Human Rights and Sustainability (Graduate Seminar)

Meets: Thursdays 4:30-7:15
Location: Wilson Hall 255
(Syllabus subject to revision)

Professor: LaDawn Haglund
E-mail: ladawn.haglund@asu.edu
Office Location: Wilson Hall Room 265
Phone number: 480-965-7083
Office Hours: Tuesday and Thursday 12:30-2:00

“Failure to grasp the enormous potential that human rights have on sustaining environment ... will only lead to a larger scale of dispossession and homelessness across the world.”
- Miloon Kothari, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing, Statement at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg South Africa, August 2002

I. Course description:

This course addresses the connections between human rights and environmental sustainability. Legal and scholarly approaches linking human rights and sustainability are just beginning to emerge, given the important resource dimensions of economic and social rights realization and the human dimensions of sustainability. The right to food, housing, and a healthy environment are all areas where the discourses and practices of both human rights and sustainability are invoked to address shortcomings in current practices.

Yet human rights demands and environmental concerns are not always in harmony. Conservation efforts have at times created obstacles for local communities in terms of access to land and livelihoods. At the same time, the world’s poor and indigenous populations are often forced to bear the costs of environmental degradation, pollution, and climate change resulting from patterns of production and consumption from which they do not personally gain. The priorities of environmental justice movements, sometimes referred to as “environmentalism of the poor,” can thus differ considerably from those of mainstream environmental organizations. Furthermore, the emphasis within human rights law and practice on individual rights exists in tension with the collective and third-party impacts of many sustainability challenges, while the context-specific, place-based nature of most environmental problems (and the populations that endure them) sits uneasily aside claims to universal human rights.

This course addresses these dilemmas through theoretical and empirical readings on human rights and sustainability; grassroots accounts of struggles over environment-related human rights; and selections from literature and film that illustrate the environmental justice issues at stake. It also explores the routes by which rights can be realized beyond claims-making, emphasizing the importance of inclusive processes in the design and implementation of environmental policy.
The course will be divided into several sections, including an introduction to the concepts of human rights and sustainability, an exploration of how these concepts are operationalized in the real world, and a deeper examination of three substantive areas in which these ideas intersect and sometimes clash. The first substantive module will examine “urban ecology and human rights” including emerging claims for a “right to the city” and the sometimes conflicting mandates urbanization can create for states attempting to ensure adequate housing (including water and sanitation) while simultaneously protecting land and water resources.

The second substantive module will consider “the human right to food” and the related sustainability implications of the current global food system. The shift in the last 100 or so years from primarily rural agrarian societies to fossil fuel-based, urban industrial societies (and increasingly industrialized farming techniques) has created a number of challenges to both food security and environmental protection. The third substantive module investigates more deeply the consequences of industrialization processes for human rights, in particular, extractive industries such as oil and mining, and their implications for accelerated global climate change, community displacement, indigenous rights, and human health.

The objectives of the course are:

1. To clarify the official and unofficial meanings of “human rights” and “sustainability”

2. To acquaint students with theories and methodologies used to study and interrogate human rights and sustainability, in particular as they relate to one another

3. To demonstrate various ways that nations, communities, and advocates have attempted to promote human rights vis-à-vis sustainability challenges

4. To elucidate the structural characteristics of sustainability challenges, including the ways these challenges are shaped by dominant processes of production and consumption

5. To evaluate the role of power in the alleviation and/or perpetuation of environmental injustices, including the way it shapes struggles over solutions

6. To examine critically the unequal distribution of environmental injustices among poorer societies and vulnerable groups

7. To further student research on topics of human rights and sustainability

8. To foster a sense of political responsibility in regard to human rights and sustainability challenges, as well as develop a set of ideas regarding how more just and sustainable alternatives may be realized

This course provides a basis for research in the fields of international development and human rights. It can be used to prepare students for a comprehensive exam in the area of human rights and sustainability, as well as serve as a foundation for future work in internationally-focused governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations, or policy institutes.
II. Course requirements and grading:

Students must:

a) Attend all seminar meetings and participate in class discussions
b) Do all required assignments prior to the class for which they are due
c) Post weekly blogs outlining your critical reactions to the assigned texts
d) Lead class discussion once during the semester
e) Complete 2 short (4-6 page) papers on substantive themes
f) Submit an annotated bibliography of sources to be used for your final paper
g) Complete a 20-25 page final paper with final bibliography (not annotated)

a) Both attendance and participation are vital to the success of the seminar and to your grade, and are particularly important given the few number of class meetings during the semester. Students who miss more than one class will face penalties for their final grade.

b) This is a reading-intensive seminar. We will cover a lot of material (~100-150 pps/wk) during the semester. All seminar participants are expected each week to allot the time required for reading assigned materials thoughtfully and thoroughly, and watching films, prior to class. This will provide the basis for your active participation in our in-class discussions. I strongly recommend, as a matter of good scholarly practice, to take extensive notes on all your assignments, outlining the main ideas and clarifying any unfamiliar terms or concepts.

c) Weekly blogs on the assigned materials will be required; these should be no more than 1-2 pages, double-spaced, composed in a standard Word document. Blog posts should outline your critical reflections on the materials (as a whole), highlighting key points, evaluating them in light of each other and your own knowledge, and including 2-3 thoughtful questions that were not answered in the materials. You should not summarize the readings; assume everyone has read them. Blogs must be completed and posted 24 hours prior to our weekly meetings. In addition to writing your own blog, you are expected to review the blogs posted by all other seminar participants and comment on at least three other people’s posts prior to our weekly meeting.

Note: Although blogs are posted online, they should not be written while you are online. This is not an informal “chat session.” It is intended to provide thoughtful academic commentary, comprising brief but well organized reflections, questions and criticisms regarding the readings. Conventional grammar and punctuation rules should be observed.

d) Student-led discussion: students will lead class discussion once during the semester. Sign-up will take place during the 1st session. If you join class after this, it is your responsibility to contact me in order to sign up. You will select one reading (not more than 25 pages) or video (not more than 25 minutes) for your peers to consider in addition to the week’s assigned materials, and transmit this material through Blackboard or email one week prior to your presentation. Your task as discussion leader will be to raise important questions and issues, based on the blogs and critical reflections of all students. You should attempt to find common themes, points of divergence or confusion, and interesting observations that can guide the conversation in fruitful directions. You should not regurgitate the readings, as everyone will be expected to have done them prior to class. You are encouraged to link the week’s themes to current news.
e) There will be two short papers (5-6 pages) that explore and critique the arguments made in the readings from the first two substantive sections of the course:
   1) Urban ecology and human rights - due October 18
   2) The human right to food - due November 8

You can utilize comments from your own weekly blogs for these short papers, though I would like to see you synthesize, analyze, and critique the materials in a scholarly manner, and from the perspective of each topical area as a whole. I will provide guiding questions for these papers prior to their due date.

f) Your annotated bibliography is due two weeks before your final paper. It should consist of a brief (3-6 sentence) statement regarding the type of paper you will do (proposal, research paper, or theory paper) and its topic/questions, followed by a minimum of 10 scholarly sources that you intend to utilize, explaining in 2-3 sentences how each source will be useful for your topic. Please submit to the SafeAssignment on Blackboard prior to class on the due date. A PowerPoint presentation is posted on Blackboard to guide you in constructing an effective annotated bibliography.

g) Your final paper should be approximately 20-25 pages, and should link your research interests with theoretical approaches to - and empirical realities of - human rights and sustainability. You have three options in choosing the format of this paper:
   1) a dissertation (Ph.D.) or research grant (M.S. or Ph.D.) proposal
   2) an original research paper on a topic of human rights and sustainability (with intent to publish)
   3) a theoretical examination of a real-world human rights and sustainability issue (comparing/contrasting at least two theoretical perspectives), with a discussion of possible methodologies for testing these theoretical approaches

Your choice of format should depend on your year and progress toward degree, as well as on your professional goals. Regardless of which you choose, I urge you to think in terms of praxis, defined as:
   “the process by which a theory or lesson becomes part of lived experience. Rather than a lesson being simply absorbed at the intellectual level in a classroom, ideas are tested and experienced in the real world, followed by an opportunity for reflective contemplation. In this way, abstract concepts are connected with lived reality.”

Thus, all papers should include a theoretical framework, a review of relevant literature, and a discussion of methodologies for understanding real problems posed by the issue. You are required to meet with me to discuss your paper at least once before you write it.

Important: I expect graduate students to have mastered the basics of writing papers, using a standard style manual and proofreading their work. Please take the time to present professional quality work. Get to know one of the social science style manuals – e.g., A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations (Kate L. Turabian), A Manual of Style (The University of Chicago - use the “Author, Date” system for the social sciences), or the APA Manual – and pay particular attention to the pages on bibliographic references. You can lose up to a full grade for sloppiness, noncompliance or inconsistency with an established style, or poor proofreading.
Your grade will be based on the following:
- Attendance, participation, presentation: 15%
- Critical reflections postings to Blackboard: 15%
- Paper #1: 20%
- Paper #2: 20%
- Final paper: 30%

Please note that late work will not be accepted without a documented and dire reason.

III. Required Texts:

IV. Supplementary materials
2. A number of articles for this course will be handed out in class or posted to Blackboard.

V. Miscellaneous course information:

Obvious courtesies:
- Arrive on time
- Turn off your cell phone
- Let me know in advance if you must leave early

Incompletes: “A mark of ‘I’ (incomplete) is given by the instructor only when a student who is otherwise doing acceptable work is unable to complete a course because of illness or other conditions beyond the student’s control” (from the ASU General Catalog).

Academic integrity: I hope it is unnecessary to inform you that cheating and plagiarism will be dealt with severely. This includes failing to cite sources that you use for your work, representing others’ work as your own, or allowing others to represent your work as theirs. If you have doubts about what constitutes academic dishonesty, ask me. The Faculty of Justice and Social Inquiry adheres to university policies regarding academic integrity, which you are encouraged to read and take very seriously: [http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity/policy](http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity/policy).

Disability Services: If you have a learning disability, need disability accommodations in this class, or have other particular needs, please let me know as soon as possible. All information regarding disability is confidential.
COURSE OUTLINE

WEEK 1: August 23
Overview and Introduction to the Course

WEEK 2: August 30
What are Human Rights?
Topics: Where do rights come from? How do we know they exist? How can we gauge rights realization?

Readings:
- Review the latest United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals Report, which can be found at: http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/reports.shtml

Films: For those who have little knowledge about human rights, here are two very short, very basic introductions (Watch before class):
1. www.humanrights.com/#/what-are-human-rights
2. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbUL3hxYGNU&list=PLCAA1D8F69131A393&index=3&feature=plpp_video

WEEK 3: September 6
What is sustainability?
Topics: Historical roots of ecological crises; Rio summit, Kyoto protocol, The Brundtland Report, etc.; Alternative definitions of sustainability

Readings:
- Ontology: [the essence of the issue]
- Epistemology: [how do we know what we know]


*UN Activities*: (Familiarize yourself with these activities and reports, but do not worry about reading everything word for word. * Asterisked sources are posted on Blackboard)*

- *1987 - Our Common Future (“The Brundtland Report”) World Commission on Environment and Development. OVERVIEW ONLY (pp. 18-38) [I have posted the full report in case you are interested, but no need to print or bring to class]*


- *1998 - Kyoto protocol (“an international agreement linked to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change”): http://unfccc.int/resource/docs/convkp/kpeng.pdf*

- * Rio+20 (follow up to 1992 Earth Summit; http://www.earthsummit2012.org/); official conclusions (“The Future We Want”) and conclusions of the “People’s Summit” are both posted on Blackboard. Please read the latter completely, as it is relatively short.*

*Films:*

- (Another very basic introduction. Watch before class) The Story of Stuff: http://www.storyofstuff.com/


WEEK 4: September 13

**Human Rights and Sustainability: Making the Linkages**

*Topics: Environmental human rights, Eco-Justice*

*Readings:*


- 8 -


**Film:**
- (In Class) PBS Frontline: *Heat* - Chapters 6-9

**WEEKS 5-6: Consumption, production, and the role of capitalism**

**Topics:** Economic rationality and global expansion; Industrialization, carbon-based economies, technological advances and pollution, transportation; Inequality in costs and benefits, winners and losers at all scales/levels, gender/class/race; exploitation; Public goods; Alternative logics

**September 20: Economic rationality and global expansion**

**Readings:**

**Film:**
- (In class) TBD

**September 27: Alternative Logics**

**Readings:**
- The Happy Planet Index: [http://www.happyplanetindex.org/](http://www.happyplanetindex.org/)

**Film:**
- (In Class) “Sun Come Up”
- Wendell Berry: “Now We're Hearing from the World” (on the BP Gulf oil spill) - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=My2WJ5nZbAw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=My2WJ5nZbAw) [4min 50sec: watch outside class]

**WEEKS 7-8: CASE STUDY 1 - Urban ecology and human rights**

**Topics:** “Right to the City”; Right to housing, water, sanitation; Impact of building, urbanization

**October 4**

**Readings:**

“General Motors’ Destruction of California Transit Systems”
[Link](http://moderntransit.org/ctc/ctc06.html)

**UN Activities:**
- Special Rapporteur on the right to housing (familiarize yourself with this page, and read at least one of the “reports”): [http://www.righttohousing.org](http://www.righttohousing.org)

**Film:**
- The Unforeseen (93 min.) – PART 1

**October 11**

**Readings:**
- Evans, Peter. 2002. *Livable Cities: Urban Struggles for Livelihood and Sustainability.* University of California Press. [Chapters 1 & 6-8; also available online- ASU library]

**Film:**
- The Unforeseen (93 min.) – PART 2

**Special Event:**
- Screening and critical discussion of “América’s Home” (ASU Professors C.A. Griffith and H.L.T. Quan): October 12, 11:50 to 1:25 p.m. in Social Sciences Building, Rm. 105

**WEEK 9: October 18**

*First short paper is due today; no blog is due this week. Discussions will take place in class. Please start working on your annotated bibliographies for your final paper.*

**WEEKS 10-11: CASE STUDY 2 - The human right to food**

**Topics:** Trade, intellectual property rights; Agricultural policy; Green revolution; Land and energy use; Hunger and malnutrition; Food security; Biodiversity; GMOs

**October 25**

**Readings:**
UN Activities:

Film:

November 1
Readings:
- Gottlieb, Robert and Anupama Joshi. 2010. *Food Justice*. [Everyone read pp. 1-120 and 221-238; we will split up the remaining case studies so students summarize selections.]

Film:
- (In Class) “The Power of Community: How Cuba Survived Peak Oil”

OPTIONAL Film:
- YouTube video: Michael Pollan, The Omnivore's Dilemma, 2006 [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFpjskn3_Pe](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFpjskn3_Pe)

WEEKS 12-13: CASE STUDY 3 - Industrialization processes and human rights

Topics: Mining; Petroleum dependency and extraction; Climate change; Indigenous Rights

November 8
Readings:
- United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)
• Familiarize yourself with the Oil/Tar Sands: http://www.energybulletin.net/node/50186

• [Optional but interesting] “Dark Lord of Coal Country,” Rolling Stone, November 9, 2010

**UN Activities:**

• UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues:

**Film:**

• (Watch before class): Very brief video on the Oil/Tar Sands in Alberta:
  http://iturn.tv/content/2009/h2oil-das-business-mit-wasser-und-oel-318

• (In class) Crude Impact (30 min.)

**Second short paper due November 8**

**November 15**

**Readings:**


**UN Activities:**

• Universal Declaration on the Rights of Mother Earth, drafted at the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth:

**Film:**

• (In class) “Power paths.” (2009; 56 min.) - PBS Site for film:
  http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/power-paths/

**WEEK 14: November 22**

**HAPPY THANKSGIVING!**

No class, but please continue working on your final paper!
WEEKS 15-16: SOLUTIONS
Topics: Deep ecology, deep economy; Global public goods and global commons; Governance, right to participation, autonomy, decision-making, inclusion

November 29
Readings:
- McKibben, Bill. 2007. *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*. New York: Henry Holt and Company. [Read to Ch. 1 (p. 45) and skim Ch. 2 (to p. 94)]

Film:
- (Watch before class) Very brief definition of “deep ecology”:
  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2gZ6FRhc3w&feature=player_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2gZ6FRhc3w&feature=player_embedded)
- (In class) “Climate of Change”

Annotated bibliography for final paper due today

December 6 – LAST DAY OF CLASS
Readings:

Film:

FINAL PAPER DUE December 13th - NO EXCEPTIONS!