

A holistic approach to sustainability, this course is designed to understand the "big picture". The effects of globalization and rapid development have opened a door of opportunity for humans. As a species, we have only started to realize the consequences of our actions — this course is intended to track the cause and effect and change the cause by addressing our mental modes. We will be addressing a wide range of topics. First we will look at the importance ecosystems and services from nature, and then we will look at how these cycles and services have been disrupted by humans as well as how this is affecting us, in the global north and the global south. From there, the course will dive into the moral aspects of becoming a sustainable society, how we perceive our needs, our desires, and our need to find a collaborative harmony between our species and the rest of nature, this will include an analysis of ecopsychology and the new spiritual shift. Finally, we will be looking at what actions we can take given that we’ve achieved this shift in perception, we will look at innovative and replicable solutions from around the globe, from eco-design and biomimicry to activism and community movements. The goal of this course is to address the true meaning behind acting "sustainably", thus before performing an action we need to understand and address its purpose and foundations, only then can we live in a more holistic and balanced world.

"I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious" — Albert Einstein

This course is designed for the mind, not just the engineering, economic, or philosophical mind; it is designed for any curious mind. It is open to all students for the purpose of sharing knowledge and discussion. I don’t assume that you know everything about these topics, and I don’t assume you know nothing, I assume that what you do know from your own experiences (be those mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and/or any other) will bring value to the discussions given the broad range of topics we will be covering. That being said, I ask one thing from everyone (including myself); that you come into class realizing the student next to you knows something valuable for these discussions that you don’t, and vice versa. With this in mind, the concept of respect and understanding can truly be fostered. I ask this simply to make all of us realize the importance of expressing opinion and sharing knowledge; that we are and will always be students and teachers of one another given that our desire to learn and inform is present.

The goal of this course is to shift as a whole towards a stronger understanding of what it means to really exist sustainably, and we cannot do this by focusing strictly on ecology or psychology, we need both, and we need many more “logy’s”! For those of you who believe you are in that process already, please help the rest of us as well as those who are just beginning. For those of you who are jumping into this without a clue of what to expect or just want to sit in for the sake of it, feel free to do your own research on these ideas and somehow someway I guarantee you will find a niche that fits both your interests and the interests of this course, thus adding yet another root for this growing tree of knowledge. Either way, your curiosity is assumed to be present given your interest in the course, and that should be more than enough to establish a holistic approach to the subjects and ideas we will be addressing.

Finally, please take a good look at the course outline, the course is reading intensive and will require you to put a lot of effort outside of the class in order to really follow and participate in the class. The readings in the READINGS boxes are to be completed by the date under which the boxes are, as we’ll be discussing them in class.

Grading

Since this course is pass/fail only, there is no specific grading scheme. However, keep in mind that your class participation, which is highly dependent upon the readings, is the most important aspect of passing this course.
Also, there will be short assignments which are designed to help you create your final paper which is also a large portion of passing the course. The short assignments are not required, but highly recommended for the completion of the final.

**Short Assignments (choose a minimum of 3)**

Will be on spark. Assignments are due at the beginning of class or anytime before the due date. The assignments are assigned according to the material that will be addressed in the week/s prior to the due date. Since these will help with your final, please take a look at them in advance to make sure you complete the ones that are more relevant to your interests so that you are not stuck with assignments that may have little to do with your final.

**Final Paper (Due by 5/12)**

“Vocation with earth in mind” – Do you hope to apply what we have learned in this course to your career/vocation? If yes, how? Use the concepts we have addressed in the readings and discussion to relate. If no, please explain why and use these concepts to support your argument. (7-10 pages double spaced).

**Outline**

**DATE: 1/24, 1/31**

- Understand the benefits and importance of nature and biodiversity to our existence

**READINGS**

- Sustaining Life: How human health depends on biodiversity (3-18, 82-106, 117-126, 126-160 [health/medicine34], 329-353, 356-361, 367-371 [food production33]) – Eric Chivian & Aaron Bernstein

**DATE: 2/7 Assignment # 1 due**

- Understand the threats and consequences of globalization
  o Environmental, Social, political, economic distresses (poverty, health/food security etc)
  - DOCUMENTARY: The 11th Hour

**READINGS**

- Sustaining Life: How human health depends on biodiversity (, 29-72, 107-114, 287-306[health/medicine]), 318-322)
- PLAN B.2.0, Signs of Decline – Lester Brown

**DATE: 2/14 Assignment # 2 due**

- Understanding how we got here; a perception problem
  o Human needs, fulfillment, desire, instinct
  - DOCUMENTARY: The Economics of Happiness

**READINGS**

- Are we happy yet? (from Eco-Psychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the mind. 68-76) – Alan Thein Durning
  - From Knowledge to Understanding: Navigations and Returns (1-7) – Manfred Max-Neef
  - Human Scale Development (23-38, 49-65) – Manfred Max-Neef

**DATE: 2/22 (Monday schedule), 2/28**
- The shift in perception
  o Systems Thinking

**READINGS**
- Ecology & Community (1-6) – Fritjof Capra
- Systems Thinking Handbook (5-14) – LCWR
- Causality & Probability (1-3)

**DATE:** 3/7 Assignment #3 due, 3/21 (We have a workshop on 3/26 @ Campus Center Room 917, 9:30-5:30)
  o Eco-psychology
  o Spiritual shift (the turning point)
  VIDEO: The Great Turning – Joanna Macy

**READINGS**
- Where Psyche Meets Gaia (from EcoPsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind. 1-17) – Theodore Roszack
- Eco-Ethics & Sanctity of Life (from Living Philosophy: 206-220, 228-234) – Henryk Skolimowski
- The Great Turning/New Civilization – Joanna Macy/Ervin Laszlo

**DATE: 3/28 Assignment #4 due, 4/4, 4/11**
- From Perception to Action
  o Personal mastery
  o Organizational Learning
  o Management (adaptive + holistic)

**READINGS**
- Compassion and the Individual (1-7) – Tenzin Gyatso (14th Dalai Lama)
- 5th Discipline (3-16, 68-92, 127-128, 139-173, 205-232, 339-360, 368-372) – Peter Senge
- Sustainability: A Philosophy of Adaptive Ecosystem Management (88-129, 304-388) – Bryan G. Norton

**DATE: 4/20 Assignment #5 due, 4/25**
- Solutions
  o Global Movements
    - EcoSocialism
    - Organic/local Farming
  o Design
    - BioMimicry, EcoDesign, Energy Efficiency

**READINGS**
- Ecology and Socialism (to be chosen) – Chris Williams
- Cradle to Cradle (Design + Eco-Efficiency 17-117) – William McDonough, Michael Braungart
- Blessed Unrest (to be chosen) – Paul Hawken
DATE: 5/2 Assignment #6 due

- More Solutions + Discussion
  - Scaling + Replicating systems

READINGS
- Ecology and Socialism (to be chosen) – Chris Williams
- Sustaining Life: How human health depends on biodiversity (383 – 428) – Eric Chivian & Aaron Bernstein
- Restoring Habitats, Communities, and Souls (from EcoPsychology: Restoring the Earth, Healing the Mind. 224-239). – Elan Shapiro

Final due by 5/12

Suggested books/readings (check for updates on SPARK)

Foundations of Transdisciplinarity (1-20) – Manfred A. Max-Neef
On Human Nature – E.O Wilson
Monocultures of the Mind – Vandana Shiva
The Necessary Revolution – Peter Senge
Endgame – Derrick Jensen
Ecology and Socialism – Chris Williams