

## Proposed Economics 492a (3)

### The Economics of Sustainability: Communities, Markets and Technology

April - May, 2016

Syllabus (Draft)

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#### Description of the Course:

Students of economics are provided with a strong grounding in formal reasoning and technical methods as part of their undergraduate education, a foundation that aims to provide them with the skills and knowledge to tackle economic problems. This course builds upon that tradition of rigor and research-based analysis. It does so though by starting with the recognition that it can be difficult to gain a realistic understanding of the experience of people living in conditions of poverty through lectures, textbooks and journal articles alone. Pedagogical research suggests that this knowledge gap can be bridged through student involvement in Community Based Experiential Learning and, in particular, International Service Learning. Such experiential learning complements classroom teaching and disciplinary research by providing students with an enriched education, one that enables students to be better equipped to comprehend the reality of a complex world where the problems faced by individuals and communities cannot be easily resolved.

The aim of this course then is to both deepen and broaden students' understanding of the process of sustainable economic development as it affects poor communities through student participation in applied community-based research and International Service Learning. The course has been developed in collaboration with the Centre for Community Engaged Learning's International Service Learning program and will involve a twelve-week field component during which students will take on a long-term volunteer placement focused on a specific project of concern to a community organization in Africa or Latin America.

Prior to this experiential component, students will participate in a series of seminars, lectures, and activities aimed at developing capacity in relation to their role as contributors to the creation and flows of knowledge in the discipline of economics. In particular, we will explore the problems and concerns of developing countries in relation to ways that resilient, healthy communities are able to create sustainable livelihoods, to support rather than deplete the local or regional environment, and to build economies that ensure the well-being of all community members. The course will also explore obstacles that may inhibit the capacity for such sustainable development.

The pre-departure assignments and seminars will provide students with the background and intellectual tools to be able to reflect deeply about their experience with the community partners. This reflective practice serves to integrate experiential learning with disciplinary

theories and methods to bring new understanding to the discipline about the problems faced by poor communities in Latin America and Africa. Students will be expected to contribute to the disciplinary discourse through a presentation of their work at a poster session to be held in the Vancouver School of Economics in (September) October following their international service placement.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- To deepen students engagement with disciplinary research and debates associated with sustainable economic development;
- To identify and apply economic concepts associated with sustainability and economic development;
- To deepen student understanding of the development process and global poverty alleviation in light of impacts on the environment;
- To gain knowledge of research methodologies used by economists to assess impacts of policies aimed at both reducing poverty and minimizing environmental degradation arising from economic activity;
- To understand and critically assess the debates about the role of markets in supporting or thwarting environmental sustainability;
- To understand why sustainable practices and livelihoods may be elusive in poor communities;
- To consider the implications of the Istanbul Principles of Effective Development to economic theory and methodology;
- To consider the development process from the perspective of The Istanbul Principles for Development Effectiveness, and to be able to identify whether these principles are relevant to the community organization they will be serving;
- To be able to identify the kinds of technologies that are important to the community, how they may promote sustainability and whether there are obstacles to the adoption of sustainable technologies;
- To develop critical thinking skills beyond those associated with their economic course work
  - To be able to identify relevant problems and concerns
  - To be able to identify both the needs and assets of a developing community
  - To critically assess their own preconceptions and beliefs about the causes of poverty, inequality and other problems in development
  - To approach complex problems from the perspective of a wider range of approaches
  - To be able to identify and articulate the extent to which the theories and methods in the scholarly literature are supported, contrasted or even contradicted by the reality experienced and observed during the ISL assignment
  - To be able to identify and evaluate the outcomes of decisions made in the community in relation to sustainable practices
- Participate in Speakers' Series as part of the course during May of 2016. Representatives from community organizations that promote sustainable development will speak to the challenges and successes arising through their work.

## REQUIRED READINGS

Banerjee, Abhijit and Duflo, Esther (2011) *Poor Economics : A Radical Rethinking of the Way to Fight Global Poverty* (New York, PublicAffairs)

Course Reading Pack available at the UBC Bookstore.

## GRADING

<b>Assignments and Grading:</b>	<b>Percentage of Overall Grade</b>
Reading Assignment Presentation	10 %
Country Thematic Situational Analysis	20 %
Reflective Journaling (3 during ISL placement)	30 %
Mid-placement Progress Report (Due July 15th)	10 %
Post Placement Evaluation/Presentation (Due September 1st)	15 %
Post Placement Presentations	15 %
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Total	100 %
Bonus Participation Mark	5 %

## COURSE PLAN

### Proposed Topics:

- 1. Introduction to the Course: The Economics of Sustainable Development and Applied Economics**
  - Introduction and overview
  - Effective aid, effective development

- Alternative definitions and concepts of sustainability; views about the relationship between economic activity and the environment; historical perspectives
- United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals
- Introduction to reflection in Economics

**Readings:**

Banerjee, A. V. and Duflo, E. (2011) "Forward", Chapters, 1-2  
 Barbier, Edward B. (1987), "The concept of sustainable economic development." *Environmental Conservation* Vol. 14, No. 2, pp. 101-110.  
 Open Forum (2009) Istanbul CSO Development Effectiveness Principles, (<http://cso-effectiveness.org/istanbul-principles,067>)

**2. The Economics of Sustainable Development: Theory**

- The view from economics and from other disciplines; the role of community in development; identifying the constraints to sustainable economic development; further views of effective development practice

**Lecture/Seminars**

**Readings:**

Banerjee, A. V. and Duflo, E. (2011) Chapters 3 - 5

**Resources:**

United Nations (1996) *Indicators of Sustainable Development: Frameworks and Methodologies* (New York: United Nations).  
 United Nations (2011) Final Report *Rio +20, United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development* [www.uncsd2012.org](http://www.uncsd2012.org)  
 Soubbotina, T.P. (2004) *Beyond Economic Growth: An Introduction to Sustainable Development*, [http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/english/beyond/beyondco/beg\\_all.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/depweb/english/beyond/beyondco/beg_all.pdf) (Washington, The World Bank)

**3. Applied Methods in Economics**

- empirical approaches in economics; developing a research project; identifying and evaluating data sources; scholarly writing in economics; what makes community based research distinct from other research projects or essays?

**Lecture/Seminars**

**Lab Sessions**

**Reading:**

Banerjee, A. V. and Duflo, E. (2011) Online Resources

**4. Integrating experiential and "classroom" learning: the role of reflection**

**Lecture/Seminar**

**In-class practice reflection**

**Suggested Reading:**

Bringle, R.G. and Hatcher, J.A. (1999) 'Reflection in Service Learning: Making Meaning of Experience,' *Educational Horizons*, vol. 77 (4), pp. 179-185.

## 2. Models of Sustainable Development: Balancing Economic Growth, Human Development and Environmental Sustainability

- Valuing nature: environmental and economic perspectives; sustainable livelihoods: balancing environmental protection and employment; markets and market failure; asset based community development; evaluating the evidence

### Reading:

Acemoglu, D. and Robinson, J.A. (2012) *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Poverty and Prosperity*, Chapter 3 (New York, Random House).

Cunningham, G. and Mathie, A. (2005) Who is Driving Development? Reflections on the Transformative Potential of Asset-based Community Development, *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue canadienne d'études du développement*, 26 (1), pp. 175-186.

Moyo, D. (2009) *Dead Aid*, Excerpts (Vancouver, Douglas and McIntyre).

## 3. Sustainable Economic Development: Case Studies (TBC)

- Wild-life habitat protection
  - Poaching: enforcement, punishment and incentives
  - Community engagement and socio-economic development
- Rural Livelihoods I: agricultural employment and global markets
- Rural Livelihoods 2: rural opportunities for non-migrants
- Livelihoods in Urban Slums: Bolivia, India, Indonesia and South Africa
- Income generation for community organizations in Swaziland

### Readings and Resources:

Bermann-Harms, C. and Lester Murad, N. (2011) *Putting the Istanbul Principles into Practice: A Companion Toolkit to the Siem Reap Consensus on the International Framework for CSO Development Effectiveness*, Selected Readings (Open Forum for CSO

Development Effectiveness, <http://cso-effectiveness.org/istanbul-principles,067>)

Messer, K. (2000) 'The Poacher's Dilemma: Economics of Poaching and Enforcement,' *Endangered Species*, Vol. 17 (3) pp. 50-72.

Ostrom, Elinor (2012) 'The future of the commons: beyond market failure and government regulation,' in Elinor Ostrom (ed.) *The Future of the Commons: Beyond Market Failure and Government Regulation*, pp. 68-82. (London, Institute of Economic Affairs).

Scoones, I. (1998) "Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A Framework for Analysis," *IDS Working Paper no. 72*, (Brighton: Institute of Development Studies).

Tipple, G. (2005). The place of home-based enterprises in the informal sector: Evidence from Cochabamba, New Delhi, Surabaya and Pretoria. *Urban Studies*, 42(4), pp. 611-632.

## 4. Preparing for Post-Placement Presentation

- Integrating lessons learned from International Service Learning placement
  - Country-team presentations
  - Integrating experiential and academic learning
  - Economic insights: What can you contribute to disciplinary understanding of the development process?
  - Designing an effective academic presentation

