Overview

Sustainability is a new word with old roots. First introduced as a concept in the 1970s and 1980s, sustainability is now everywhere. There are sustainability majors and minors at many universities, companies have sustainability divisions, and in general, many see striving for sustainability as a laudable goal.
But where did this term come from? What are we trying to sustain? And for whom? What political, economic, and cultural changes—especially over the past thirty years—made the idea of sustainability so attractive? What are the root causes of unsustainability?

This class will look at the history of a number of key environmental ideas, such as nature, conservation, the environment, the Anthropocene, resilience, and sustainability. We will then look at the application of sustainability ideas in a number of areas, especially related to climate change. Finally, we will end the course by reflecting on the question “Is sustainability still possible?” Given our unchecked carbon emissions and rapidly changing climate, this ability to construct a society that is even remotely sustainable seems in question.

**Evaluation**

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<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Component</th>
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<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Attendance and Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>10%</td>
<td>Reading Quizzes (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15%</td>
<td>Essay 1 – <em>The Bet</em> book review</td>
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<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>Essay 2 – Is Sustainability Still Possible?</td>
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<td>Second Exam</td>
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**Attendance and Participation**

I will run this class, as much as possible, like a seminar. *Attendance and participation are essential.* You must do the readings and be willing to participate in class discussion.

To give you a sense, of my expectations for class participation, I offer the following guidelines:

The **A** student reads all the material beforehand and demonstrates a clear understanding of the key aspects of the text. She is able to answer questions posed by the professor, but more importantly, she has developed her own questions and comments about the text. She speaks regularly without dominating the discussion. She also listens carefully to what her classmates say and builds on their contributions.

The **B** student more or less reads the material, though not very carefully. He understands the ‘gist’ of the article or chapter, but when pressed, he has difficulty assessing the implications of the text. He is an infrequent contributor to discussion. In general, this student participates from time to time, but is mostly content to let others do most of the talking and critical thinking.

The **C** student demonstrates little evidence of doing the reading and she rarely, if ever, speaks. However, she attends regularly.

The **D** or **F** student never talks, shows no evidence of doing the reading, and may also miss classes. Basically, this student is a pain-in-the-behind.

**You must bring the day’s assigned readings to class. If you don’t bring the readings, I will mark you as absent.**

**Reading Quizzes**

To ensure students are keeping up with the reading, I will give four pop quizzes during the semester. These quizzes should be quite straightforward. If I think students are not doing the reading, or reading the books and articles superficially, I will give quizzes beyond just the four I am planning now.
You may use your notes, but not the assigned readings, during the quizzes.

**Essays**
There will be two essays in the course: a five-page book review of *The Bet* and an eight-ten page paper on the topic “Is sustainability still possible?” Please see the syllabus schedule for the essay due dates. Two to three weeks before these papers are due, I will distribute hand outs laying out my expectations in more detail.

**Exams**
There will be two exams in the course. Exam questions will likely consist of short answers and short essays.

**Laptops, Tablets, Smart Phones, and Texting**
You are welcome to use laptops and tablets in this course. *However,* I consider the use of such technologies a privilege, not a right. If it is clear you are surfing the web, cruising Facebook, etc.—and trust me, in a class of ~30 people it is very clear when you are doing this, even if I can’t see your screen—I will revoke your laptop/tablet privileges and deduct points from your class participation grade.

No texting at all during class, either.

**Academic Integrity**
Cheating in any form will not be tolerated, nor is assisting someone to cheat. The submission of any work in this class is taken as a guarantee that the thoughts and expressions are the student’s own unless properly cited. Breaking this policy on exams, essays, or other assignments will, at a minimum, result in a failing grade for an assignment and likely a failing grade for the course. For more information, see the student section of the university’s web site about academic integrity ([http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/](http://academicintegrity.syr.edu/)).

This is what the university obliges me to tell you. This is my own simple take on the matter: plagiarize a paper or cheat on an exam and you will fail. Period. Other professors may let issues of academic dishonesty slide or let you off with a warning. *I am not one of those professors.*

**Student Athletes**
Many of you are student athletes. Athletics is an important part your time in college, and I will do my best to accommodate your travel schedules.

Typically, your coaches or another official associated with the team or athletic department will give you a letter explaining your status and a list of your away games. Once you receive this material, please give me a copy.

**Students with Disabilities**
Syracuse University has a commitment to aiding students with disabilities. If you have disability that will affect your ability to succeed in this course, please let me know and we will work out an arrangement in consultation with SU’s Office of Disability Service to ensure that you can complete assigned readings, attend lectures, and finish assignments.

**Religious Observances**
Students must notify instructors by the end of the second week of classes if, and when, they will be observing their religious holiday(s). You may fill this out online via MySlice. When you log-
on to MySlice, you (should) see a link for religious observances. Click on that and fill-out the requested material.

**Required Texts**

**Other course articles and chapters are available on the course Blackboard site under “Readings.”**

**Course Schedule**
(BB) – reading available on Blackboard

**Week One**
January 14  Welcome and Introduction
January 16  Early Ideas about Nature

**Readings**
Williams, Raymond. “Nature.” In *Keywords*. (BB)

**Week Two**  Does the Environment Sculpt Society?
January 21  **No Class. MLK Day.**
January 23  Environmental Determinism

**Readings**


**Week Three**  Dawning of Conservation
January 28  Sustainable Farming in Colonial New England?

**Readings**
January 30  Man and Nature

Readings


**Week Four**  Progressive Conservation
February 4  What was Conservation?

Readings


February 6  Conservation and the Land Ethic

Readings

**Week Five**  Conservation Critiques
February 11  Conservation, Justice, and Resource Management

Readings


February 13  **First Exam**

**Week Six**  Population and Limits to Growth
February 18  Neomalthusianism

Readings
February 20   Limits to Growth?

Readings


**Week Seven**   Sustainability in the Era of Markets
February 25   From Limits to Free-Market Fundamentalism

Readings

February 27   Seeking Sustainability in an Age of Political Polarization

Readings


**Week Eight**   Limits to Sustainability
March 4   Sustainability Critiques

**Essay: The Bet book review due **

Readings
Robert Engelman, “Beyond Sustainababble,” *Is Sustainability Still Possible?*, 3-16.


March 6   Capitalism and Sustainability?

Readings


**Week Nine**
March 11   Spring Break

March 13   Spring Break
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<th>Week Ten</th>
<th>Climate Change and Sustainability</th>
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<tr>
<td>March 18</td>
<td>The Angry Beast: Discovering Global Warming</td>
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Readings

March 20 | Storms of My Grandchildren |

Readings


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<th>Week Eleven</th>
<th>Coping with Climate Change</th>
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<td>March 25</td>
<td>Climate Activism I</td>
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Readings
Klein, Naomi. “How Science is Telling Us to Revolt.” *New Statesman* 29 October 2013. (BB)

March 27 | Climate Activism II |

Readings


Wilson, Robert. “Forging the Climate Movement: Environmental Activism and the Keystone XL Pipeline.”

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<th>Week Twelve</th>
<th>Living in the Anthropocene</th>
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<td>April 1</td>
<td>Living in the Anthropocene</td>
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Readings

April 3  
Love Your Monsters?

Readings
Latour, Bruno. “Love Your Monsters: Why We Must Care for Our Technologies As We Do Our Children.” *The Breakthrough*, Winter 2012. (BB)


**Week Thirteen**
April 8 **No class. Away at AAG Conference.**
April 10 **No class. Away at AAG Conference.**

Readings
None. Work on your essay!

**Week Fourteen**
April 15 From Sustainability to Resilience I

**Is Sustainability Still Possible?**

Readings
None.

April 17 From Sustainability to Resilience II

Readings
To be announced.

**Week Fifteen**
April 22 Discussion: Is Sustainability Still Possible?

Readings
To be announced. Most likely, a selection of quotes or sections from student papers on “Is sustainability still possible?” I will post these on Blackboard

April 24 Wrap Up

Readings
None.

**Week Sixteen**
April 29 **Second Exam**

Readings
None. Prepare for final.