Economics for a Sustainable Future (Econ 4999-i01)

Topic for the Spring 95

The course will focus on the idea of sustainability, a concept that has received widely varying interpretations. We will discuss several alternative perspectives on sustainability in the context of the project and adjustment lending of the World Bank and associated multilateral development banks. We approach the subject this way for two reasons: it allows us to see what abstract notions of sustainability mean when it comes to concrete policy decisions, and the World Bank is probably the most important single institution affecting sustainable development, at least for the third world.

During the first nine weeks of the course prior to the break (March 20-27) the class will go through a common set of readings. During this time, students will choose topics on which they will write papers consistent with the theme of the course. After the break, each student will make presentations of two drafts of his or her paper. A third and final draft is due at or before the date of the final exam.

A major emphasis is given to the practice of critical thought in both written and oral form. During the first part of the course, three weeks will be chosen in which one or more articles will be selected on which each student will write short written critiques on the same article(s). On those weeks Mondays will be lecture and discussion and Wednesdays will be primarily class discussion of the critiqued material. Each student will be asked to submit marginal comments on the written comments of two of his/her classmates comments. This will constitute 20% of the grade and another 30% of the grade will be an exam one week prior to the break. The remaining 50% of the grade will be the written work, written comments on the written work, and class discussion of written work after the break. Written work is frequent but short — emphasis is on quality.

Readings: Many readings will be xeroxed and others will be on reserve in Norlin.

David Pearce and Kerry Turner, "Discounting the Future" (1990) pp. 211-225
Don Roper "Intergenerational Equity and the Social Rate of Discount"

Jan 26, 28 Garrett Hardin "Tragedy of the Commons" "Second Thoughts"
George Monbiot "Tragedy of the Enclosure" Scientific American, Jan 94
written comments on Hardin and Monbiot discussed in Wednesday class

Feb 7, 9 Environmental and National Income Accounting
Cobb and Daly, pp 62-84, and 401-455 (Norlin reserve and EC)
Salah El Serafy and Ernst Lutz, "Environmental and Resource Accounting: an Overview" UNEP
World Bank Symposium, pp 1-7.
Daly, "Environmental and Resource Accounting: An Overview." Symposium, pp. 8-9
El Serafy, "The Proper Calculation of Income from Depletable Natural Resources," Symposium,
pp. 10-18
Richard Norgaard "Linkages Between Environmental and National Income Accounts," Symposium,
pp. 54-58.
Henry Peskin, "Environmental and Nonmarket Accounting in Developing Countries," Symposium,
pp. 59-64.

Feb 14, 16: WB: history and interaction with the environment
Bruce Rich, "Pressure on the World Bank ..."
Brent Blackwelder, "Campaign to Reform MDBs"
Chapter 2, pp 9-35, Mikesell and Williams, "International Banks and the Environment," Sierra
Club Books (1992) brief factual overview of the various multilateral development banks.

Feb 21, 23: Debt-for-Nature Swaps
Morris Miller. Debt and the Environment, chs. 8-9, pp. 131-158.
Tamara Hrynik, "Debt-for-Nature Swaps: Effective but not Enforceable," Case Western Reserve J.
of International Law, Winter '90, pp. 141-163 (Norlin reserve)
Rodney Wagner, "Doing More with Debt-for-Nature Swaps," International Environmental Affairs,
Spring '90, pp. 160-166 (Norlin)

Feb 28, Mar 2, 7: WB Impacts: specific loans, dams, forestry projects
Mikesell and Williams, "Environmental Problems in Irrigated Agriculture and Multipurpose Dams,"
26pp
Mikesell and Williams, "Forestry Policies and Resettlement Projects," 30pp
"Bankrolling Disasters," Sierra Club, 30pp. (1986)
"Funding Ecological and Social Destruction" Bank Information Center (1980) Intro, 9pp, case
studies on Bolivia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Ghana, Jamaica, India, Indonesia, and Sudan. Two copies in
Norlin and a copy at the Env Center.
US Congressional Testimony by Bruce Rich on cutting appropriations to the WB as a result of
environmental impacts of previous projects (Norlin reserve).
Wilfrido Cruz and Repetto "The Environmental Effects of Stabilization and Structural Adjustment

March 9 (Wed): Exam
Mar 14, 16: Discussion of paper topics, possible guest speaker, and discussions of research literature.
No reading assignment.

======== Break =========

Two presentations per class for 3 weeks.

Three presentations per class for 2 weeks.