Course Title:
NR 5XXX: NAVIGATING THE SOCIAL COMPLEXITIES OF SUSTAINABILITY

Instructor:
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Course Description
This course is designed to provide students with a variety of tools for navigating the social complexities of environmental and other sustainability-related initiatives. Students will learn about a wide array of social science theories that help to explain human behavior. They will use these theories to develop strategies for approaching real world problems. Students’ own interests will dictate the specific problems of focus. Through readings, presentations, discussions, and strategy development exercises, students will develop new tools for approaching sustainability-related challenges and interacting with diverse stakeholders.

Course Objectives
Having successfully completed this course, the student will be able to:

- Describe the social dimensions of sustainability challenges.
- Communicate about social science theories effectively.
- Demonstrate the ability to apply social science theories to real-world problem-solving within the context of environmental sustainability.
- Articulate both the value and limitations of social science theories for problem solving.

Required text

Course schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Topic/structure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Introductions</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Wickedness; moving beyond the technical</td>
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<td>- Reading and discussion</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Review 3SO</td>
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<td>- Discuss preliminary problem statement: systems, stakeholders, strategies, outcomes</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Read Chapters 1-3 of book.</td>
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<td>- Submit problem statement.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Read Chapter 10. Select theories.</td>
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<td>- Rank theories for video presentation to class.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Chapter 4 and Vignette 9.1. Student presentations.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. 4-6 minute videos summarizing theories (6-9).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Feedback from other students and discussion</td>
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</table>
| 7 | Chapter 5 and Vignette 9.2: Student presentations  
   1. 4-6 minute videos summarizing theories (5-7).  
   2. Feedback from other students and discussion. |
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| 8 | Chapter 6 and Vignette 9.3: Student presentations  
   1. 4-6 minute videos summarizing theories (4).  
   2. Feedback from other students and discussion |
| 9 | Chapter 7 and Vignette 9.4: Student presentations  
   1. 4-6 minute videos summarizing theories (6).  
   2. Feedback from other students and discussion |
| 10 | Chapter 8 and Vignette 9.5: Student presentations  
   1. 4-6 minute videos summarizing theories (4).  
   2. Feedback from other students and discussion |
| 11 | Problem solving session 1 (1/3 of class)  
   1. 3-5 page write-up of problem, proposed strategies, and justification  
   2. 5-8 minute video to accompany write-up  
   3. Student feedback and discussion |
| 12 | Problem solving session 2 (1/3 of class)  
   1. 3-5 page write-up of problem, proposed strategies, and justification  
   2. 5-8 minute video to accompany write-up  
   3. Student feedback and discussion |
| 13 | Problem solving session 3 (1/3 of class)  
   1. 3-5 page write-up of problem, proposed strategies, and justification  
   2. 5-8 minute video to accompany write-up  
   3. Student feedback and discussion |
| 14 | Final papers due  
   • Final submission of problem-solving paper. Maximum of 6 pages. |
| 15 | Final exam – sustainability challenge |

**Assignments (all page estimates are for single-spaced documents):**

Problem statement (10%):  
- A summary of a sustainability-related problem the student would like to address in the course, covering the problem, relevant system elements, and stakeholders, their strategies (or lack thereof), and their interests/positions.
- Criteria for selection:  
  - Must have an element of “wickedness” – some degree of disagreement about problem definition and/or desired outcomes among stakeholders.
  - Must be related to sustainability
  - Must have enough information/knowledge to have a basic understanding of the stakeholders and their desires.
- Maximum 3 pages, single-spaced.

Theory summary assignment (20%):  
- 4-6 minute video that clearly summarizes the theory (or theories in a few cases) and provides a clear example of how it could be useful in a sustainability situation. Students are encouraged to use visual aids.
- Students will rank the top three theories they would like to summarize. I will assign one to two theories to each student. In a couple cases, a student might take on two theories where this makes sense (for example, ELM and TPB).
Problem solving assignment (40%)
• 3-5 page write-up, summarizing the problem briefly, applying a minimum of three theories to developing a proposed approach for effectively addressing the problem, and a clear justification of why this approach should be successful. (10%)
• 5-8 minute video presentation to accompany the write-up. (10%)
• Final problem-solving paper (20%)
Feedback and discussion (10%)
• Theory summaries:
  o All students will be required to ask at least one clarifying question or to pose an additional insight about each theory.
  o Presenters of each theory will be required to respond to all comments.
• Problem solving presentations:
  o All students will be required to provide constructive feedback for each presenter.
  o Each presenter is required to answer any questions asked and will use the feedback they receive to fine-tune their problem-solving paper.
Final exam (20%)
• Students will be provided with a hypothetical scenario. They will respond to it by using what they have learned (theories and associated strategies) to develop an approach for engaging with the issue. Students will be graded based on the extent to which they can apply relevant theory to the problem and clearly justify their approach. They will have one week to complete the exercise and must use at least three theories in their response. They must use at least one theory they did not use in their earlier assignments.