

# Sustainability

## Political Science 294

College of Charleston  
Fall 2022

Day/Time: Online  
Location: Online  
Course Website: OAKS

Instructor: P. Brian Fisher  
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Office: JC Long Room 223  
Office Hours: by appt or virtual apt

Technical Help: see OAKS Tutorials and/or Helpdesk

### Course Background

This course will examine the interrelated environmental, economic and social problems facing humans at local, regional and global scales around the theme of sustainability. Specifically, we will explore sustainability both as a 'constructed' concept as well as a practice by examining the role of values, ethics, politics, ideology, science, media/marketing, design, engineering, and personal decision-making. That is, how can we govern the process from the "idea of sustainability" to generating good policy on sustainability and sustainable development? In addressing this question, the class will use an applied experience from their own sustainability projects and analyses to examine ways to generate values of sustainability, create policy to encourage sustainability, and ultimately govern it.

### Course Format

The Course will be divided into six parts or modules:

1. Brief History of Human Development (Pre-Module): The opening part of the course will review history of human development, essentially exploring one basic question: how we got to this point where everything we have built is unsustainable.
2. Environmental Unsustainability: The initial part of the course will briefly examine human orientation to the environment, and how this has led to a series of systems that are not self-sustaining and possess a constellation of externalized problems that defy in many ways governance and policy.
3. Systems in an Age of Complexity: This section will examine the dynamics of the interconnected systems that we live in and make decisions daily within. These systems are growing in complexity and uncertainty. It will highlight how we make decisions without a holistic understanding of how we fit within it and how our actions influence it.
4. Sustainability: Cradle to Cradle: The second half of the course will focus on sustainability as a platform for addressing these systems problems, and their underlying drivers. It will focus on a cradle to cradle

approach to our production-consumption systems—particularly how to change our economic foci to incorporate environmental protection, eco-design, personal sustainability and global sustainability as sustainable development.

5. **Community and Well-being:** The fifth part of the course will focus on communities and personal well-being. We will get into sustainable communities and how to build that durable future, with a particular focus on personal security and wellbeing. That is, we will ask the basic question, can we have a sustainable community with unfulfilled people?
6. **Social Sustainability:** The final part of the course will focus on social sustainability, with a focus on equality, discrimination and justice. We will ask fundamental questions around the importance of building a sustainability society on rooted concepts of equity, diversity and inclusiveness.

## Course Goals and Learning Outcomes

In light of the course format, the goals and learning outcomes of this course are to:

1. To explore the theoretical literature on sustainability, from the philosophy of environment to eco-design and governance.
2. To utilize this literature to critically analyze ways to address complex problems, which are largely defined as unsustainable.
3. To develop divergent and creative thinking that builds a synthesis of knowledge to promote pragmatic solutions to the problems identified.
4. To experiment with practical ways to attain sustainable practices in every day life, and to identify the obstacles to achieving consistent sustainability—individually and societally.
5. To engage active experiential learning to understand sustainability on a personal and pragmatic scale.
6. To synthesize this knowledge in ways that has a visual outcome through the design and production of their own sustainability video.
7. To identify the ways to incorporate student's practical lessons into society (local, national and global) to create a more sustainable way of life.
8. To hone professional development skills through public speaking, public service, and engaging the public on sustainability issues.

## CofC Honor Code and Academic Integrity

Lying, cheating, attempted cheating, and plagiarism are violations of our Honor Code that, when identified, are investigated. Each incident will be examined to determine the degree of deception involved.

Incidents where the instructor determines the student's actions are related more to a misunderstanding will be handled by the instructor. A written intervention designed to help prevent the student from repeating the error will be given to the student. The intervention, submitted by form and signed both by the instructor and the student, will be forwarded to the Dean of Students and placed in the student's file.

Cases of suspected academic dishonesty will be reported directly by the instructor and/or others having knowledge of the incident to the Dean of Students. A student found responsible by the Honor Board for academic dishonesty will receive a XF in the course, indicating failure of the course due to academic dishonesty. This grade will appear on the student's transcript for two years after which the student may petition for the X to be expunged. The student may also be placed on disciplinary probation, suspended (temporary removal) or expelled (permanent removal) from the College by the Honor Board.

Students should be aware that unauthorized collaboration--working together without permission-- is a form of cheating. Unless the instructor specifies that students can work together on an assignment, quiz and/or test, no collaboration during the completion of the assignment is permitted. Other forms of cheating include possessing or using an unauthorized study aid (which could include accessing information via a cell phone or computer), copying from others' exams, fabricating data, and giving unauthorized assistance.

Research conducted and/or papers written for other classes cannot be used in whole or in part for any assignment in this class without obtaining prior permission from the instructor.

Students can find the complete Honor Code and all related processes in the Student Handbook at: <http://studentaffairs.cofc.edu/honor-system/studenthandbook/index.php>.

## Course Materials

### Required Books

1. *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way we Make Things* (2002). McDonough and Braungart, North Point Press.
2. *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future* (2007). Bill McKibben, Times Books (found online for free).

### Recommended Books

1. *Post Carbon Reader: Managing the 21<sup>st</sup> Century's Sustainability Crises* (2010). Heinburg and Lerch, Watershed Media.
2. *Handbook for Sustainability Literacy: Skills for a Changing World* (2009). Stibbe (ed), UIT Cambridge Ltd.

### Reading for Application

In this class, I am more concerned with how things connect and how you begin to "construct" your ideas and perceptions of sustainability. Your readings are meant as a guide in this process, not material to be memorized for an exam. It's about application and analysis.

### Online Course Format

**Format:** The course is broken into **5 modules (and a pre-module)**. Each module will have sub-modules based on topics. Each of these will be organized around readings, resources (e.g. video lectures), and possible chats. Check the "content" section on OAKS for this course for the course materials. At the end of each module, students will engage in an applied assignment to engage the material as a conclusion to the module.

**Announcements:** Check the "news" section of the course (in OAKS) regularly to ensure that you have the most up to date information. Use this in conjunction with the course schedule to determine important deadlines and required assignments.

**Online Chatting:** You can use the chat feature in OAKS, which is an Instant Messaging tool that allows you to get in touch with your classmates or the instructor. When you click on the "Classlist" tab in the top toolbar, you'll get a list of names. Anyone with a green dot next to his or her name is currently signed in. Check the box next to their name and press the "Page User" button at the top of the classlist. Feel free to hit me up for a real-

time answer.

**Course Materials:** All materials will be found on OAKS and videos accessed through the links provided (through mediasite interface). Use your CofC username and password to log in.

**Turning in Assignments:** All assignment should be turned in via dropbox on the OAKS coursepage by the assigned deadline. Formats for the assignments can be MS Word, rich text, or pdf.

## Assessment

### Grading

The following weight is assigned to determine final grades:

Coursework	Value
(5) Projects (drop lowest)	60%
Midterm	20%
Final Exam (cover all modules)	20%
Completing Assignments on Time	2% BONUS

Grading Scale: A 94-100; A- 90-93; B+ 87-89; B 83-86; B- 80-82; C+ 77-79; C 73-76; C- 70-72; D 65-69; F >65

## Instructor Availability

I will respond to email throughout the course in a very prompt manner—usually immediately or within a few hours. Occasionally, this will be a bit longer, but you can expect that I will respond within 24 hours.

## Course Structure

Module	Topic	Readings
	<b>History of Human Development</b>	Watch Video lectures
<b>1</b>	<b>Environmental Unsustainability</b>	
1A	Introductions	
1B	Unsustainability I: State of Earth	State of World, Chap 1; Sachs, "Our Crowded Planet"; Meadows, "Limits to Growth", Diamond, "Collapse", McNeil, New Under the Sun, <i>Localization</i> , chap 1, pp. 5-12.
1C	Unsustainability II: Values	US Enviro Values Survey; Jamieson, "An American Paradox"; Shellenberger, "Death of Environmentalism", White, "Roots of Env Crisis"; PCR, Chapter 15 "Human Nature of Unsustainability"; HSL, Chapter 14, "Values Reflection"
Checkpt		<b>Due: Ecological Footprint Analysis</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Systems &amp; Complexity</b>	

2A	Unsustainability III: Systems	Misc Readings on systems thinking and complexity
2B	Unsustainability: Insecurity	Misc readings on links between unsustainable systems and security
Checkpt		<b>Due: Systems Source Analysis</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Sustainability</b>	
3A	Sustainability: Defining	Misc readings: Meadows, "Limits to Growth: 30yr Update"; Pragmatic St, "What is Sustainability"
3B	Sustainability II: System	McDonough and Braungart, Cradle to Cradle
3C	Sustainability III: Design	DeYoung & Princen, Localization: Part I, pp. 1-58
Checkpt		<b>Due: C2C Design in Household</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Community &amp; Wellbeing</b>	
4A	Sustainability IV: Economy and Community	McKibben, <i>Deep Economy</i> , pp. 1-45, 177-226; PCR, Chapter 33, "What Communities can do?"
4B	Sustainability V: Well Being	HSL, Chapt 25, "Emotional Well Being"; HSL, Chapter 26, "Finding Meaning without Consuming"; Princen, "Confronting Consumption"; "Reflections", 100yrs of US spending; Layard, "Happiness: Lessons in New Sci"
Checkpt		<b>Due: Fulfillment Project</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Social Sustainability</b>	
5A	Sustainability VI: Social Pillars	Sachs, Sustainable Development Chapter: Social Sustainability
5B	Sustainability VII: Social & Cultural Dimensions	See Oaks
Final	Dec 10/11 (Anytime)	<b>Final Exam</b>

## Important Deadlines

While this course is largely asynchronous, I am creating a structural framework for assignments that should be followed the best that you can. If you complete all the assignments for these deadlines you will get an extra 1% on your final grade. **No Assignment can be more than 1 week late.**

9/9: Module 1 Ecological Analysis

9/28: Module 2 Systems Source Analysis

10/14: Module 3 C2C Analysis & Group Project

10/21: Midterm

11/11: Module 4 Community and Wellbeing Survey Project

11/30: Module 5 Social Justice Project

12/5: Final Exam