Portland State University  
USP 588 Sustainable Development Practices  
"Integrating Sustainability"  
Fall 2011, 3 credits

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Class Meeting Day / Time / Place  
Mondays, 4:00-6:30 p.m., URBN 270

Course Overview and Goals

"Sustainability" is a widely used term whose meaning remains elusive. Nevertheless, a wide variety of organizational strategies and policy tools/techniques are now being pursued by governments, NGOs and businesses in support of efforts to accomplish sustainable development (SD). This course is a graduate-level consideration of those sustainable development practices. It surveys newly emerging analytic and management approaches that are intended to avoid (or limit) the social and environmental harms associated with most past (and current) patterns of development and - ideally - to provide environmental and social benefit through more sustainable development practices.

The course is intended to build upon basic understandings of socio-environmental change from earlier coursework and independent study. It is also intended to provide a foundation for subsequent in-depth studies of particular sustainable development strategies and analytic techniques. It serves multiple purposes in the PSU curriculum. It is an elective course in the environmental specialty of the urban and regional planning degree and an elective in the real estate graduate certificate. It is also one of the core courses in the Graduate Certificate in Sustainability and is a required course in the School of Urban Studies and Planning's Urban Design Certificate.

The course is taught by an interdisciplinary faculty team. Each faculty member approaches the topic from a somewhat different perspective. However, all share a core concern for effective real-world application of sustainability goals and principals, as well as a respect for the serious challenges faced by sustainability change-makers

Reading Materials

Articles provided in class or through D2L at least one week before due – not all reading assignments are included in this syllabus.
Assignments and Grading
15% - participation
35% - 3 short written assignments
50% - group project outline, draft paper, final paper and team presentation

Participation expectations include: reading assigned materials and contributing to classroom discussions, presenting results of independent inquiry, and contributing to collective assignments.

Written Assignments
All written deliverables must be submitted in the form of one hard copy delivered in class plus one electronic version e-mailed simultaneously to all instructors for the course.

Short individual papers: Three short individual written assignments are required.

- Paper #1 (due October 17): Choose three articles from those listed in Paper #1 Handout (one from economics list, one from environmental list and one from social list) and provide an analysis of how the concepts raised in these 3 articles might inform the sustainability of ecodistrict development. Of particular interest are the ways in which the different perspectives can be integrated on the ground. Paper not to exceed 7 pages.
- Paper #2 (due November 7): What strategies have been developed elsewhere (i.e. not in Portland) to address the kinds of issues your group project is focused on in your ecodistrict? What are some elements from these examples that could inform how Portland approaches district level sustainable development efforts? What are some challenges to using these approaches in Portland? (4-5 pages).
- Paper #3 (due December 5): Summary assessment of the key concepts you are taking away from this class with respect to sustainable development implementation. What surprised you, what questions did the class raise for you? This is not intended to be a course evaluation, but rather your own synthesis of key elements you learned in the class. (2-4 pages)

Group Project
An overview of the Group Project is provided below – additional information will be provided in class regarding the specific topic areas, expectations, and the format for the paper and presentation.

The group project will involve the development of a response to a request for proposals related to the implementation of a particular aspect of eco-district development. Topic areas will be shared in the first class – based on students’ expressed areas of interest, teams will be assigned by the second class session.

Central to the project is a critical analysis of the intended outcomes – what is the rationale for your proposed approach? What environmental and social impacts will this approach address? Are there any negative impacts that your approach may cause? What regulatory or policy hurdles would you be likely to encounter and how will you address them? How do you expect people to respond to the approach you are proposing? Why are the people involved or affected likely to behave in the way you predict? How would you measure success? What specific metrics would you use and how will you evaluate the results of these measures? How does your proposal integrate comprehensive sustainability principles? Ultimately, why should the stakeholders and funders needed for the success of this project support your proposal?
In the final project report, we expect a professional presentation, both oral and written. One of the goals of this class is to move to a relatively sophisticated and broad understanding of the issues we discuss. You need not lose your biases, but you should recognize them and carefully consider that your biases may lead you to poor conclusions. Opinions should have solid support from authoritative sources (be careful about the internet). Think about the quality of your references. Contact practitioners for a reality check—but do not assume that one or two people’s experiences represent the gamut of possible experience.

In the in-class presentation, we expect thoughtful, logical presentations. This presentation can be facilitated with PowerPoint or other presentation software. You need not have a completed paper when you do your presentation. But do understand that the presentation is a significant portion of your final deliverable, so it must be well prepared. An outside audience of interested sustainability actors will be invited, so you should be prepared to do a professional presentation.

**Schedule of Topics, Readings and Assignments**

**Week 1 – September 26, 2011** (Drs. Allen, Lutzenhisier and Brown)

Overview and Basics
- Introductions
- Review of the course: topics, sessions, readings, assignments
- Introduce topic areas for Group Project and collect information for team assignments
- Discussion of one credit course available to accompany USP 588 (contact Dr. Brown no later than October 3 if this one credit course is of interest)
- Group Evaluation format introduced
- Group process

**Introduction to Group Process:** Led by Professor Jeanne Enders, School of Business Administration faculty

**Week 2 – October 3, 2011 (Dr. Allen)**

Sustainability – Understanding the Global Context and Key Concepts

- What does sustainability mean?
- What is the history of sustainability efforts at international, national, state and local levels?
  What are the key problems/issues/challenges related to sustainability and sustainable development?
- Introduction to Ecodistricts

Guest Speaker: Naomi Cole, Ecodistrict Manager, Portland Sustainability Institute

Reading

- General background on ecodistricts
- Seltzer et al., 2010. “Making Ecodistricts”
- Progress reports on 5 ecodistrict pilots,

**Week 3 – October 10, 2011**
Understanding Change through Time in Large Systems (Dr. Lutzenhiser)

- social history of technology (SHOT)
- social construction of technological change (SCOT)
- diffusion of innovation
- social movements
- market transformation models

→ DUE: **Outline of Group Topic Area** – Identify key issues, questions, challenges. Include task list for team members.

**Week 4 – October 17, 2011**

Sustainable Development Issues and Metrics (I) (Dr. Brown)
- Metrics and Markets
  - codes & standards
  - benchmarks & rating systems
  - third-party certification
  - accounting systems
  - pollution markets

→ DUE: Paper # 1 (see above for topic)

**Week 5 – October 24, 2011**

Sustainable Development Strategies (Dr. Lutzenhiser and Dr. Allen)
- Policies and Interventions
  - law & regulation
  - procurement
  - taxes, investments, incentives & subsidies
  - planning & evaluation systems/metrics
  - RD&D, technical assistance, education & training
  - social marketing, labeling & demand-side intervention
  - market effects


**Week 6 – October 31, 2011 (Dr. Brown)**

Dynamics of Change in Organizations and Markets
- organizational fields
- markets, institutions, conventions
- supply chains
- value (and values) chain
- corporate social accountability

**Week 7 – November 7, 2011 (Dr. Allen)**

Sustainability in specific topic areas related to Group Projects
Emerging strategies and issues
Guest Speakers

⇒ DUE: Paper # 2 (see above for topic)

⇒ **Friday November 11 - DRAFT GROUP PAPER DUE** by 5 PM to entire class, by email.

**Week 8 – November 14, 2011 (Dr. Allen)**
Presentation and constructive critique of group paper.

**Week 9 – November 21, 2011 (Dr. Allen)**
- Sustainability in specific topic areas related to Group Projects
- Emerging strategies and issues
- Guest Speakers

**Week 10 – November 28, 2011**
Student presentations – 10 minute “elevator pitch” presentation- 20 minute critique.

**Week 11 – December 5, 2011**
Student presentations – 10 minute “elevator pitch” presentation - 20 minute critique.

**Wednesday, December 7, 2011 Final Individual Paper due by 5 PM**
**Wednesday, December 7, 2011 Final Group Paper due by 5 PM**
**Wednesday, December 7, 2011, Team Peer Evaluation due by 5 PM**