

ENVR/IDIS 190: Redefining Prosperity: Moving Toward a Culture of Sustainability

<u>Instructor</u>	<u>Phone</u>	<u>E-mail</u>	<u>Office</u>
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Office Hours:	Mondays	10:00 -- 11:00 am
	Tuesdays	9:00 -- 10:00 am
	Wednesdays	10:00 -- 11:00 am
	Thursdays	9:00 -- 10:00 am

Class Meeting Time: Fridays 12:45 – 3:45 PM, 310 H.I.L.L.

Course Prerequisites: None

Required Texts:

2010 State of the World Report
Transforming Cultures: From Consumerism to Sustainability
The WorldWatch Institute

Confessions of an Eco-Sinner: Tracking Down the Sources of My Stuff
Fred Pearce, Beacon Press, 2008

Additional Required Reading: *You will also have several readings from various media and internet sources throughout the semester.*

Course Introduction and Description:

Background:

In 2002, a U.N. Declaration indicated that there would be a Decade for Education for Sustainable Development beginning in 2005. Discussions on practical sustainable efforts on campus have begun, but according to a 2009 study conducted by the National Wildlife Federation and the Princeton Survey Research Associates International, very few institutions of higher education have developed curriculum (new courses or programs) focused on topics of sustainability.¹ According to Julian Keniry at NWF, “unless a student majors in biology or environmental studies, he or she is unlikely to take a course covering environmental or sustainability issues”.² A number of national environmental education or research organizations have also begun to express the need for

¹ <http://www.nwf.org/Global-Warming/Campus-Solutions/Resources/Reports/Campus-Report-Card.aspx>

² August 2009 memo forwarded from Julian Keniry and Jim Lyon (a Moravian College alum) to me summarizing results on sustainability education from the *Campus Environment* 2008 report (available at <http://www.nwf.org/campusEcology/docs/CampusReportFinal.pdf>).

curriculum related to topics of sustainability. Personally, I strongly believe that this is an important and complex topic that students should have a chance to learn more about and they should realize that sustainability goes well beyond recycling and energy efficiency projects that are popular on many college campuses.

While attending the U.N. Climate Change meetings (COP15) in Copenhagen in 2009, I ventured over to Klimaforum (the peoples' alternative forum) and happened to walk into a talk being given by Tim Jackson of the United Kingdom. Earlier that year, he had authored a report published by the Sustainable Development Commission of the United Kingdom entitled *Prosperity without Growth: the Transition to a Sustainable Economy*.³ I was struck by a particular graph that he showed (to be discussed in class) and the idea that there were other measures of prosperity and success. Given that I would be on sabbatical in fall 2010, I decided to investigate these themes of sustainability and prosperity more thoroughly. The plan was to develop what I learned into a pilot course and here we are!

Course Description/Preliminary Components for the Course Syllabus:

In the 1980's, the United Nations established the World Commission on Environment and Development which has become known as the Brundtland Commission—named after the chair of the working group. This commission provided the first definition of sustainability:

..Meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Subsequently, a number of other definitions have become associated with the term; typically the goals for achieving sustainability encompass and integrate a range of environmental, social and economic factors. Sustainable development should allow continued economic development that not only is less resource-intensive and less polluting, but also results in a more equitable distribution wealth and education.

Since the Brundtland Commission report was published in 1987, the 1992 Rio Earth Summit was held, the U.N. Millennium Development Goals were established, the U.N. Millennium Ecosystem Assessment was completed, the Earth Charter was written, there has been enhanced globalization, and, more recently, a global economic downturn has occurred. These events and reports, along with the ever growing population, worsening environmental problems, and the stark realization of diminishing natural resources ranging from oil to fisheries, have caused people to consider sustainability in a much more focused manner. The above mentioned 2009 "Prosperity without Growth" report challenges the long standing global goal of continuous economic growth as a measure of success—suggesting that it may no longer be feasible or even the best measure of prosperity. This report and many others challenge the current belief that consumption, economic growth and GNP are the best measures of progress. Analyses also show that these indicators are not well correlated with measures of what constitutes "a good life" or happiness. Indeed, Costa Rica, the happiness nation in the world, is far from the top of the list having the highest annual household or gross national incomes.⁴ (Depending on the survey and indicators used the United

³ The report is available at: <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=914> or <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/pages/redefining-prosperity.html>.

⁴ <http://worlddatabaseofhappiness.eur.nl/> and <http://www.happyplanetindex.org/>

States ranks 20th or 114th!) An international dialog has begun to examine the relative importance of technology and innovation vs. nature and beauty on overall wellbeing.

This seminar-format course will examine the history of the sustainability movement, along with various definitions of sustainable development and measures of prosperity. You will be examining your own patterns of consumption and ideas of what makes you feel secure and happy and you will consider, through research, the global social and economic impact of the choices you make. I will ask you to consider what you would be willing to sacrifice for a more equitable distribution of resources globally, for a cleaner environment, or for more secure and more prosperous future for your children. We will examine case studies of countries that have ranked high in surveys of “happiness quotient”, education, health care and economic dynamism to try to understand what factors influence perceptions of a good life and the overall quality of life in different countries. We will also investigate examples of sustainability movements and projects and the role of civil society, non-profits and social networks in these efforts. Ultimately, we will tackle the question of whether the goals for a sustainable planet are achievable, and if so, at what cost.

You will be expected to conduct a research project that will culminate in a term paper and course presentation on topics such as those below:

- Moving from Agriculture to Permaculture (sustainable agriculture, food security, etc.)
- Rethinking School Food – the link between food and the health and brain development of our children
- The Slow Food Movement
- Sustainable Work Schedules (the U.S. is the “Nation without Vacation”)
- Changing Business Cultures
- Building the Cities of the Future
- Media Literacy, Citizenship and Sustainability
- Ecovillages
- Inspiring People to See that Less is More
- Environmental Justice
- Lessons that can be learned from Indigenous Peoples, Tribal Elders, or Grandmothers!⁵
- The Value of Wilderness and Beauty in Child Development (“Nature Deficit Disorder”)
- Sustainable Energy
- A Green Economy

Student Learning Outcomes:

Through the readings, discussions and investigations, by the end of the course, you should be able to:

- Understand the various definitions/interpretations of sustainability, including the new concept of “just” sustainability (the new environmental paradigm);
- Understand the objectives of obtaining global sustainability;
- Examine the global “source to sink” impacts (social and environmental) for some of your favorite “must-haves” in life;

⁵ For example, see Schaefer, C. 2006 Grandmothers Counsel the World. Women Elders Offer Their Vision for Our Planet, Trumpeter Press, Boston.

- Compare and evaluate a range of measures of progress and prosperity including well-being, happiness and the “Happy Planet Index” which includes human well being and ecological efficiency as well as the efficiency of use of finite resources;
- Compare prosperity levels (using a range of measures), economic status, cultural differences, health care and wellbeing, happiness indices, and the ecological footprints of the United States, Costa Rica, Germany, one island nation in the top 10 countries in the most recent Happy Planet Index, one African country, and one Asian country (i.e. representative countries from both the Global North and South);
- Reflect on what prosperity means to you personally, and consider which country or culture best emulates your personal “ideal”.

Expectations:

I prepare weekly lecture outlines that include discussion topics for the week, assigned readings, assignments, and a list of other relevant resources (typically internet-based) that may be of interest. I have a BlackBoard site set up for the course where I will post some of the resources and for which I use to communicate to the class in between our meeting times.

Attendance: Regular class attendance is expected. Make-up work will not be permitted unless you have an acceptable reason (family emergency, illness, etc) – *with* documentation. If an emergency should arise, please try to notify me prior to class. Notification from the Moravian College Health Center, Learning Services or the Moravian College Dean of Students’ Office will be necessary if you miss more than one class (remember that we only meet once per week so it is equivalent to a week’s worth of material). I will recognize legitimate excused absences such as when students are representing the university in an official capacity (e.g. for presentation at scientific meetings, intercollegiate athletic competition, but not practice, off-campus music performances, etc.). Such activities are scheduled ahead of time; thus, I expect you to make arrangements with me ahead of time as well. Please note: Students who arrive late to class disrupt the flow of the session and distract their peers – especially since this is a small class and a discussion-based one. Please be prompt!

Cheating or plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism may result in failure of the course. Students will be held to the highest standards as specified by the Moravian College Honor Code. Violations of this code will be handled in the most severe manner allowed by college policy. Please read the **Academic Honesty Policy** that is included in the student handbook *and* the policy that will be distributed in class. I have attached a cover sheet to a policy that each of you will sign indicating that you have read and understand the policy and implications of violating it. If you have any questions about plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty, please ask. Several assignments in this class will involve the use of internet resources, and it is my experience that students often do not realize that copyright violations and plagiarism policies still apply.

Reading Assignments : Should be completed prior to each class session (not during).

Extra Help : If any difficulties arise during this course from selecting a research topic or other issues, please see me. *I will be happy to help!* The reference librarians in Reeves Library are also willing to assist you with reference materials. The Moravian College Writing Center can provide assistance in writing and revising your papers.

Special Accomodations:

Students who wish to request accommodations in this class for a disability should contact Mr. Joe Kempfer, Assistant Director of Learning Services for Disability Support, 1307 Main Street (extension 1510). Accommodations cannot be provided until authorization is received from the office of Learning Services.

Assessment of Student Learning (aka *Tests/Assignments/Grading*):

You will keep a journal and/or contribute to a course blog throughout the semester (details will be discussing during the first class meeting period). At the end of the semester, you will prepare a reflection paper that considers how your views have been impacted by the course discussions, readings and your research.

There will be a number of short writing assignments throughout the semester – which will be used to enhance discussions during class meetings.

In my opinion, this is not the type of course where tests are the best measure of student learning. There will be some time of final (essay based), but most of your grade will come from assignments, a research project, the journal/bloggging activities, and participation in course discussions.

Grading: The grading system is as follows: *(+/- will be administered as professor deems appropriate)*

A = 90 – 100 %

B = 80 – 89 %

C = 70 – 79 %

D = 60 – 69 %

- Miscellaneous assignments throughout the semester based on readings, current events, and class discussions = **15%**
- Cultural comparison assignment: Students will research compare the “prosperity” of at least 2 countries (one from the Global North and one from the Global South) with the U.S. and explain what cultural, social, economic and environmental factors impact the quality of life in these countries. = **10%**
- Assignment related to Pearce book (examining the global “source to sink” impacts – social and environmental – on some of your favorite “must-haves” in life = **10%**
- Research paper and presentation (e.g. on topics not specifically discussed in class as noted above)* = **20%**
- Final (essay exam) = **10%**
- Journal/bloggging contributions = **15%**
- Class participation in discussions, etc.** = **20%**

***RE: Research paper and presentation:**

<u>Topic decision date:</u>	February 18th
An <u>abstract</u> describing the topic:	March 1st (by 5:00 pm)
Class presentations on topic:	April 8th and 15th
<u>Paper due:</u>	April 21st (by 5:00 pm)

(If you would like me to review a draft of your paper, I would need to have it by April 1st in order to get it back to you in time for you to make revisions.)

- The paper should be in the 8 to 10 page range (typed, double-spaced; bibliography or list of sources is not included in these 8 to 10 pages).
- Ideally, this project will include a variety of resources, including primary sources.
- The talk should be approximately 15 to 20 minutes in length and each speaker should be able to answer questions from the audience. Hopefully, the topics chosen will be ones that will generate good discussion.

**** RE: The "class participation grade":**

This is based on your active participation and preparation for each class session. Therefore, excessive absences will have a negative effect on your final grade for the course. Please note: it is within the instructor's purview to apply qualitative judgment in determining grades for assignments or the entire course

A Preliminary List of some potentially useful resources (hopefully, you will help to expand this list). These are in no particular order and represent sites that I have found or have had recommended to me via colleagues that I know personally or through social networking!

- A New Prosperity (D. Husic's blog) <http://anewprosperity.blogspot.com/>
- The United Nations Millennium Development Goals site: <http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/> (Links to many other relevant U.N. sites are accessible from this home page – see left panel)
- Earth Charter Initiative: <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/>
- Earthscan: Blogging for a sustainable future <http://www.earthscan.co.uk/blog/>
- Just Sustainabilities (the blog of Julian Agyeman from Tufts): <http://julianagyeman.com/>
- WiserEarth.org: The Social Network for Sustainability <http://www.wiserearth.org/>

- World Watch Institute Blogs:
 - <http://blogs.worldwatch.org/nourishingtheplanet/>
 - <http://blogs.worldwatch.org/transformingcultures/>
 - <http://blogs.worldwatch.org/greeneconomy/>
- Yes! Online Magazine <http://www.yesmagazine.org/>
- Orion Magazine <http://www.orionmagazine.org/>
- SustainabilityForum.com <http://www.sustainabilityforum.com/blog>
- Slow Planet: <http://www.slowplanet.com/blog/overview/>
- The Green Elephant: <http://www.thegreenelephant.us/>
- Transition United States: <http://transitionus.org/welcome-transition-us>
- Transition Network: <http://www.transitionnetwork.org/>
- Transition Towns: <http://www.transitiontowns.org/>
- U.K. Sustainable Development Commission <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/index.php>
- Nature language: <http://naturelanguage.com/>
- Greenspace Scotland: <http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/>
- Links between Greenspace and health (Literature review)
<http://www.greenspacescotland.org.uk/default.asp?page=477>
- The Centre for Business Relationships, Accountability, Sustainability and Society (BRASS):
<http://www.brass.cf.ac.uk/>
- STAUNCH Sustainability Tool from BRASS:
http://www.brass.cf.ac.uk/projects/Responsible_Management_Governance_and_Leadership/responsible-management--STAUNCH.html
- DEFRA (UK): <http://ww2.defra.gov.uk/>