

## **Global Studies 361: Environment and Sustainability**

Fall 2014

Lectures: Tuesday and Thursday, 12:30-1:45pm

Classroom: Bolton Hall B91

Course Website: <https://uwm.courses.wisconsin.edu/d2l/home>

Instructor: Prof. Oriol Miroso

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The concept of ‘sustainability’ is ubiquitous nowadays. In a world that has become aware of the negative (and potentially catastrophic) environmental implications of our way of life, calls for living sustainably have become pervasive. But what does this turn towards sustainability really imply? Does it mean that we should not grow? What does a sustainable environment look like? Should sustainability be pursued through government action, or by individual agents in a market? Are sustainability and increased profitability compatible? How can sustainability be pursued at the global level and in the context of accelerating globalization? And what is the relationship between a sustainable environment and inequality? All these questions suggest that sustainability and the environment are complex realities that can only be understood in relation to social processes. The main goal of this class is to tease out these realities and relationships in order to develop the analytical tools necessary to manage global environmental problems.

### **Class organization**

The class will be divided in two main parts. In the first two-thirds of the course, we will explore global environmental problems, their possible causes, and the different strategies available to tackle them. We will pay particular attention to the concept of ‘sustainability’, its different understandings, and the implications of using it to address environmental challenges. This section of the class will conclude with an exam. In the second part of the course, we will explore specific case studies of environmental sustainability. I will start with a review of the case of global water access, and then each student will spend half a session presenting a case and leading the class discussion.

Given the reduced number of students and the advanced nature of the course, I plan to run the class as a seminar. This means that, even if I will lecture and provide the basic information necessary to understand the issue at hand, I want to spend as much time as possible having an open discussion of environmental problems and sustainability. This means that you have to come to class and be ready to speak up, ask questions and engage with your peers. For this reason, in the context of this class I establish the principle that THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A STUPID QUESTION OR COMMENT. You should think of this class as a safe space in which we all start from zero and work together to make sense of the readings and theories. Sometimes the simplest questions or the most misdirected comments are the most productive and illuminating ones, and we need to embrace that in this class.

## Assignments and workload

These are the different components through which I will evaluate you:

*Responses/Reflections:* through the 17 sessions that comprise the first part of the course, I will ask you to write 10 short reflections on the readings or responses to what we have seen and discussed in class. Each one should be short, between 300 and 500 words, and the main goal is to show me that you are actively thinking about the class material. You can look back at what we have seen and basically continue the class discussion, or you can look forward and use the readings to pose questions and bring up issues that you would like to talk about in class. You can choose for which of the 17 sessions you want to submit a response, but you need to keep track of how many you have submitted. Each response should be uploaded by 8am on the day of the class. After that deadline, the response is counted as belonging to the following session. You can only submit one response per session, so if you fall behind and you have more responses to do than there are sessions left, you will not be able to reach the required 10. The responses need to be posted to the corresponding session in the Discussion tab of D2L (please copy the text as a comment, do not upload files). Each response is worth 2 points, for a total of 20 points for this component of your grade. All responses that show critical thinking and genuine reflection will obtain the 2 points, but I reserve the right to give you a lower score if your submission is not showing the required engagement and effort.

*Exam:* at the end of the first component of our class, we will have an exam in which I will test your knowledge and understanding of the material seen in the previous 17 sessions. The exam will be worth 30 points.

*Case study presentation and class leadership:* in the last third of the semester I will be asking each of you to take over the class for half an hour to present a case study which you will have prepared and facilitate the discussion about it. I will give you more details on what I expect from you when the time comes. This component of your grade will be worth 30 points.

*Final reflection:* the last thing you will have to do is to write a final overall reflection for the class. For this one, I do not want you to repeat what you said in your presentation, but to reflect on what you learned from your case study and to compare it to the other cases presented by your peers. Do all cases show similar issues? Are they very different? If so, why? What overall assessment can you make, what broader lessons can you extract from the overall consideration of your case study with those of others in the class? What conclusions have you reached about sustainability after everything seen during the semester? This exercise will be worth 20 points. The final reflection has a maximum length of 1,500 words, and should be submitted in D2L's Dropbox by 5pm of Monday, December 15<sup>th</sup>.

The only other requirement for the course will be attendance to class. Attendance is required and I will take attendance each and every class. I will allow up to 4 unjustified absences. These are supposed to cover illnesses and other uncontrollable circumstances, they are not a free pass to miss four classes without reason. Therefore, if anyone misses more than four classes I will need to see a justification for ALL the absences if you do not want to be penalized. With this, I am trying to avoid the cases of those who miss four classes without justification early in the semester, and then they get sick and feel entitled to miss more sessions. You are expected to be

in class every day, and therefore any non-justified absence beyond the allowance of 4 will subtract 2 points from your final grade. And just to be clear: attending a class implies being there for all (or most) of the session and being ‘active and engaged’. Showing up late or leaving early without reason will be counted as an absence. In the same way, sleeping in class or not paying any attention to me or your classmates when they speak will also be counted as an absence, and I will be the only judge of whether you are ‘active and engaged’.

The grading scheme, therefore, will be the following:

10 responses	x	2 points each	=	20 possible points
1 exam	x	30 points	=	30 possible points
1 presentation	x	30 points	=	30 possible points
1 final reflection	x	20 points	=	20 possible points
TOTAL			=	100 possible points

The final letter grades, then, will be applied over the total possible 100 points for the class in the following manner:

A	93-100
A-	90-92.9
B+	87-89.9
B	83-86.9
B-	80-82.9
C+	77-79.9

C	73-76.9
C-	70-72.9
D+	67-69.9
D	63-66.9
D-	60-62.9
F	0-59.9

This scheme will be strict. If you get 92.9 points your grade is A-, not A. You are warned from the very beginning so if you want a higher grade work harder and take advantage of the different opportunities available to improve your grades. Complaints of the “but I am so close!”-type at the end of the semester will not have any effect. A further comment on ‘complaints’ about grades: I am happy to discuss with you any concerns you might have about how you are evaluated and about your grades. However, I will only make changes to your grades if I made an obvious mistake. My main concern when I evaluate you is to make sure that I am fair to everyone in relation to each other. If somebody comes to see me and ‘convinces’ me to increase his or her grade that puts those who just accept their grade and do not come to see me at a disadvantage, and therefore as a policy I do not change grades.

**A note on participation in class discussion**

As I mentioned above, your active participation will be a key element of the learning experience in this class, so I want to make sure that what I mean by that is clear: participating properly in class is not a function of speaking a lot or of making only brilliant points. My main criterion for evaluating participation is: is this contribution bringing the conversation forward? This can happen by asking a very simple question of clarification, or by saying something that is completely wrong yet allows us to confront an issue that we had not considered before. Someone who speaks non-stop or who shuts other people off is in fact stifling debate, and that is the exact opposite of what I am looking for. As I said before, I want to encourage you all to participate,

thus the principle that there is no such thing as a stupid question or comment in this class. But I do ask you to be mindful: you are part of a group, and our goal is to move forward and learn together. Using participation to disrupt the conversation or to put someone else down is not acceptable and I will be strict about that.

### **Phone, tablets, laptops**

Although I understand the potential value of using personal devices in the classroom, in my experience they tend to be much more of a distraction than a productive tool, and therefore their use is not allowed in this class. I want you to be paying attention and engaged in class, not taking notes frantically to the point that you cannot process what I am saying, and for that reason after each class I will give you access to my lecture slides (which are quite verbose and self-explanatory). Hopefully this will mean that you will only have to take limited, pointed notes during class and there will be no need to use any electronic devices. If for a particular reason somebody needs to use a device, you have to get explicit permission from me first.

### **Office hours, email**

I will hold office hours every Tuesday from 10am to 12noon. You should see this as a resource to which you have access in order to seek clarification, to discuss issues both with the material and the functioning of the class, or simply to make your views known about specific topics and readings. Please use them!

You can also contact me by email at any point during the semester. I will try to reply to your messages promptly. However, you should always allow 24-72 hours for my replies. Therefore, you should not wait until the last minute to ask me important questions. Plan ahead!

### **Required texts**

All of the readings that we will use this semester are available as electronic reserves on the Content tab of D2L. Depending on how the class goes, I might be making some changes to the reading list and deleting or uploading readings to D2L. I will let you know in class and by email if that is the case.

### **Desire2Learn**

I have set up a class website on D2L (<http://d2l.uwm.edu>). There you will be able to follow your grades and attendance for the class, access the online discussion board, submit your final reflections in the dropbox, and download the different class materials. As I mentioned above, I will be posting the class slides to the website after each session.

### **Credit hours and workload**

Following university guidelines, this course requires at least 9 hours of work outside of the classroom every week. You should expect to spend about 4 hours doing the readings and writing your reflections, 3 hours studying and preparing for the exam, and 2 hours working on your presentation and final reflection (this is an average – you will be spending much more time

working on these and less doing the readings at the end of the semester).

### Calendar of sessions and readings

Tue 9/2            The Syllabus (no reading)

Thu 9/4            Overview of Global Environmental Problems

Rockström, Johan et al. 2009. "Planetary Boundaries: Exploring the Safe Operating Space for Humanity." *Ecology and Society* 14(2).

Tue 9/9            What Is Sustainability? (i)

Dresner, Simon. 2008. *The Principles of Sustainability*. London and Sterling, VA: Earthscan. Chapters 1: "Progress and Its Discontents," and 2: "From Muir to Meadows," pp.9-30.

Thu 9/11           What Is Sustainability? (i)

Martinez, J. Michael. 2014. *American Environmentalism. Philosophy, History, and Public Policy*. Boca Raton, FL: CRC Press. Chapter 3: "Environmental Ethics: An Overview," pp.49-74.

Tue 9/16           Capitalism, the Environment and Sustainability (i)

Magdoff, Fred, and John J. B. Foster. 2011. *What Every Environmentalist Needs to Know About Capitalism. A Citizen's Guide to Capitalism and the Environment*. New York: Monthly Review Press. Chapter 4: "The Environment and Capitalism," pp.61-93.

Thu 9/18           Capitalism, the Environment and Sustainability (ii)

Bunker, Stephen G., and Paul P. S. Ciccantell. 2005. "Matter, Space, Time, and Technology: How Local Process Drives Global Systems." Pp. 23-44 in *Nature, Raw Materials and Political Economy*, edited by Paul S. Ciccantell, David A. Smith and Gay Seidman. Oxford: Elsevier.

Tue 9/23           Population, the Environment and Sustainability (i)

Engelman, Robert. 2009. "Population and Sustainability: Can We Avoid Limiting the Number of People?" *Scientific American's Website*.

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/population-and-sustainability/>

Kunzig, Robert. 2011. "Population 7 Billion." *National Geographic Magazine's Website*. <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/print/2011/01/seven-billion/kunzig-text>

Smail, J. Kenneth. 1995. "Confronting the 21st Century's Hidden Crisis: Reducing Human Numbers by 80%." The NGP Forum. Teaneck, NJ: Negative Population Growth.

- Thu 9/25                    Population, the Environment and Sustainability (ii)
- Hartmann, Betsy. 1995. *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs. The Global Politics of Population Control*. Boston: South End. Chapter 8: “Building a ‘Consensus’ for Cairo and Beyond,” pp.131-156.
- Navarro, Mireya. 2011. “Environmental Group Breaks the Silence on Population Control.” *New York Times’s Website*.  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/01/science/earth/bringing-up-the-issue-of-population-growth.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/01/science/earth/bringing-up-the-issue-of-population-growth.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)
- The Economist. 2008. “The Marathon’s Not Over.” *The Economist*, July 12<sup>th</sup>  
<http://www.economist.com/node/11708001>
- Tue 9/30                    Technology, the Environment and Sustainability (i)
- Mol, Arthur P. J. 2002. "Ecological Modernization and the Global Economy." *Global Environmental Politics* 2(2):92-114.
- Thu 10/2                    Technology, the Environment and Sustainability (ii)
- Bonds, Eric, and Liam Downey. 2012. “‘Green’ Technology and Ecologically Unequal Exchange: The Environmental and Social Consequences of Ecological Modernization in the World-System.” *Journal of World-Systems Research* 18(2):167-186.
- Zehner, Ozzie. 2011. “Unintended Consequences of Green Technologies.” Pp. 427-432 in *Green Technology. An A-to-Z Guide*, edited by Dustin Mulvaney and Paul Robbins. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tue 10/7                    Business, Markets and Sustainability (i)
- Holliday, Chad, and John Pepper. 2001. *Sustainability Through the Market. Seven Keys to Success*. Geneva: World Business Council for Sustainable Development. Chapter 2: “Seven Keys to Success,” pp.10-47.
- Thu 10/9                    Business, Markets and Sustainability (ii)
- Keohane, Nathaniel O., and Sheila S. M. Olmstead. 2007. *Markets and the Environment*. Washington, Covelo, and London: Island Press. Chapter 5: “Market Failures in the Environmental Realm,” pp.65-83.
- Tue 10/14                   Sustainability and Inequality (i)
- UNDP. 2011. *Human Development Report 2011. Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All*. New York: United Nations Development Programme. Chapter 2: “Patterns and Trends in Human Development, Equity and Environmental Indicators,” pp.23-43.

- Auyero, Javier, and Debora Swistun. 2007. "Amidst Garbage and Poison: An Essay on Polluted Peoples and Places." *Contexts* 6(2):46-51.
- Thu 10/16 Sustainability and Inequality (ii)  
 UNDP. 2011. *Human Development Report 2011. Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All*. New York: United Nations Development Programme. Chapter 3: "Tracing the Effects – Understanding the Relations," pp.45-66.
- Martínez-Alier, Joan. 1995. "The Environment As a Luxury Good or 'Too Poor to Be Green'?" *Ecological Economics* 13(1):1-10.
- Tue 10/21 Sustainability and the Environmental Movement (i)
- Rootes, Cristopher. 1999. "Acting Globally, Thinking Locally? Prospects for a Global Environmental Movement." *Environmental Politics* 8:290-310.
- Schlosberg, David. 2007. *Defining Environmental Justice. Theories, Movements, and Nature*. Oxford. Chapter 4: "Environmental Justice and Global Movements," pp.79-99.
- Thu 10/23 Sustainability and the Environmental Movement (ii)
- Rohrschneider, Robert, and Russell R. J. Dalton. 2002. "A Global Network? Transnational Cooperation Among Environmental Groups." *Journal of Politics* 64:510–533.
- Roberts, J. Timmons. 2007. "Globalizing Environmental Justice." Pp. 285-307 in *Environmental Justice and Environmentalism. The Social Justice Challenge to the Environmental Movement*, edited by Ronald Sandler and Phaedra C. Pezzullo. Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press.
- Tue 10/28 Sustainable Development (i)
- World Commission on Environment and Development. 1987. *Our Common Future*. Oxford. Chapter 2: "Towards Sustainable Development."
- Kates, Robert W., Thomas T. M. Parris, and Anthony A. A. Leiserowitz. 2005. "What Is Sustainable Development?: Goals, Indicators, Values, and Practice." *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 47(3):8-21.
- Thu 10/30 Sustainable Development (ii)
- Park, Jacob, Matthias Finger, Ken Conca, Jacob Park, Ken Conca, and Matthias Finger. 2008. "The Death of Rio Environmentalism." Pp. 1-12 in *The Crisis of Global Environmental Governance. Towards a New Political Economy of Sustainability*. London and New York.
- Monbiot, George. 2012. "Rio+20 Draft Text Is 283 Paragraphs of Fluff." *The Guardian's Website*.
- Tue 11/4 Review Session

Thu 11/6	EXAM
Tue 11/11	Water Sustainability (i) No reading
Thu 11/13	Water Sustainability (ii) No reading
Tue 11/18	Student presentations 1 & 2
Thu 11/20	Student presentations 3 & 4
Tue 11/25	Student presentations 4 & 5

THANKSGIVING BREAK

Tue 12/2	Student presentations 6 & 7
Thu 12/5	Student presentations 8 & 9
Tue 12/19	Student presentations 10 & 11
Thu 12/11	Wrap-Up and Conclusions