

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN ONTARIO
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY
Undergraduate Course Outline 2015-2016

Philosophy 2355F
Sustainability: Philosophical Issues

Fall Term 2015 Location: online	Instructor: Eric Desjardins Stevenson Hall 2137 Office Hours: Tu 2:00-3:00, F 11:30-12:30 519-661-2111 x.87769 edesjar3@uwo.ca
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DESCRIPTION

From governments to transnational corporations to radical environmental organizations, everyone agrees that we should pursue the ideal of sustainability. But what exactly does this mean? What ought to be sustained, and what is required to make that possible? Is sustainability a mere trendy ideology? Is it a justified ethical ideal? Or is it a scientifically based endeavor to live well in a complex and increasingly populated world? Some experts now suggest that sustainability requires resilient, life-supporting social-ecological systems as well as intergenerational justice and equity. This course explores this proposal and fosters reflection on the philosophical issues it raises.

TEXTS

1. Taylor, Robert. 2014. TAKING SIDES: Clashing Views on Sustainability, Second Edition (available at UWO Bookstore)
2. Articles, book chapters and online documents (made available on OWL)

OBJECTIVES

Students taking this course should: 1) acquire a deeper and more reflective understanding of sustainability and of the various practical and ethical dimensions shaping it; 2) be aware of the historical roots of sustainability and be knowledgeable of the different philosophical principles supporting it; 3) be able to critically assess some of the challenges that sustainability raises for the individual for humanity as a whole; 4) be able to evaluate the adequacy and limitations of the various actions that have been undertaken during the last decades; 5) develop skills for writing and discussing reflectively and effectively about various philosophical issues surrounding the topic of sustainability.

REQUIREMENTS

The final grade will be based upon the following scheme:

1. Mid-term essay (30%)

Essay on a topic and issue of your choice from weeks 1-6, approximately 1800 words.
Due Monday after Reading Week.

2. Final exam (35%)

This is an essay type exam. The focus will be on material covered during second half of the semester, but it will require understanding and integrating the concepts introduced during the whole semester. Duration: 3hrs.

3. Blog entry (15%)

A short blog entry about a sustainability initiative in your local community. Due by the end of semester, but can be submitted at anytime.

4. Participation to forum (20%)

Every week, post on one of the forum topics. **Must be done by Monday 9AM**

AUDIT

Students wishing to audit the course should consult with the instructor prior to or during the first week of classes.

The **Department of Philosophy Policies** which govern the conduct, standards, and expectations for student participation in Philosophy courses is available in the Undergraduate section of the Department of Philosophy website at <http://uwo.ca/philosophy/undergraduate/policies.html>. It is your responsibility to understand the policies set out by the Senate and the Department of Philosophy, and thus ignorance of these policies cannot be used as grounds of appeal.

Students who are in emotional/mental distress should refer to Mental Health@Western <http://www.uwo.ca/uwocom/mentalhealth/> for a complete list of options about how to obtain help.

This information appears on Page 3, under Support Services at the link:

<http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/handbook/exam/courseoutlines.pdf>