



CIEE Beijing, China

Course name:	Sustainability in Context
Course number:	ENVI 3002 BJCH
Programs offering course:	Sustainable Development
Language of instruction:	English
U.S. Semester Credits:	3
Contact Hours:	45
Term:	Spring 2020

Course Description

The World Commission on Environment and Development defined sustainability in 1987 as “meeting the needs of society of today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” This course systematically introduces the field of sustainability through a “three-pillar” model articulating the critical need to balance environmental, sociocultural, and economic spheres in development. Emphasis will be placed on sustainability within the Chinese national context as well as on how China interacts with and impacts other regions and peoples in the world. The course focuses on key knowledge areas of sustainability including population, ecosystems, global change, energy, agriculture, water, culture, and identity. In addition to providing a basic introduction to concepts and theories of sustainability, you will analyze environmental issues related to sustainability in China and reflect upon how individual behaviors and governmental policy and structural forces impact environmental justice and sustainable ethics. Through course exercises and research projects, you will have the opportunity to study the intricate interdependence among the ecological, the social-cultural, and the economic spheres of sustainability in China and the world.

Learning Objectives

This course is designed to help students:

- Gain an understanding of conceptual and theoretical foundations of sustainability in the three-pillar model
- Develop critical analysis of the interdependence between nature, sociocultural transformation, and economic development in China as well as around the globe
- Develop skills in selection of issues, qualitative research, and presentation of inquiries on sustainability

Course Prerequisites

There is no prerequisites for this course; however previous experience in the social and environmental sciences is beneficial.

Methods of Instruction



The teacher view learning as an intellectual journey supported by collaboration among the instructor and the students. Each week, the teacher will utilize readings and films to introduce students to a variety of social phenomena, worldviews, and cultures, with the goal of sensitizing students to perspectives pertaining to sustainability in China and the world. Guest speakers and site visits will be included in the instruction. In addition, weekly group activities and discussions will require students to integrate newly learned concepts to build their own observation of daily lives in Beijing. The final project will give students the opportunity to apply their insights to produce a written research paper and present their findings to the class.

Assessment and Final Grade

Class Participation	20%
Reading Discussions (2)	20%
Short Papers (2)	20%
Presentation and Critique	20%
Final Project	20%

Course Requirements

Class Participation

Class participation is an integral component of this course. You cannot do well in this course without attending punctually. Please arrive at class meetings on time and fully prepared, having completed the assigned readings, reviewed your reading and film notes, and ready to discuss. Your participation and discussion grade in class is worth 20% of your total grade and will be assessed on the following scale:

A- level: The student attends class, listens and speaks in a respectful manner, demonstrates familiarity with the reading and lecture material, and can articulate the three-pillar model and apply it to real world examples

B- level: The student attends class, listens and speaks in a respectful manner, and demonstrates familiarity with the reading and lecture material

C- level: The student attends discussion section and listens and speaks in a respectful manner

Per CIEE guidelines, each unexcused absence will cost 2% while the penalty for being late is 1% of your total grade. In addition, *internet surfing, texting, or working on other courses during discussion section constitutes a kind of mental absence and will lead to a loss of all participation points for that day.*



Reading Discussions

You will lead two discussions of specific readings for the class. These exercises are designed to encourage students to develop abilities to critically comprehend complex issues and clearly communicate their ideas with their colleagues in a seminar setting. It is important for the discussant to demonstrate to the class how the assigned readings are situated within the broader discussion on sustainability and their experiences living in China. In addition, you are responsible to facilitate class participation by asking informed questions and by constructing roadmaps of comprehension in the presentation. You will be graded based on your familiarity with the assigned readings and analytical engagement with the topics of the week. I will provide the grading rubric in Week 3 of the course. Class discussion usually lasts half an hour to forty five minutes. Please feel free to contact me a week in advance if you have any questions.

Research Portfolio

Your research portfolio will consist of two five-page double spaced papers (20%), your presentation and critique (20%), and a twelve-page double spaced final report (20%). Each assignment is designed to help you to gradually develop your research project throughout the course of the semester.

Short Papers

The first short paper is due on Week 6 of the semester. In this paper, please identify one sustainability issue you have noticed in Beijing. Pose a research question, and then outline why you think the question is relevant to the course and how you plan to conduct the research. Your chosen topic needs to fit into the concepts introduced in the course (a list of key concepts will be distributed in the second week of the semester). I will schedule individual meetings in week six to discuss the research questions and methodological plan with each student before the due date of the assignment.

The second paper is due on Week 10 of the semester. In this paper, please provide a preliminary analysis of your data employing the three pillar model. Please list in detail the interplay between the causes and the economic, sociocultural, and ecological consequences of the specific issues you have observed. I will meet with each student individually to discuss the projects after I review paper. I will provide more instruction for this assignment after you turn in the first paper.

Late papers will be marked down 5% after the first day and 1% every day afterwards.

Thesis Statement Presentation and Critique

On **Week 13**, present a 15-minute overview of your project to the class. In the presentation, you will need to present a thesis statement of your research project, your analysis based on the three-pillar model, and any unanswered questions. In addition, you will sign up to critique a fellow student's research and suggest possible solutions to the particular sustainability issue your classmate studies. These exercises are designed to help



students to become better presenters and discussants in future academic and corporate settings. The advice and suggestions will help your classmate to modify their research project before the final due date. More instruction on the assignment will be shared on Week 10. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to discuss them with me *a week in advance*.

Final Project

Write a final paper and present to the class, synthesizing your experiences and reflections that link your research experience and findings in Beijing/China to broader theoretical and conceptions from the course. The written portion should be 12 to 15 pages long and the presentation will be 20-30 minutes. More instruction will be given on this assignment during the course of the semester.

Weekly Schedule

List your schedule of classes below for the full term, including orientation, holidays and scheduled program trips. Ask the Resident Director for program dates before scheduling classes. If there are required course related fieldtrips in addition to regularly scheduled classes, be sure to indicate that these are required.

Week 1

Date

Orientation Week

Introduction to class

Week 2

Date

Sustainability: the Three-Pillar Model

Introduction to the goals and grading rubric of the course/Introduction to the three- pillar model, development in China, and global sustainability crises.
Chinese Development

Read:

World Youth Alliance. 2012. "Statement on Sustainable Development"
<http://www.wya.net/SustainableDevelopmentStatement.pdf>.

Shapiro, Judith. 2012. "Introduction: The Big Picture" *China's Environmental Challenges*. Malden, MA: Polity Press pp.1-30.

Meadows et al. 2004 [1972] "Limits to Growth" *Planet Blues: Environmental Politics from Stockholm to Johannesburg* edited by Conca, Ken and Dabelko, Geoffrey D. Green London: Westview Press pp.24-28.

Activity: Do We Have a Sustainable Campus?



Week 3
Date

Crowded and Hot but Not So Flat

Introduction and application of concepts such as carrying capacity; Malthus paradigm, ecological footprint, I=PAT; Try to think China's population and environmental issues in a global context.

Read:

Diamond, Jared. 2008. "What's Your Consumption Factor?" New York Times, January 2, 2008.

Watts, Jonathan. 2010. "Why Do So Many People Hate Henan" When A Billion Chinese Jump: How China Will Save Mankind -- Or Destroy It New York: Scribner pp.231-259.

Bell, Michael M. and Carolan, Michael S. 2011. "Population and Environment The Invitation of Environment Sociology. 4th edition Los Angeles: Sage pp.95-122.

Activity: Ecological Footprints and Global Inequality: A Lesson in Individual and Structural Components of Environmental Problems.

Week 4
Date

Research Methodology and the Great Collision

Examination of the contradictions between global capitalism and capacity of the planet; Introduction to ecological and social consequences of the Chinese local corporatism development model (i.e. Ordos/Lanzhou); Introduction to qualitative methodologies

Read:

Speth, James G. 2008. "Modern Capitalism: Out of Control" The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability. Yale University Press pp.46-66.

Barbosa, David. 2010. "Chinese City Has Many Buildings, but Few People" New York Times. Available at:
http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/20/business/global/20ghost.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Activity: Doing Interviews

Week 5

Buy, Baby, Buy and Drill, Baby, Drill



Date

Introduction to the Treadmill of Production and Consumption and Jevons paradox concepts. Examination of the global consumer culture and GDP myth in the Chinese context.

Read:

Frank A. G. 1996. "The Underdevelopment of Development" The Underdevelopment of Development edited by Chew, Sing C. and Denmark, Robert A. New York: Sage Publications pp.17-52.

Tilt, Bryan. 2010. "The Development Imperative" the Struggle for Sustainability in Rural China: Environmental Values and Civil Society New York: Columbia University Press pp.16-33.

Watts, Jonathan. 2010. "Made in China: Guangdong" When A Billion Chinese Jump: How China Will Save Mankind -- Or Destroy It New York: Scribner pp.135-158.

Activity: An Analysis of Chinese Consumerism

Week 6

Date

Is Sustainability Possible in Our Current World System? /Field Trip

First Short Paper

Introduction to the Treadmill of Production and Consumption and Jevons paradox concepts. Examination of the global consumer culture and GDP myth in the Chinese context.

Read:

Neumayer, Eric. 2010. "Conceptual, Ethical, and Paradigmatic Issues" Weak versus Strong Sustainability: Exploring the Limits of Two Opposing Paradigms. Northampton, MA: Edward Elger pp.7-29.

Braungart Michael and William McDonough. 2002. "Why Being Less Bad is No Good" Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way we Making Things New York: North Point Press pp.15-26.

Foster, John B. 2009. "Capitalism and Ecology: the Nature of Contradiction" The Ecological Revolution: Making Peace with the Planet. NY. Monthly Review Press pp.201-212.

Fieldtrip: Sustainable Beijing!/? Green Buildings and Urban Planning Museum



Hand in the first short paper.

Week 7
Date

Case Study: the Three Gorges Dam

Examination of the modernization paradigm and environmental justice; overview of displacement, degradation and inequality

Read:

Chetham, Deirdre. 2004. *Before the Deluge: The Vanishing World of Yangtze's Three Gorges* London: Palgrave Mcmillan. Chapter 8, 10 pp.144-162, 177-201.

Shapiro, Judith. 2012. "Environmental Justice and the Displacement of Environmental Harm" *China's Environmental Challenges*. Malden, MA: Polity Press pp.135-165.

Economy, Elizabeth C. 2010 "The Economic Explosion and Its Environmental Cost" *The River Runs Black: the Environmental Challenge to China's Future*. 2nd Edition Ithaca: Cornell University Press pp.36-57.

Activity: Social Class and Built Environment in Beijing

Week 8
Date

Case Study: Grassland Degradation in Inner Mongolia

Overview of the Common Pool Resource Approach; Discussion on the importance of cultural heritage and community in sustainability

Read:

Greider, Thomas and Garkovich, Lorraine. 1994. "Landscapes: The Social Construction of Nature and the Environment" *Rural Sociology*. Vol. 59, No.1: 1-24.

Williams, Dee M. 2002 *Beyond Great Walls: Environment, Identity, and on the Chinese Grasslands of Inner Mongolia*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Chapter 5,8 pp.80-116, 174-201.

Activity: Tragedy of the Commons Exercise

Week 9
Date

Dying of Thirst (and Hunger)

Overview of global climate change, food security, and water shortage issues; Using project on the Minqin oasis and the Qilian Glaciers as a case study



Read:

IPCC Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report IPCC.

Brown, Lester R. 2009. Plan B 4.0 Mobilizing to Save Civilization. New York, NY: W W Norton & Company. Chapter 1 and 3 pp.3-27, 55-76.

Conca, Ken. 2005. "Global Water Prospects" From Resource Scarcity to Ecological Security: Exploring New Limits to Growth edited by Dennis Piragis and Ken Cousins Cambridge, MA: MIT Press pp.59-81.

Activity: Rediscover local agriculture around Beijing

Week 10

Date

Maybe it is not too late

Overview on environmental Kuznets: Energy and Waste Alternative; discussion on China's attempts to alter its development model

Read:

Mol, Arthur P.J. 2001. "Ecological Modernization and Global Environmental Reform" Globalization and the Environmental Reform: the Ecological Modernization of the Global Economy Cambridge, MA: MIT Press pp.199-226.

Watts, Jonathan. 2010. "Science vs. Math" When A Billion Chinese Jump: How China Will Save Mankind -- Or Destroy It New York: Scribner pp338-372.

Hawken, Pual, Amory Lovings, and L. Hunter Lovings. 2008. "Waste Not" Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution San Francisco: Back Bay Books pp.48-61.

Activity: Where did my bottles go?

Hand in the second short paper.

Week 11

Date

Mid-semester Field Trip: No class in Beijing

Week 12

Date

Guest Speaker and National Holiday

Guest Speaker: Zhao Zhong, Pacific Environment China Program Coordinator and Director of Green Camel Bell in Gansu

Week 13

Thesis Overview Statement Presentation and Critique



Date

Week 14

Date

Sustainable Development with Chinese Characteristics

Discussion on the institutional constraints and opportunity for de-coupling to happen in China

Read:

O'Connor, James. 1994. "Is Capitalism Sustainable?" Political Economy and the Politics of Ecology. The Guilford Press, pp.153-173.

Shapiro, Judith. 2012. "State led-Environmentalism: The View from Above" China's Environmental Challenges. Malden, MA: Polity Press pp. 57-72.

Pan Jiahua. 2012. "China's Low Carbon Development: Driving Forces, Trends, and Paths" China At The Crossroads: Sustainability, Economy, Security and Critical Issues for the 21st Century edited by Wang and Kuhn Beijing: Foreign Language Press pp.26-31.

Activity: Write to Chairman Xi

Week 15

Date

Writing and Editing Week

Week 16

Date

Final Project Presentations and Concluding Remarks

Week 17

Date

Chinese Final: No Class

Readings

Barbosa, David. 2010. "Chinese City Has Many Buildings, but Few People" New York Times.

Available at:

http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/20/business/global/20ghost.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Bell, Michael M. and Carolan, Michael S. 2011. "Population and Environment The Invitation of Environment Sociology. 4th edition Los Angeles: Sage pp.95-122.

Braungart Michael and William McDonough. 2002. "Why Being Less Bad is No Good" Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way we Making Things New York: North Point Press pp.15-26.



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Diamond, Jared. 2008. "What's Your Consumption Factor?" New York Times, January 2, 2008.

Economy, Elizabeth C. 2010 "The Economic Explosion and Its Environmental Cost" The River Runs Black: the Environmental Challenge to China's Future. 2nd Edition Ithaca: Cornell University Press pp.36-57.

Foster, John B. 2009. "Capitalism and Ecology: the Nature of Contradiction" The Ecological Revolution: Making Peace with the Planet. NY. Monthly Review Press pp.201-212.

Frank A. G. 1996. "The Underdevelopment of Development" The Underdevelopment of Development edited by Chew, Sing C. and Denmark, Robert A. New York: Sage Publications pp. 17-52.

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IPCC Climate Change 2007: Synthesis Report IPCC.

Meadows et al. 2004 [1972] "Limits to Growth" Planet Blues: Environmental Politics from Stockholm to Johannesburg edited by Conca, Ken and Dabelko, Geoffrey D. Green London: Westview Press pp.24-28.

Mol, Arthur P.J. 2001. "Ecological Modernization and Global Environmental Reform" Globalization and the Environmental Reform: the Ecological Modernization of the Global Economy Cambridge, MA: MIT Press pp.199-226.

Neumayer, Eric. 2010. "Conceptual, Ethical, and Paradigmatic Issues" Weak versus Strong Sustainability: Exploring the Limits of Two Opposing Paradigms. Northampton, MA: Edward Elger pp.7-29.



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Shapiro, Judith. 2012. "Introduction: The Big Picture" *China's Environmental Challenges*. Malden, MA: Polity Press pp.1-30.

Shapiro, Judith. 2012. "State led-Environmentalism: The View from Above" *China's Environmental Challenges*. Malden, MA: Polity Press pp. 57-72.

Speth, James G. 2008. "Modern Capitalism: Out of Control" *The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment, and Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability*. Yale University Press pp. 46-66.

Tilt, Bryan. 2010. "The Development Imperative" *the Struggle for Sustainability in Rural China: Environmental Values and Civil Society* New York: Columbia University Press pp.16-33.

Watts, Jonathan. 2010. "Made in China: Guangdong" *When A Billion Chinese Jump: How China Will Save Mankind -- Or Destroy It* New York: Scribner pp.135-158.

Watts, Jonathan. 2010. "Science vs. Math" *When A Billion Chinese Jump: How China Will Save Mankind -- Or Destroy It* New York: Scribner pp. 338-372.

Watts, Jonathan. 2010. "Why Do So Many People Hate Henan" *When A Billion Chinese Jump: How China Will Save Mankind -- Or Destroy It* New York: Scribner pp.231-259.

Williams, Dee M. 2002 *Beyond Great Walls: Environment, Identity, and on the Chinese Grasslands of Inner Mongolia*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. Chapter 5,8 pp.80-116, 174-201.

World Youth Alliance. 2012. "Statement on Sustainable Development"
<http://www.wya.net/SustainableDevelopmentStatement.pdf>.

Films

We will use short segments (10-12 minutes) from the following films during lecture:

Black Gold
Capitalism and People's Republic of China



China's balancing act: high growth vs. sustainability

Demography

Food, INC.

Fuel—Change your fuel... change your world

Is Wal-Mart good for USA?

King corn Made in China

Manufactured Landscapes

Mined to death

Planet in peril

Rainmakers—China's warriors for the environment Seeds of hunger

The rise of ecology, 10 disasters that changed the world

Up the Yangtze

We feed the world

When clouds clear

Yangtze River—China's Wild Life Line