GEOG 1115 / NR 1115: SEEKING SUSTAINABILITY
Strategies to Examine, Understand, Change, and Save the World

COURSE INFORMATION
Credit Hours: 3
Requirements: None
Primary Audience: All students are welcome.
Prerequisites: No prerequisites are required for this course
Location: New Classroom Building 120
Meeting Times: 9:30pm-10:45pm T, Th

INSTRUCTOR CONTACT INFORMATION
Name: Dr. Timothy Baird
Office Location: Major Williams Hall, Room 127
Office Hours: Tuesdays and Thursdays 3pm-4pm, or by appointment
Email address: tbaird@vt.edu (THIS IS THE BEST WAY TO GET IN TOUCH WITH ME - please put ‘GEOG1115’ in the Subject line of your email – this way it won’t get lost)

TEACHING ASSISTANT CONTACT INFORMATION
Name: Mark Villarreal
Office Location: Major Williams Hall, Room 112
Office Hours: By appointment
Email address: villarmd@vt.edu (CONTACT MARK WITH YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT READING AND READING NOTES)

COURSE DESCRIPTION & GOALS
Sustaining the world’s interconnected environmental, social, and economic systems is arguably the most pressing concern that humans now face. All sectors of our economies and all aspects of our lives are engaged in a grand struggle with the environment and yet “Sustainability” is still quite a mysterious enterprise. In the first semester of this two-semester course we will critically and constructively examine “Sustainability.” We begin by examining the apparent goals of the sustainability movement and as well as the challenges it faces. Next, we will learn about the basic components (i.e., things) that “sustainability” is trying to sustain, how these things have evolved, and how they are interrelated. We will discuss strategies to understand integration and adaptation, including the strengths and weaknesses of diversity and how “sustain” really means “change”. Finally, we will apply these perspectives to engage the current discussions surrounding global climate change and the global economic crisis.

Lastly, this course seeks to broaden our conceptualizations of what sustainability is (and more importantly, what it could be) within the context the most relevant issues facing humans today. We will discuss the relevance of language, food, energy, family, business, biodiversity, and design for sustainability and evaluate the prospect that the sustainability heavyweights who will do the ground-breaking stuff are still taking college classes.
By the end of the course, students should be able to:

1. identify key concepts of the social sciences;
2. describe the dominant interconnections within and between environmental, social, economic, and integrated complex adaptive systems;
3. identify interconnections among and differences between components and interactions within and across systems, including interconnections between social institutions, groups, and individuals;
4. analyze the ways in which values and beliefs relate to human behavior;
5. identify advantages and challenges of diversity across a range of contexts;
6. interpret an intercultural experience both from one’s own and another’s worldview; and
7. create and support arguments related to pressing sustainability challenges.

Also, I think becoming a peace-loving trouble-maker would be positive outcome.

COURSE MATERIALS
No Required Text

INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS
Class periods will involve discussion of readings, small in-class group projects, and interactive lecture. Also, there will be a few short movies shown during the course.

READING & CLASS PARTICIPATION
For this course, reading and class participation are inextricably related.

One of the primary forms of participation will be discussion. To reinforce this course objective, guiding questions will be provided for each reading. These questions will form the basis of our in-class discussion. Students are expected to do the required reading and answer the reading questions before the appropriate class period. Questions should be uploaded to Scholar in advance of class and are evaluated on a 100-point scale. Students are expected to make an earnest effort to respond thoughtfully to each question. Evaluation is not based on correct answers. Answers do not need to be long – a few sentences will suffice for full credit. 11 points will be deducted for each day that questions are handed in late. Exceptions will be made only in extreme circumstances. This is not intended to be punitive, but to encourage timely completion of the reading and quality preparation for class discussion.

In order to create a good climate for everyone to participate, please follow these discussion guidelines:

➢ Be ready to share and explain your opinions. Feel free to disagree with others, but be specific in your own assertions and back them up with evidence.
➢ Listen carefully and respond to other members of the group. Be willing to change your mind when someone demonstrates an error in your logic or use of facts.
➢ Do not hesitate to ask for clarification of any point or term that you do not understand.
➢ Make your point succinctly, avoid repetition, and stick to the subject.

The reading for this course will include newspaper, magazine, and journal articles, selections from books, and textbooks. It is important that you do the readings before the appropriate class periods. Plan ahead so that you will not get behind. PDFs of readings or links to sources on the internet can be found at scholar.vt.edu. Also links to internet readings are provided on the syllabus.

COURSE EVALUATION
The best evaluation is personal. “Did I learn anything in this class? Was it worth the effort?” An inquiring attitude and an active imagination will help you to recognize the relevance of the course topics to your life and will enhance your enjoyment of, and success in, this class.

Instructor evaluation will reflect performance on:

Reading Questions: 50%
Midterm Exam 23%
Final Exam 27%
Final Grade 100%

Reading Notes: please see READING & CLASS PARTICIPATION section above.

Exams: Exams will aim to evaluate critical thinking skills. Questions for the midterm and final will be drawn from the class discussions and reading notes. Exams will be open book and open notes. This does not mean that the exams will be easier – it means that I will be looking for thoughtful application of examples and ideas from the course to address broad conservation issues and challenges in an organized and convincing manner. One more thing – you have to be in a group of 3 or 4. It sucks – I know.

GENERAL EDUCATION - PATHWAYS ASSESSMENT GOALS & PLAN

And another thing: This course is part of the incoming general education (GenEd) curriculum at Virginia Tech. GenEd programs are meant to promote broad learning across disciplines. This is meant to compliment deep disciplinary learning (e.g., majors). At Virginia Tech, this new curriculum, which is called Pathways, will replace the existing GenEd model, called the Curriculum for Liberal Education (CLE). In an effort to track the efficacy of the Pathways curriculum, all approved GenEd courses will focus on specific learning outcomes (e.g., scientific reasoning, critique and practice in arts and design, etc.) and indicators of those outcomes. Instructors will report on measures of student learning according to these outcomes and indicators. A full list of these outcomes and indicators can be found here. THIS COURSE addresses two specific learning outcomes: (1) Reasoning in the Social Sciences, and (2) Intercultural and Global Awareness. Here are the indicators associated with those outcomes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasoning in the Social Sciences</td>
<td>1. Identify fundamental concepts in social sciences.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Identify interconnections among and differences between social institutions, groups, and individuals.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Analyze the ways in which values and beliefs relate to human behavior and social relationships.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural and Global Awareness</td>
<td>1. Identify advantages and challenges of diversity and inclusion in communities and organizations.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>2. Address significant global challenges and opportunities in the natural and human world.</td>
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The instructor and teaching assistant will assess students’ competencies (e.g., below competent, competent, above competent) for these indicators based on students’ completed work on reading notes and exams, specifically work related to these specific indicators. This assessment will be relayed to the VT Office of Assessment & Evaluation, which will compile data for all courses contributing to each learning outcome. Student identities will not be known by anyone besides the instructor and teaching assistant.
HONOR CODE
The Undergraduate Honor Code pledge that each member of the university community agrees to abide by states: “As a Hokie, I will conduct myself with honor and integrity at all times. I will not lie, cheat, or steal, nor will I accept the actions of those who do.”

Students enrolled in this course are responsible for abiding by the Honor Code. A student who has doubts about how the Honor Code applies to any assignment is responsible for obtaining specific guidance from the course instructor before submitting the assignment for evaluation. Ignorance of the rules does not exclude any member of the University community from the requirements and expectations of the Honor Code. For additional information about the Honor Code, please visit: www.honorsystem.vt.edu

HOW TO SUCCEED IN THIS COURSE
➢ Attend class and participate in discussion.
➢ Keep up with the readings.
➢ If something is not clear, ask a question.
➢ Clarify expectations with the Professor.
COURSE SCHEDULE

SECTION 1: PERSPECTIVES, VALUES & STRATEGIES
1. AUG 21 (T): INTRODUCTION TO THE CLASS AND TO SUSTAINABILITY
   Reading:
2. AUG 23 (Th): THE VALUE OF VALUES
   Reading:
3. AUG 28 (T): WHAT’D HE SAY?
   Reading:
4. AUG 30 (Th): MOVIE/CHAT: NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC HUMAN FOOTPRINT
5. SEP 4 (T): SUSTAINABILITY SYSTEMATICALLY
   Reading:

SECTION 2: ENVIRONMENTAL SYSTEMS
6. SEP 6 (Th): MUD WRESTLING
   Reading:
7. SEP 11 (T): ALIEN INVASIONS & TROPHIC CASCADeS
   Reading:
8. SEP 13 (Th): EVOLUTION & RIPPED GENES
   Reading:

SECTION 3: SOCIAL SYSTEMS
9. SEP 18 (T): “TRADITIONAL” SOCIAL NETWORKS
   Reading:
10. SEP 20 (Th): THOUGHTS ON SOCIAL CONNECTIONS
   Reading:
11. SEP 25 (T): SOCIALITY AND INFORMATION EXCHANGE
   Reading:

SECTION 4: ECONOMIC SYSTEMS
12. SEP 27 (Th): THE EARLIEST ECONOMIES
   Reading:

13. OCT 2 (T): MERCANTILISM IN THE COLONIES
   Reading:

   Reading:

15. OCT 9 (T): EXAM WORK DAY (Exam due Th 10/11, 11:53pm)

SECTION 5: CONCEPTUALIZING INTEGRATED SYSTEMS
16. OCT 11 (Th): MOVIES: JOHN AND MAX
   Readings:
   • Zip

17. OCT 16 (T): PEOPLE HEART PLANTS. WHAT DO YOU HEART?
   Reading:
   • Evaluation of me (we'll do this in class)

18. OCT 18 (Th): CORN FLAKES AND COUP D'ETATS
   Reading:

19. OCT 23 (T): COMPLEX ADAPTIVE SYSTEMS
   Reading:

SECTION 6: RESILIENCE, REGIME SHIFT & DIVERSITY
20. OCT 25 (Th): THE GREAT PLAINS CASE
   Reading:

21. OCT 30 (W): THE OPIOID CASE
Reading:

22. NOV 1 (Th): PAYING FOR THE PARTY & MIDTERM EXAM DISCUSSION
Reading:

NOV 6 (T): NO CLASS

23: NOV 8 (Th): DIVERSITY BLOWS
Reading:

24: NOV 13 (T): TV RULES
Reading:

SECTION 7: GLOBAL CRISIS - SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL CONCERNS
25. NOV 15 (Th): SUSTAINING THE AMERICAN DREAM?
Reading:

NOV 20 (T): NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK
NOV 22 (Th): NO CLASS – THANKSGIVING BREAK

26. NOV 27 (T): BOOMERANG GENERATION – HI MOM, I’M HOME
Reading:

27. NOV 29 (Th): BUCKS AND DUCKS
Reading:

SECTION 8: TRANSITIONING TO NEXT SEMESTER
28. DEC 4 (T): SAYS WHO? I DON’T BELIEVE IT!

Reading:

Class Activity:
- REVIEW AND FINAL EXAM HANDED OUT