

**WESTERN UNIVERSITY  
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
Undergraduate Course Outline 2017-18**

**Philosophy 2355F  
Sustainability: Philosophical Perspectives**

**Fall Term  
Online Course**

**Instructor: Eric Desjardins  
Stv. Hall 2137,  
Office Hours: Tue and Thu, 11AM-Noon  
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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 the topic of sustainability and the various practical and ethical dimensions shaping it; 2) be aware of the historical roots of sustainability and 3) be knowledgeable of the different philosophical principles supporting it; 4) be able to critically assess some of the challenges that sustainability raises for the individual and for humanity as a whole; 5) be able to evaluate the adequacy and limitations of the various actions that have been undertaken during the last decades; 6) 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%)  
An essay on a topic and issue of your choice from weeks 1-6, approximately 1800 words.  
Due at the end of Week 7.
2. Final exam (35%)

This is an essay type exam on a preselected set of issues. It will focus on materials from the second half of the semester, but will require understanding and integrating various concepts and perspectives that have been introduced throughout the course. Duration: 3hrs.

### 3. Blog entries (15%)

Two short blog entries about a sustainability initiative of your choice (preferably in your local community). The first entry is worth 7% of the final grade and is due by the end of week 4. The second entry is worth 8% of the final grade and is due by the end of the semester.

### 4. Participation to forum (20%)

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

### **AUDIT**

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

### **DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY POLICIES**

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.

### **ACCOMMODATION**

Students seeking academic accommodation on medical grounds for any missed tests, exams, participation components and/or assignments worth 10% or more of their final grade must apply to the Academic Counselling office of their home Faculty and provide documentation. Academic accommodation cannot be granted by the instructor or department. Documentation shall be submitted, as soon as possible, to the Office of the Dean of the student's Faculty of registration, together with a request for relief specifying the nature of the accommodation being requested. The UWO Policy on Accommodation for Medical Illness and further information regarding this policy can be found at

[http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/accommodation\\_medical.pdf](http://uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/accommodation_medical.pdf).

### **ACADEMIC OFFENCES**

Scholastic offences are taken seriously and students are directed to read the appropriate policy, specifically, the definition of what constitutes a Scholastic Offence, at

[http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic\\_policies/appeals/scholastic\\_discipline\\_undergrad.pdf](http://www.uwo.ca/univsec/pdf/academic_policies/appeals/scholastic_discipline_undergrad.pdf)

### **PLAGIARISM CHECKING**

All required papers may be subject to submission for textual similarity review to the commercial plagiarism detection software under license to the University for the detection of plagiarism. All papers submitted for such checking will be included as source documents in the reference database for the purpose of detecting plagiarism of papers subsequently submitted to the system.

Use of the service is subject to the licensing agreement, currently between The University of Western Ontario and Turnitin.com <http://www.turnitin.com>.

### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Registrarial Services <http://www.registrar.uwo.ca>

Student Support Services <https://student.uwo.ca/psp/heprdweb/?cmd=login>

Services provided by the USC <http://westernusc.ca/services/>

Student Development Centre <http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/>

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. Immediate help in the event of a crisis can be had by phoning 519.661.3030 (during class hours) or 519.433.2023 after class hours and on weekends.