

INTRODUCTION TO SUSTAINABILITY

GENERAL INFO

Enrollment: Undergraduate
Pre-Requisites: None
Credit Hours: 3
Format: Online

INSTRUCTOR INFO

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OVERVIEW

Introduction to Sustainability is a core requirement for the BA in Sustainability and fulfills a Social Behavioral (SB) requirement in the Cardinal Core. This course introduces you to theories, principles, and practices of sustainability from a variety of disciplinary perspectives.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The Brundtland Commission's (1987) framework describes the central goal of sustainability as ensuring the greatest quality of life for all of humankind, now and into the future. Achieving this goal requires us to collectively rethink approaches to development in ways that prioritize ecological and social well-being (IUCN 1980). This course introduces students to the basic dimensions of sustainability (ecological, social, economic) and key principles of sustainability science and practice. Due to the complexity and diversity of sustainability, students will be exposed to a wide range of issues and perspectives.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

My primary goal for this course is that together we create a lively, comfortable, and intellectually challenging virtual space. After completing this course, you will have familiarity with broad definitions, various perspectives, and methods of inquiry related to sustainability science and practice, as well as the key issues, systems, and processes involved in fundamental environmental problems and potential solutions. My hope is that this course will also prepare you for continued interdisciplinary study and facilitate your development as a responsible citizen and informed leader within

society.

STUDENT LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Critically think about and apply multiple definitions of sustainability.
- Develop familiarity with core concepts and principles of sustainability. Learn to conceptualize common problems in sustainability as complex interactions among the three Es: environmental, economic, and social equity.
- Develop familiarity with primary solutions and research methods employed by experts in different areas of sustainability. Practice critiquing and synthesizing these approaches in creative ways that prioritize collective well-being.
- Develop interdisciplinary research, writing, and communication skills.

Whether or not we achieve a collective culture of rigorous intellectual inquiry is ultimately dependent on each students' individual engagement with course material and each other.

ASSIGNMENTS

Reflecting the inherent complexity of sustainability issues, course assignments are based on an interdisciplinary, multi-dimensional approach to inquiry and are intended to help students develop the broad portfolio of skills described above.

<u>Summary of Assignments</u>	<u>Points</u>
Weekly Discussion Board	250 (10x25 points)
Sustainability in the News	100
Sustainability Talk/Workshop Reaction	100
Midterm Essay	150
Digital Policy Brief - Proposal	200
Digital Policy Brief - Project	200
<u>Total</u>	<u>1000 (100%)</u>

Weekly Discussion Board Engagement: (25 points x 10 weeks = 250 points total)
Since this is an online course, our engagement with each other will happen primarily through discussion board conversations. In order to receive full credit, you must fully engage in this shared virtual space. 12 weeks out of the semester you will submit a 250-word reading reflection in which you respond thoughtfully to the ideas, concepts, and questions introduced in that week's material. You should not summarize each reading. Instead, this is a space for you to think through various

arguments and perspectives and to develop your own thoughts. At the end of each reflection, you will pose at least two discussion questions to your classmates. Your reflection and discussion questions are worth 15 points. Additionally, you will thoughtfully respond (50 words minimum) to at least three discussion questions posed by your classmates to receive the remaining 10 points.

Sustainability in the News: (100 points) Each student will be responsible for choosing a week to share a “sustainability in the news” post. You will select a current event/development (within the last 6 months) related to sustainability and share one or more links to related coverage of that event/development (‘coverage’ might include articles, podcasts, reports, blogs, videos, social media posts, etc). In addition, you will need to post a commentary paragraph (250 words) in which you explain why the event/development interests you, how you think it connects to course material, and what about it you think requires further interrogation and/or debate.

Sustainability Talk/Workshop Reaction: (100 points) Students are required to virtually attend or watch a recording of one [Sustainability Roundtable](#) OR [EcoRep Workshop](#) over the course of the semester and submit a brief (250 words) reaction post afterwards. This reaction post should include the date of the talk, the speaker’s name and affiliation, and a brief summary of the topic and main points. Most of the space, though, should be dedicated to processing key moments in the talk that sparked insight, confusion, curiosity, frustration, hope, or other reactions.

Midterm Essay: (150 points) Students will choose one of three writing prompts to respond to. Essays should be 750-1000 words.

Digital Policy Brief Proposal: (200 points) Students will propose a digital policy brief project that addresses a local sustainability issue of their choice. Included in this proposal will be an annotated bibliography of relevant and reliable primary and secondary sources that they plan to incorporate in their culminating policy brief website in order to create an engaging, informative, solution-oriented project.

Digital Policy Brief Website: (200 points) Building on their proposals, students will create a digital policy brief website using google sites or comparable website creation platform of their choice. Digital Policy Brief websites will provide an overview of the local sustainability issue, analysis of the specific historical and place-based dimensions of the issue, analysis of the issue according to the 3 Es of sustainability, review of current scientific understandings of the issue, a summary of possible solutions, and one or more specific policy recommendation(s).

FINAL GRADES

Final grades will be based on a percentage (1000 points = 100%) system...

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Percent</u>
A+	98-100
A	93-97
A-	90-92
B+	88-89
B	83-87
B-	80-82
C+	78-79
C	73-77
C-	70-72
D+	68-69
D	63-67
D-	60-62
F	Below 60

REQUIRED TEXT

R. Brinkmann (2021). Introduction to Sustainability, Second Edition. John Wiley & Sons.

(You can find this text through the [UofL Bookstore website](#). I recommend the digital version because it is cheaper and saves paper.)

Other readings, videos, and materials will be uploaded on Blackboard and linked in the course outline.

Occasionally, you may have to rent a film or documentary (always for less than \$5), but I will always do my best to find free versions OR schedule free watch times when I will share the video on my screen via Teams.

REQUIRED TECHNOLOGY

PC, Laptop, or Tablet.

Access to reliable internet connectivity.

UNIVERSITY, ACADEMIC, AND COURSE-RELATED POLICIES

Inclusion Statement:

I do not condone hate speech or bigotry. No one should have to read or listen to the dehumanization of their own or another group. It is my intent that students from all diverse backgrounds and perspectives be well served by this course, that students' learning needs be addressed, that the diversity that students bring to this class (which includes, but is not limited to: gender identity, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, nationality, religion, and culture) will be respected.

(Virtual) Classroom Etiquette

Making sure that this course is a positive and enriching experience is up to all of us. This course strives to embrace different perspectives, backgrounds, and ideas. We will read/listen/watch texts from a variety of perspectives. I ask that you thoughtfully consider positions different from your own, but also to critically assess your own position. Critically examining and assessing our most basic assumptions and values is not just one of the tasks of philosophy but is an activity vital to being a good researcher and citizen. I ask that you engage in research and discussion with care, empathy, and respect. I expect that we respect one another's ideas, experiences, and learning needs.

Communication

It is your responsibility to frequently check university email and visit the course's Blackboard page. I will use Blackboard to post announcements, grades, and other course materials. If you need to contact me, please use my university email address (mary.rudolph@louisville.edu).

Late Work

Please make every effort to complete class assignments on time. When extenuating circumstances make this challenging for you, please reach out to discuss your situation with me as soon as reasonably possible so that we can decide on an appropriate extension or make-up assignment together. I will only give extensions on assignments if you reach out to me *before* the due date. Situations that qualify for accommodations include: a personal emergency (e.g., a mental health or medical emergency involving yourself or a close friend/family member) OR an inflexible schedule conflict (e.g., an important appointment; a conflicting university-sponsored activity, etc.).

Religious Days & Observances

Students who observe work-restricted religious holy days will be allowed to do so without jeopardizing their academic standing. Students' requests for adjustments in course work on the grounds of religious observance will be accommodated, provided that the student makes such requests in writing during the first two weeks of the semester. For more information, view [Religious Days and Observances](#).

Students with Special Learning Needs

The University of Louisville is committed to providing access to programs and services for qualified students with disabilities. If you are a student with a disability and require accommodation to participate and complete requirements for this class, notify me immediately and contact the Disability Resource Center (119 Stevenson Hall, 852-6938) for verification of eligibility and determination of specific accommodations. For more information, visit the [Disability Resource Center](#).

Academic Dishonesty

While I do not anticipate a problem, I want everyone to be clear on the definition for plagiarism and how it will be handled in this course. Plagiarism is using someone else's words or ideas without properly citing them. The minimum penalty for plagiarism will be a zero on the assignment. It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the university's full-length definition and policy for plagiarism in addition to the general expectations for academic honesty: [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#) (Sections 5 and 6). If you feel unsure about how to avoid plagiarism in your work, please talk to me before submitting your assignment and I'll be happy to help. Additionally, all work submitted must be original—you may not submit work you have produced for another purpose or class.

Sexual Misconduct & Gender Discrimination

As a university employee, I am required to report and act on any information about sexual misconduct or gender discrimination you communicate to me to help resolve the situation.

Sexual misconduct (sexual harassment, sexual assault, and sexual/dating/domestic violence) and gender discrimination are violations of University policies. Anyone experiencing sexual misconduct and/or gender discrimination has the right to obtain confidential support from the PEACC Program 852-2663, Counseling Center 852-6585 and Campus Health Services 852-6479. Reporting your incident to any other University employee (including, but not limited to, professors and instructors) is an official, non-confidential report to the University. To file an official report, please contact the Dean of Students Office 852-5787 and/or the University of Louisville Police Department 852-6111.

For more information regarding your rights, visit the Office for Civil Rights. For more information and resources about reporting at UofL, visit the [Sexual Misconduct Resource Guide](#).

University Closings & Delays

Weather-related closings and delays will not affect due dates or assignments for this class since we are an online section. We will follow the [university calendar](#) re: university observed holidays and breaks.

Other Helpful Links

- Counseling Center: louisville.edu/counseling
- UofL Writing Center: louisville.edu/writingcenter/
- Blackboard Student Help: louisville.edu/delphi/blackboard/help/students/students.html
- Using Blackboard: louisville.edu/delphi/blackboard/help/students/using-blackboard.html

HOW THIS COURSE RELATES TO THE "CARDINAL CORE"

The ideas, issues, and interdisciplinary complexity inherent in sustainability allows this course to satisfy the requirements of a SB Cardinal Core designation. The course fulfills the "Social and Behavioral Sciences" (SB) designation by addressing Student Learning Outcomes in the following manner:

1. Apply knowledge and theories underlying sustainability and analyze evidence via qualitative and/or quantitative research methods that are utilized in the field.

Outcome: In their exploration of sustainability, students will be introduced to both qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods. Students will read articles, chapters, essays, and reports that build their understanding of issues in sustainability. Students will also be exposed to a talk by a professional in a sustainability related field through attendance at a Sustainability Roundtable or EcoRep Workshop of their choice. Digital policy brief projects will provide an opportunity to practice research skills.

Assessment: Student comprehension will be assessed through the submission of thoughtful reading reflections, midterm essays, and digital policy brief projects.

2. Identify how different fields of inquiry conceptualize diversity and the dynamics of social inequalities.

Outcome: Sustainability involves an interdisciplinary approach to complex social

issues that involve many layers of social inequality. This course addresses diversity and equity through lenses of social, economic, and environmental justice.

Assessment: Students will demonstrate their understanding through reading reflections, engagement in class discussion board, and midterm essays.

3. Represent and critically respond to multiple points of view on cultural issues as expressed in different historical, social, and cultural contexts.

Outcome: Students will be exposed to a variety of perspectives from multiple disciplines through readings and in class discussion that consider sustainability issues in relation to historical, social and cultural contexts. Course topics such as environmental justice, resource management, and governance of complex social-ecological problems provide fertile ground for this type of exploration.

Assessment: Students will demonstrate these skills through reading reflections, engagement in class discussion board, and midterm essays.

4. Use critical thinking and reasoning skills such as making inferences, evaluating assumptions, and assessing limitations of knowledge claims.

Outcome: Students will use critical thinking and reasoning skills when completing reading reflections and engaging in the class discussion board. Midterm/final exams provide an opportunity to make inferences, evaluate assumptions, and assess the knowledge discussed in each class. Digital policy brief projects will provide an opportunity to practice these skills further.

Assessment: Students will demonstrate these skills through reading reflections and discussion board engagement, "sustainability in the news" posts, midterm essays, and digital policy brief projects.

5. Communicate effectively in speech and writing, while respecting others' contributions, through proper citation appropriate to the discipline.

Outcome: Students will practice communication and citation skills in a variety of contexts and formats.

Assessment: Weekly reading reflections, "sustainability in the news" and reaction posts, midterm essays, and digital policy brief projects will provide opportunities for assessment.

COURSE OUTLINE

This outline is subject to change throughout the semester. I will always let you know when a change has been made via a Blackboard announcement.

Discussion Board Posts & Discussion Questions will be due on Wednesdays at midnight. Discussion Board Responses will be due on Fridays at midnight.

Week 1 (Jan.9-13): Introductions

Read: the syllabus

Watch: [What is Sustainability](#) (3 min)

Read: [Mog \(2000\). What is Sustainability?](#) (UofL sustainability blog post)

Read: Ch. 1 Roots of the Modern Sustainability Movement in textbook

Week 2 (Jan. 17-20): Roots of Sustainability

Watch: A Fierce Green Fire: The Battle for a Living Planet (Rent on Vudu or watch free on [Look Movie](#))

Read: [Leopold \(1949\). The Land Ethic](#) (from A Sand County Almanac)

Read: [Carson \(1962\). Silent Spring I](#) (New Yorker article, 1/3)

Read: Naess (1973). The Shallow and Deep, Long-Range Ecology Movements: A Summary (essay)

Listen: [Force of Nature](#) (Throughline podcast)

Week 3 (Jan. 23-27): Natural Systems & Env. Sustainability

Read: Ch. 2 Understanding Natural Systems in textbook

Read: [Morelli \(2011\). Environmental Sustainability: A Definition for Environmental Professionals](#) (journal article)

Read: [Kimmerer. Returning the Gift](#) (essay)

Watch: [Baraka](#) (97 min)

Week 4 (Jan. 30-Feb. 3): Sustainable Development

Read: Ch. 3 Measuring Sustainability in textbook

Read: [Sustainable Development Goals](#) including 'more info' on each goal - click on each (UN website)

Watch: UN's [SDGs 2022 Report](#) (5 min)

Read: [Kates, et al. \(2005\). What Is Sustainable Development?](#) (journal article)

Week 5 (Feb. 6-10): Energy & Water

Read: Ch. 4 Energy in textbook
Read: [Energy Innovation & Traditional Knowledge](#) including all embedded videos (UN University website)
Read: Ch. 6 Water in textbook
Read: [Experts Name the Top 19 Solutions to the Global Freshwater Crisis](#) (Circle of Blue website)

Week 6 (Feb. 13-17): Climate Change & Pollution and Waste

Read: Ch. 5 Global Climate Change and Greenhouse Gas Management in textbook
Listen: [When We Almost Stopped Climate Change](#) (The Daily podcast)
Read: [Justice at the Heart of Climate Activism](#) (YES! Magazine)
Watch: [Generation Now: The Fight For Climate Justice](#) (14 min)
Read: Ch. 10 Pollution and Waste in textbook

Week 7 (Feb. 20-24): Food & Agriculture

Read: Ch. 7 Food and Agriculture in textbook
Read: [Berry \(1989\). The Pleasure of Eating](#) (essay)
Read: [Clapp & Moseley \(2020\). This food crisis is different: COVID-19 and the fragility of the neoliberal food security order](#) (journal article)
Watch: [Kiss the Ground](#) (80 min) - available on Netflix & [Youtube](#)
*Optional further reading: [Food Sovereignty](#) (Via Campesina website)
*Optional further reading: [OXFAM \(2020\). Uneven ground: Land inequality at the heart of unequal societies](#) (report)

Week 8 (Feb. 27-Mar. 3): Green Building & Transportation

Read: Ch. 8 Green Building in textbook
Watch: [Biomimicry: An introduction with Janine Benyus](#) (22 min)
Watch: [Green Architecture](#) (9 min)
Read: Ch. 9 Transportation in textbook
Read: [Car Culture is a Huge Impediment to Climate Action](#) (Medium article)
Read: [9 Cities with Smart Ideas to Improve Transportation](#) (Curbed article)

Week 9 (Mar. 6-10): MIDTERM

MIDTERM ESSAYS DUE FRIDAY MARCH 10TH

Week 10 (Mar. 13-17): SPRING BREAK!!

NO ASSIGNMENTS

Week 11 (Mar. 20-24): Environmental Justice

Read: Ch. 11 Environmental Justice in textbook

Watch: [What is Environmental Justice](#) (3 min)

Read: Bullard & Johnson (2000). Environmentalism and Public Policy: Environmental Justice, Grassroots Activism and Its Impact on Public Policy Decision Making (journal article)

Read: [McGregor et al \(2020\). Indigenous Environmental Justice and Sustainability](#) (journal article)

Read: Derickson & MacKinnon (2013). From Resilience to Resourcefulness (journal article)

Week 12 (Mar. 27-31): Sustainable Governance & Economics

Read: Ch. 12 Sustainability Planning and Governance in textbook

Watch: [What is the Most Sustainable City in the World?](#) (8 min) & [Creating Sustainable Cities](#) (7 min)

Read: DeCaro et al. (2017) [Legal and Institutional Foundations of Adaptive Environmental Governance](#) (journal article)

Read: Ch. 13 Sustainability, Economics and the Global Commons in textbook

Week 13 (Apr. 3-7): Solidarity Economy & The Commons

Watch: [What is the tragedy of the commons?](#) (5 min)

Read: Kawano (2021). Solidarity Economy: Building an Economy for People and Planet (chapter in scholarly book)

Read: Dietz et al. (2003). The Struggle to Govern the Commons (journal article)

Read: Bollier (2021). Commoning as a Transformative Social Paradigm (chapter in scholarly book)

Week 14 (Apr. 10-14): PROPOSALS

DIGITAL POLICY BRIEF PROPOSALS DUE FRIDAY APRIL 14TH

Week 15 & 16 (Apr. 17-21 & 24-28): DIGITAL POLICY BRIEFS

DIGITAL POLICY BRIEF PROJECTS DUE FRIDAY APRIL 28TH