CSUS 824
Sustainable Development: Measuring Socioeconomic Well-Being

Spring 2015
Monday, 3:00 – 5:50pm
306 Natural Resources Building

DAYS AND TIMES
Monday, 3:00 – 5:50pm
LOCATION
306 Natural Resources

INSTRUCTOR
Dr. Robert Richardson
E-MAIL ADDRESS
rbr@msu.edu
http://d2l.msu.edu
COURSE RESOURCES
http://d2l.msu.edu
TELEPHONE
Office: 355-9533 (or extension 5-9533)
Department: 353-5190
Fax: 353-8994

OFFICE
305 Natural Resources
OFFICE HOURS
Tuesdays 10:00am – 12:00pm (or by appointment)

COURSE DESCRIPTION
The study of sustainable development reveals a tension between a concern for human needs and for the scale of the impacts of human demands on nature. This graduate course explores the challenges of environmental sustainability and social justice in the context of global economic development. We will review the principles of sustainable development in both theory and practice, with a focus on the measurement of social and economic welfare at national and local scales. The course will examine the extensive literature and policy frameworks associated with conventional notions of sustainable development along with divergent concepts and models that challenge mainstream thinking. Using theories of development, sustainability science, and economic growth, we will examine traditional and alternative indicators of sustainable development, including the social, economic, and environmental dimensions of human well-being. Students will apply their understanding of sustainability indicators in a specific developmental and environmental context related to their interests. The course will include theoretical and empirical readings, reflective discussions and essays, and planning for data sourcing and analysis for the calculation of sustainability indicators.

COURSE OBJECTIVES
Students will understand the challenges of environmental sustainability in the context of social and economic development, and be able to describe the role of natural resources and the environment in human welfare. Specifically, students in this course will:

• Understand the origins of thinking about sustainability and sustainable development;
• Distinguish between ideas associated with mainstream sustainable development and alternative ideologies that challenge conventional thinking and commonly-held assumptions about progress;
• Examine the range of commonly-used social welfare indicators, and understand the shortcomings of consumption and economic growth as measures of socioeconomic well-being;
• Examine alternative indicators of well-being that consider the effects of social capital, natural capital, and the equitable distribution of income, and be able to describe their advantages and the challenges in their implementation; and
• Apply their knowledge about sustainable development in a sustainability assessment of some system that depicts the reality of social, environmental, and economic conditions in some geographic context of their interests (such as a rural or urban area, a region, or a country). Students interested in international development may choose to develop an analysis of socioeconomic welfare in a developing country context.
**REQUIRED TEXTS**  

**OTHER READINGS**  
Additional reading assignments will be placed on the course website on Desire2Learn, which can be accessed at [http://d2l.msu.edu](http://d2l.msu.edu).

**RESOURCES**

*Global development indicators:*
- Millennium Ecosystem Assessment: [http://www.millenniumassessment.org](http://www.millenniumassessment.org)
- International Institute for Sustainable Development: [https://www.iisd.org](https://www.iisd.org)
- Standardized World Income Inequality Database: [http://myweb.uiowa.edu/fsolt/swiid/swiid.html](http://myweb.uiowa.edu/fsolt/swiid/swiid.html)
- Sustainable Society Foundation: [http://www.ssfindex.com](http://www.ssfindex.com)
- UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network: [http://unsdsn.org](http://unsdsn.org)

*Environmental sustainability:*
- Happy Planet Index: [http://www.happyplanetindex.org](http://www.happyplanetindex.org)
- Living Planet Index: [http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/all_publications/living_planet_report](http://wwf.panda.org/about_our_earth/all_publications/living_planet_report)
- The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB): [http://www.teebweb.org](http://www.teebweb.org)

*Ecological Footprint resources:*
- Center for Sustainable Economy – Ecological Footprint: [http://myfootprint.org](http://myfootprint.org)
- Earth Day Network Footprint Calculator: [http://www.earthday.org/footprint-calculator](http://www.earthday.org/footprint-calculator)
- Global Footprint Network: [http://www.footprintnetwork.org](http://www.footprintnetwork.org)

*Government resources:*
- Michigan Dashboard: [https://midashboard.michigan.gov](https://midashboard.michigan.gov)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency – Sustainability: [http://www.epa.gov/sustainability](http://www.epa.gov/sustainability)

*Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare and Genuine Progress Indicator resources:*
- Genuine Progress Indicator: [http://genuineprogress.net](http://genuineprogress.net)
- Maryland Genuine Progress Indicator: [http://www.green.maryland.gov/mdgpi](http://www.green.maryland.gov/mdgpi)
- Vermont Genuine Progress Indicator: [http://www.vtgpi.org](http://www.vtgpi.org)

*Business, institutions, and sustainable development:*
- AASHE Sustainability Tracking, Assessment & Rating System: [https://stars.aashe.org](https://stars.aashe.org)
- Dow Jones Sustainability Indices: [http://www.sustainability-indices.com](http://www.sustainability-indices.com)
- The Natural Step: [http://www.naturalstep.org](http://www.naturalstep.org)

**ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

Academic integrity is a fundamental value of higher education at any institution of higher education; therefore, acts of cheating, plagiarism, falsification or attempts to cheat, plagiarize or falsify will not be tolerated. Please see MSU Regulations, Ordinances and Policies Regarding Academic Honesty and Integrity at: [https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/](https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/). The University policy on plagiarism is available at: [https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/plagiarism-policy.html](https://www.msu.edu/unit/ombud/academic-integrity/plagiarism-policy.html). The Graduate
School has assembled a guide to resources for responsible conduct of research, scholarship, and creative activities, which is available at: http://grad.msu.edu/researchintegrity/. The University policy on academic dishonesty is provided in the Spartan Life Student Handbook and Resource Guide, which can be downloaded from: http://www.vps.msu.edu/SpLife/. Graduate student rights and responsibilities are summarized in the Student Handbook: http://splife.studentlife.msu.edu/graduate-student-rights-and-responsibilities.

Article 2 III.B.2 of Student Rights and Responsibilities states: “The student shares with the faculty the responsibility for maintaining the integrity of scholarship, grades, and professional standards.” In addition, the Department of Community Sustainability adheres to the policies on academic honesty specified in General Student Regulation 1.0, Protection of Scholarship and Grades; the all-University Policy on Integrity of Scholarship and Grades; and Ordinance 17.00, Examinations. You are expected to develop original work for this course; therefore, you may not submit course work you completed for another course to satisfy the requirements for this course. Students who violate MSU regulations on Protection of Scholarship and Grades will receive a failing grade in the course or on the assignment.

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION

Course Preparation and Participation
The framework of the course is based on the assumption that learning takes place best in an interactive and critical atmosphere. Accordingly, the course relies heavily on reflection, critical thinking, discussion, and active student participation. The format emphasizes structured opportunities for students to share and reflect upon their individual experiences. All students are expected to regularly attend class, arrive on time, complete the assigned readings prior to each class meeting, and actively participate in class discussions. Assessment of student participation will be based on the quality of contributions to class discussions and the quality of interactions with each other.

Topical Presentation (1)
Each student will give a brief topical presentation on key issues related to a particular week’s readings and course topic. The subject matter of the presentation can draw upon the student’s own research interests, but should be related to the week’s course topic. Presentations should be no more than five (5) minutes in length, allowing 2-3 minutes for questions and discussion. Good presentations will introduce questions or arguments that stimulate discussion. Presentations should be well organized, and discussion points should be clearly presented.

Weekly Reflections (8)
In preparation for weekly in-class discussions and exercises, each student is expected to prepare a thoughtful and critically reflective statement related to the week’s reading assignments (at least eight (8) weekly reflections over the course of the semester). Statements will be posted on the course web page at Desire2Learn (https://d2l.msu.edu). All students are expected to read the statements from classmates prior to class, and respond with your own observations or comments on what you find interesting, controversial or useful in the readings and in other reflections. These statements should be used to help stimulate questions and issues, and to set the agenda for in-class discussions.

Reaction Papers (2)
Students will write two essays with their own reflections about particular course topics, as directed in the (forthcoming) assignments. Papers should be analytical and reflective, drawing upon relevant theory and course concepts as appropriate, and addressing the topic from multiple perspectives. Remember that a reflective essay is a form of writing that examines and observes the progress of the writer’s individual experience. Reflective essays are based upon your own experiences, so it is expected that you write about yourself, your ideas, reactions, and opinions. You might consider providing examples of quotations from the article (or other sources) that demonstrate a point, such a comparison with another written argument or commonly-held notion, or to highlight points with which you may agree or disagree. These papers must follow an accepted academic writing style, with all ideas from the literature cited properly. The papers should be free of spelling and grammatical mistakes.
Sustainability Assessment
Each student will prepare a sustainability assessment of some problem or issue in your domain that is of interest to you and which will likely confront you as a scholar-practitioner. This assignment is structured to help guide a process of inquiry and action for applying the concept of sustainability to complex resource problems in a region. The assessment will involve the definition and characterization of the system and its drivers, the identification of key stakeholders, and an understanding of the scale at which governance processes are manifested. A full description of the assignment is provided on D2L.

ASSESSMENT
Course preparation and participation 10%
Topical presentation (1) 10%
Weekly reflections (at least 8) 25%
Reaction papers (2) 30%
Sustainability assessment 25%

Final course grades will be assessed according to the following scale:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>4.0</th>
<th>3.5</th>
<th>3.0</th>
<th>2.5</th>
<th>2.0</th>
<th>1.5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>94-100%</td>
<td>88-93%</td>
<td>83-87%</td>
<td>78-82%</td>
<td>73-77%</td>
<td>68-72%</td>
<td>60-67%</td>
<td>&lt; 60%</td>
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## COURSE SCHEDULE AND TOPICS

### Week 1  
**January 12, 2014**  
Course introduction


**Recommended:**

### Week 2  
**January 19, 2014**  
University holiday

Holiday  
* no class session *

### Week 3  
**January 26, 2014**  
Sustainability


**Recommended:**

### Week 4  
**February 2, 2014**  
Sustainable development


**Recommended:**
| Week 5 | February 9, 2014 | Mainstream sustainable development  
*Note: Reaction Paper 1 due today* |
|--------|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

*Recommended:*


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 6</th>
<th>February 16, 2014</th>
<th>Sustainability and natural capital</th>
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*Recommended:*


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<tr>
<th>Week 7</th>
<th>February 23, 2014</th>
<th>Sustainable development and its discontents</th>
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*Recommended:*


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*CSUS 824 – Sustainable Development: Measuring Socioeconomic Well-Being*  
*Spring Semester 2015*
Week 8  March 2, 2014  Theoretical perspectives on well-being

Guest: Dr. Matthew Ferkany, Departments of Teacher Education and Philosophy


Recommended:

Week 9  March 9, 2014  Spring break

Holiday  * no class session *

Week 10  March 16, 2014  Happiness and subjective well-being


Recommended:

Week 11  March 23, 2014  Sustainability, distribution, and inequality

Note: Reaction Paper 2 due today


Recommended:

**Week 12** March 30, 2014  **Sustainability and intergenerational equity**


Recommended:

**Week 13** April 6, 2014  **Sustainability and resilience**


Recommended:

**Week 14** April 13, 2014  **Food security and well-being**

**Week 15** April 20, 2014  
Biodiversity conservation and well-being


**Recommended:**  

**Week 16** April 27, 2014  
Consumption and sustainability


**Recommended:**  

**Week 17** May 6, 2014  
*Final exam period, 3:00 – 5:00pm*  
Discussion of sustainability assessments