

# **UNIV501: Special Topics in Sustainability Sustainability and our Positionality in the world**

Sustainability Studies  
University of Calgary  
Spring 2020

**Instructor:** Dr. Sarah Skett

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**Office:** PF4203 (office hours by appointment)

**Dates:** May 7<sup>th</sup> – May 31<sup>st</sup> (back in Calgary June 1<sup>st</sup>)

**Location:** Mukono District, Uganda, East Africa

**In-field Facilitator:** Leslie Weighill, Director, The Real Uganda

**Prerequisite:** Consent of the Instructor.

## **Course Description and Context**

This course builds on the learnings and assignments from UNIV501: Understanding Ubuntu and the Sustainable Development Goals in Uganda. It engages students to show them the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in action through, and in contradiction with, the philosophy and practice of Ubuntu, the moral authority and prevailing culture found in Uganda. Students will discover and discuss the result of the modern/individualistic global north approach to sustainable development as it meets the traditional/collective global south seen in action in Uganda. We will discuss and deconstruct the role and impact of the west in what's going on in Uganda. Students will be pushed out of their comfort zone to acknowledge, understand and evaluate their positionality as it contributes to sustainable development from the local to the global. We will discuss and debate the responsibility of Africans themselves for the development within their own county's, using Uganda as an example. Students will see first-hand practical interventions enacted to build local opportunities and how Ugandan's are fostering (or not) sustainable development in the contrast of western imposition/capitalist/neoliberal intervention and the cultural practice of Ubuntu.

Students will be immersed in a variety of projects and businesses in Uganda, as well as time spent in the capital city, Kampala, to see what sustainable development really looks like in Uganda. They will hear from local leaders, businesspeople, social innovators, and politicians to understand the challenges and opportunities; and students will be expected to ask questions that challenge their perceptions and positionality as it relates to sustainable development from a global perspective.

**Learning Objectives:** By the end of this course, it is expected that students will be able to:

1. Explain, debate, critique and defend foundational concepts and theories of sustainability, sustainable development and Ubuntu as it applies to their positionality;
2. Formulate and articulate values consistent with sustainable development (e.g. our place in the natural world, inter and intra-generational ethics, diversity, equity and social justice);
3. Analyze real world problems, issues and debates and design solutions consistent with sustainability theories, concepts and values; and
4. Demonstrate an understanding of how they can contribute to creating a sustainable world in their personal, academic and work lives.

## **Teaching Approach**

Your course instructor(s) and guest speakers will offer perspectives on sustainability, Ubuntu and sustainable development from academia, the not for profit sector, business, and government. This field school will include in-situ learning, lectures, discussions, and active participation in group work and learning activities. We will be immersed in real world issues and realities of those living in poverty on a daily basis. You will be encouraged to be engaged in the course, asking questions, challenging your positionality, and formulating your own ideas.

## **Course Readings**

Required readings:

- Reid, R. J. (2017). A history of modern Uganda. Cambridge University Press.
- Caplan, G. (2008) The Betrayal of Africa. Groundwood Books: Toronto
- Mathaai, W. (2009) The Challenge for Africa. Pantheon.
- Pease, B. (2013). Undoing privilege: Unearned advantage in a divided world. Zed Books Ltd.
- Wiegratz, J., Martiniello, G., & Greco, E. (2018). Uganda: the dynamics of neoliberal transformation.

\*Further readings to be determined by the Instructor prior to course.

## **Important Adherences whilst in Uganda**

Whilst in Uganda, students are encouraged to maximise the learning that can happen *in situ* through instruction and your own observations. Students will have the opportunity to experience the stark contradictions that have come to characterise the ambience of developing countries but it is vital that students work within the parameters of the group to keep our schedule running smoothly. To this end, all activities will be carried out collectively, even though individual or teamwork may happen within that time. Changes to schedule can occur due to factors outside of the control of the instructor, and will be announced as necessary, so be prepared to be open-minded and adaptable to changes. The group will have review and reflection sessions where we will go over the day's activities and learn from them. Students are not allowed to initiate activities on their own, or to participate in activities that are not scheduled by the instructor without explicitly seeking permission to do so. The pre-departure sessions and activities will allow students to understand the instructor's expectations for student behavior and participation in the program, as well as student's responsibilities to insure a successful and safe program for all.

## **Course Requirements and Evaluation**

### **Means of Evaluation**

No final exam. Students must obtain an overall passing grade to pass this course. Quality of writing (spelling, grammar, clarity) will be a component of the assessment of all assignments.

Group Research Project	40%
Positionality Paper II	20%
Reflective Journal	20%
Participation	20%

Note: (all assignments subject to up to 5% grade reduction for every day late)

### **Group Research Project (40%)**

This research project will be due after students have returned from Uganda and submitted electronically on D2L (written component Due June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020). This is where students will reach back into UNIV501 and UNIV511 to come full circle on their academic engagement with Sustainability Studies in Uganda and with the SDGs they were first assigned, as well as the other key concepts and experiences throughout the GSP. The group will determine an area of sustainable development that they feel is well-demonstrated and delivered in Uganda and show how this could be measured through the SDGs and applied in Canada. In essence, what can we and should we learn from Uganda and why is it important? Students will be required to complete and sign a group contract.

#### **1. Written Research Project**

Students will provide the following content in their written component of the assignment (one document per team, max 30 pages (not including appendices, references, and cover page), in Word format – not PDF – double spaced, 12-point font (25% of assignment grade). Students will need to clearly outline the challenge, how it is being addressed, what is working, what is not working, how it could be applied in Canada, and why it's important that we do so.

#### **2. Visual Research Project**

Prior to departure from Uganda, each group will offer a 15-minute oral presentation of their research project, and will have specific questions for their peers on areas of consideration and ideas that should be included in the written work. The course Instructor will be looking for evidence of this in the written work. The group will also provide a slide deck with voice overlay with their written assignment, upon return to Calgary. This five minute, max 20 slides, will support the work presented in the report, and will offer some key pictures taken during their time in Uganda to further support their arguments. (15% of assignment grade).

### **Positionality Paper II (20%)**

Building on their Positionality Paper submitted in the mid-point of the GSP in Uganda (as part of UNIV501) students will further explore their positionality with relation to Uganda's current development – both from within and from outside, they will critically engage with the required readings and source 2 more relevant academic pieces to support their findings and arguments. They will first offer a literature review of these readings, and then put them in context using examples from their time in Uganda.

### **Reflective Journal (20%)**

For this assignment students will be asked to keep a regular journal throughout the GSP and will be given time throughout to reflect and write. Students will not have to submit the journal but rather use this as an opportunity to be reflective, critical, and open about their learning process. This is a tool for them to use, not something they will need to share with anyone else. This final assignment will be a 5-page summary of their journal reflecting on their learning. This will be a reflection after they have completed the GSP and had time to reflect on their experiences in Uganda and will build on/challenge their writing from their first reflective journal submitted for UNIV501 (Due June 5<sup>th</sup>, 2020). Themes to consider for the journal are:

- What were my most significant learnings? Are they different from your first journal submission? How?
- What was my process of learning through the group research project?
- What do I take with me from this course into my future work?
- What did I learn about myself?
- How has my understanding of positionality changed?

### **Participation (20%)**

Unlike some of the other forms of learning that take place in this class, participation in a GSP and a small-group environment is not an individual activity. How and what you learn from listening to a lecture, reading a textbook, doing research, or studying for an exam is quite different from what you can gain when you have immediate access to approximately 20 different, informed points of view on a single issue. As well, how you engage with individuals from the communities we learn from will be pivotal, do you demonstrate a willingness to learn and to understand their culture, needs and successes? And how do you build from this in the discussions and your written work.

In discussions, if you do not prepare effectively and contribute positively, other students miss out on one of those points of view, and their learning experience suffers. This is also true of your group work, when you do not come prepared to group meetings, work sessions and conduct your work as agreed upon in the group contract you are impeding your colleagues from completing their work and putting forward the best work possible. For this reason, our evaluation of your course and group participation will be based on how you have improved the learning experience of your peers, both in class and your group work. Supporting, engaging, and listening to your peers does not mean that you must always agree with them. Rather, you should make a sincere effort to respond to their comments and support their work. Playing an active role in discussions involves volunteering your opinion, asking questions, and listening carefully. The best discussions are the ones that move beyond the simple questions and answers. You will be rewarded for bringing up more challenging ideas and for trying to deal with them collaboratively with your classmates. To do this effectively, you must have read all the assigned material carefully. If you haven't, it will become clear quite quickly.

### **Grading Scale**

<b>Grade</b>	<b>Grade Point</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>A+</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>92.5-100</b>	<b>Outstanding</b>
<b>A</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>85-92.49</b>	<b>Excellent - superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of the subject matter</b>
<b>A-</b>	<b>3.70</b>	<b>80-84.99</b>	<b>Very good performance</b>
<b>B+</b>	<b>3.30</b>	<b>76-79.99</b>	
<b>B</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>73-75.99</b>	<b>Good – clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete</b>
<b>B-</b>	<b>2.70</b>	<b>70-72.99</b>	
<b>C+</b>	<b>2.30</b>	<b>66-69.99</b>	
<b>C</b>	<b>2.00</b>	<b>63-65.99</b>	<b>Satisfactory – basic understanding of the subject matter</b>
<b>C-</b>	<b>1.70</b>	<b>60-62.99</b>	<b>Receipt of a grade point average of 1.70 may not be sufficient for promotion or graduation (see individual undergraduate faculty regulations)</b>
<b>D+</b>	<b>1.30</b>	<b>56-59.99</b>	
<b>D</b>	<b>1.00</b>	<b>50-55.99</b>	<b>Minimal pass – marginal performance</b>
<b>F</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0-49.99</b>	<b>Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.</b>

## **Notes**

1. Written work, term assignments and other course related work may only be submitted by e-mail if prior permission to do so has been obtained from the course instructors. Submissions must come from an official University of Calgary (UCalgary) email account.
2. It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/drc/node/46>) Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of this course.
3. Plagiarism - Plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:(a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),(b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,(c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,(d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course(although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved. While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted. Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offence. It is recognized that clause (d) does not prevent a graduate student incorporating work previously done by him or her in a thesis. Any suspicion of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean and dealt with as per the regulations in the University of Calgary Graduate Calendar.
4. Information regarding the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>) and how this impacts the receipt and delivery of course material
5. Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>)
6. Safewalk information (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk>)

Contact Info for: Student Union (<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/page/affordability-accessibility/contact>); Graduate Student representative (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/gsa/>) and Student Ombudsman's Office (<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/page/quality-education/academic-services/student-rights>).

## **Electronics Policy**

The success of the program is contingent upon students, facilitators and instructor being fully engaged and fully participating to the life of the group through the activities, the meals, and the day to day work. Due to the fact that you will be completing assignments whilst in the field, taking notes and probably searching up resources for your papers and presentations, students are allowed to bring their computer; printing facilities will be arranged on the ground. You, however, do not need to bring the computer with you for every engagement. We will be able to store your computers safely as necessary, when on the ground. You are allowed to bring a tablet for reading. You are also allowed to bring your phone (to take pictures, listen to music and to use in a Wifi zone).

## **Teaching Evaluations / USRIS (Universal Student Ratings of Instruction)**

At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching, and selecting courses. **Your responses make a difference, please participate!** Website: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/usri/>.

#### **Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act**

The University of Calgary is committed to protecting the privacy of individuals who work and study at the University or who otherwise interact with the University in accordance with the standards set out in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Please refer to the following link for detailed information: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip>. The Department of Anthropology and Archaeology's FOIP (Freedom of Information and Privacy) policy requires all reports/examinations to be returned to students during class time or the instructor's office hours. Any term work not picked up will be placed in the Anthropology and Archaeology Office (ES620) for distribution. Any student not wishing to have their work placed in the office must make alternative arrangements with the course instructor early in the term.