New Course Request

1. School/Division: College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
2. Academic Subject Code: SOC
3. Course Number: B399 (must be cleared with University Registrar)
4. Instructor: Serna
5. Course Title: Human Behavior and Social Institutions
6. First time this course is to be offered (Semester/Year): Spring 2009
7. Credit Hours: Fixed at three or Variable from to
8. Is this course to be graded S-F (only)? Yes □ No X
9. Is variable title approval being requested? Yes □ No □
10. Course description (not to exceed 50 words) for Bulletin publication: Develops insights into human nature, the nature of social institutions, the social processes that have shaped the world of the twenty-first century. In an interdisciplinary way, introduces the distinctive perspectives of the social sciences, emphasizing frameworks and techniques used in explaining causes and patterns of individual and institutional behavior.
11. Lecture Contact Hours: Fixed at three or Variable from to
12. Non-Lecture Contact Hours: Fixed at zero or Variable from to
13. Estimated enrollment: 30 of which ______ percent are expected to be graduate students.
14. Frequency of scheduling: Once/year. Will this course be required for majors? Yes □ No □
15. Justification for new course: To help students meet their general education requirements.
16. Are the necessary reading materials currently available in the appropriate library? Yes □ No □
17. Please append a complete outline of the proposed course, and indicate instructor (if known), textbooks, and other materials.
18. If this course overlaps with existing courses, please explain with which courses it overlaps and whether this overlap is necessary, desirable, or unimportant.
19. A copy of every new course proposal must be submitted to departments, schools, or divisions in which there may be overlap of the new course with existing courses or areas of strong concern, with instructions that they send comments directly to the originating Curriculum Committee. Please append a list of departments, schools, or divisions thus consulted.

Submitted by: _______________________ Date 9/12/08

Dean Chairman/Division Director

Dean of Graduate School (when required) Date

Approved by: _______________________ Date 11/3/08

University Registrar

After School/Division approval, forward the last copy (without attachments) to the University Registrar for initial processing, and the remaining four copies and attachments to the Campus Chancellor or Vice-President.
COURSE SUMMARY

Sustainability is meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Every year the campus selects an interdisciplinary theme on which to focus curriculum and campus activities. The theme of Sustainable Communities brought together disciplines from across the campus to consider what is needed for natural and cultural communities to thrive into the future. This course is a continuation of those ideas as we as a campus, a local community, a nation and a global community seek to meet environmental, societal and cultural challenges in ways that will sustain a good life for ourselves and generations to come.

What are the elements of balanced, equitable development? Why are these so hard to achieve? Seeking answers to these questions will form the core of this seminar. We will look at what they mean for the various social problems facing the planet. Finally, we will look at efforts to forge alternative paths to development and quality of life.

While we're not likely to find a quick fix to any of the problems, we will also probe possible interventions to make a positive difference while seeking build a more equitable, peaceful, and sustainable world. To analyze our changing planet we will draw on the social science disciplines of anthropology, sociology, geography, political science and economics. We will also consider the insights and background offered by psychology, history and ecology.

An old Chinese proverb states: "Hearing I forget, seeing I remember, doing I understand." You will have ample chance to hear from me and your classmates, but we will also use video excerpts to help see current problems, and activities to bring home the points and increase understanding. Daily attendance and preparation are crucial. Short writing assignments will allow students to pull apart the problems and hopefully to begin to pull together ideas about personal, national and international responsibility for change. We will also draw on guest speakers and campus events to provide multiple perspectives on the theme.

BOOKS
Excerpts from Diamond, Jared. Collapse.
**GRADING**

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**AGREEMENTS AND UNDERSTANDINGS**

1. We will work together to start and end on time. When necessary, however, it's better to quietly slip in late than to miss a whole class. I will be available immediately before and after class for quick questions. Feel free to make use of my office hours, to make appointments, and to call my office (the last name is pronounced "Sir-no," Scott will be fine). I will be glad to meet with you for questions, concerns and reviews of confusing material. If you have a disability and need assistance, special arrangements can be made to accommodate most needs. Contact Disability Support Services, (Admin. 149, 520-4832), as soon as possible to work out the details. Once they have provided you with a letter attesting to your needs for modification, bring the letter to me.

2. Academic honesty is central to your career as well as your integrity as person, and applies to both in class tests and out of class work. IU code of conduct guidelines will be followed closely for any violation.

3. Procrastination is deadly! Ancient proverb: "If you must swallow a frog, don't look at it too long; if you have several frogs to swallow, take the biggest one first." The course is designed to spread the workload throughout the semester so as to maximize on-going learning and minimize mounting stress. To make this work, however, you must commit to have reading and writing assignments done on time. If you are over-committed, it's best to find this out as early as possible. If you're feeling snowed under, see me while you can still see over the banks. In turn, I will have assigned papers back to you promptly with comments and score.

**CLASS ATTENDANCE**

The 30 points are based on attendance shown on the sign-in roster. Good class attendance is critical to getting the most out of the course. While readings and class material fit together, some topics will only be covered in class. One "free" absence is allowed, after that two points is lost per absence. More than 10 absences without prior arrangement can result in a failing grade.
CLASS PARTICIPATION

Please honestly share ideas -- and listen to others. This course is a seminar and is based around active student participation in the class sessions. Good class attendance and involvement is critical to getting the most out of the course. While recognizing that speaking up in a group is harder for some than for others and that our time is limited, active class participation is encouraged. Please do not dominate discussions, but feel free to offer questions and honest reactions. They will always be treated with courtesy and respect. We will try to adopt a more global perspective than is usually reflected in the US, but you do not need to feel pressured to adopt any particular political perspective. Let's work together to create an atmosphere in which all class members' comments are listened to and respected.

You will often be encouraged to share your perspective on issues and to bring outside material to class. There is no assumption that you are an expert on all, or any, of the issues. No one anywhere is an expert on all issues everywhere, so let's learn together. Before key class discussions, you will be asked to submit discussion questions to OnCourse. We will use the collected discussion questions to guide our class discussion. Preparation and active participation is worth 30 points of the course total.

QUIZZES

Three quizzes will cover the historical, theoretical and conceptual background necessary for understanding the issues we will be discussing. Each will have twenty straight-forward multiple-choice questions covering your understanding of the factual background material. No intended tricksters but you will need to review a couple of weeks of material for each.

SEMINAR PAPERS

Three seminar papers will cover the major sections of the course. Each paper is worth 15 points, based on both completeness and quality of analysis and reflection. Late papers lose two points if turned in up to one week late; more than this will require documentation of special circumstances. Being able to write effective papers will require that readings are completed on time, and that you are an attentive and thoughtful listener to lectures, video presentations, and class discussions. The best papers are those that incorporate sound, original, critical thinking with good support from the readings. Avoid "book reports" that merely summarize material on one hand, and "blue sky" essays that are pure unsupported opinion on the other. Try to answer the questions completely by drawing on all the appropriate readings and class sessions, and by bringing these together with your own analysis and insight. Strive for good, clear English in all your answers. Target 2-3 typed, single-spaced pages.

Paper One,
What does McKibben mean by “deep economy”? How is economic growth and inequality related to the environment? What constistutes “the wealth of communities”? What does he
contend is needed to build a “durable future”? Given what you have seen and read about urbanization, population, health, energy and ecology, what do you think of his premise and his alternatives? Can the world economy really operate on different principles? What would these look like? Where can we begin in making changes?

RESEARCH PAPER

A case study in social change, due April 3: In class we will be working to get a glimpse of the big picture, and find broad explanations for that picture. The case study is your chance to focus more closely on a specific situation or local project. Select a local effort, social movement, specific development project, grassroots organization or the like. Paper should be about 4-6 single-spaced typed pages. Questions to tackle:

  What was the particular problem or need?
  How was this addressed or approached?
  What challenges were encountered?
  What successes or failures have ensued?
  What are the broader implications of this experience?

Look for one or more book-length treatments of the topic along with academic articles. Often web resources can supplement a key book in highlighting both the foundations of the work and on-going activities. Select your case study as soon as possible.

CAMPUS EVENTS

Our campus theme this year is Revolutions in Thought. Events related to our course will take place throughout the semester. Attend the event and do a short write up: what was the topic or theme, how did it fit with course topics, what did you find particularly interesting or noteworthy?

Turn in a short write up of what was presented or discussed at the event. Due within one week of the event. A second event attended can make up one missed class or add points to a low test score. If campus events conflict with your work schedule, you can substitute the field report below:

Field Report: on alternate traders and grassroots development. Visit Ten Thousand Villages across from Town and Country at 919A W. McKinley (College Square Plaza) or in the Depot in Goshen, and Just Goods, just west of the campus on Mishawaka Ave. These are area stores dedicated to selling crafts and indigenous art from various places in the world based on principles of fair trade. Note (and include if you wish) informative brochures on the products, some are behind the counter. The managers and volunteer clerks are also always eager to talk about the products. What crafts are represented from what regions, and how do they reflect the handicrafts and culture of the region? How do these programs attempt to foster grassroots development? Note the goals of the groups represented: Mennonite Central Committee, SERRV (Brethren), Equal Exchange (Coffee), and UNICEF. See www.tenthousandvillages.com and links to www.serrv.org, www.equalexchange.com and www.marketplaceindia.org.
How do alternate traders such as these attempt to cope with the problems and inequity of the global economy? Are they effective? Do you see problems with this approach? Are grassroots efforts such as these important or "a drop in a bucket"?"

OUTLINE OF CLASSES

I. IS THIS ANY WAY TO RUN A PLANET?

Aug. 26: Introduction and overview: Welcome to the world.


Sept. 2: Setting the stage: geography and ecology. Economic development and the planet.

II. SEEKING A SUSTAINABLE WORLD: ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES


Sept. 16: Food, agriculture and local economies. Read: McKibben Ch. 2.


Oct. 2: Local action and global change. Read: McKibben Ch. 5 and Afterward. Seminar Paper 1 due.
OK, from the archives, here is Linda Chen's email as chair of the Human Behavior and Social Institutions subcommittee. I don't know if there is anything more formal, or if you would just like to get a confirmation from Joe.

Scott

-----Original Message-----
From: Chen, Linda
Sent: Wednesday, February 27, 2008 10:37 AM
To: Sernau, Scott R.
Cc: Chaney, Joseph R
Subject: RE: B399 proposed course in Sociology

Scott: The subcommittee for the B190/B399 course proposals has approved your course approval as per your additions to the application form.

Thanks,

Linda C.

-----Original Message-----
From: Sernau, Scott R.
Sent: Sunday, February 24, 2008 5:42 PM
To: Chen, Linda
Cc: Chaney, Joseph R
Subject: RE: B399 proposed course in Sociology

Hi Linda,
Attached is an addendum to my proposal for a B399 Social Science Seminar. I'm trying to juggle about six things this weekend, so it may not be the most cogent bit I've ever written, but hopefully it responds to the questions raised.

Thanks, Scott

-----Original Message-----
From: Chen, Linda
Sent: Thursday, February 21, 2008 3:06 PM
To: Sernau, Scott R.
Subject: FW: B399 proposed course in Sociology

Hi Scott: The subcommittee on the common core in HBSI has reviewed your application. There are a few items that the subcommittee would like you to address (along with the conversation you had with Betsy) in your applications. Please see below.

Thanks,

Linda C.
A1. He needs to address the "instruction" aspect of this question. It seems that each project is a stand-alone one that requires self-examination on the students' part. While this passive process might sharpen their writing skills, if he provided any type of direct instruction (e.g., comments on one paper that would help the student write a better second paper, or if a smaller paper led up to the bigger research paper) I would feel more comfortable with his answer. Also, I'd like to see more detail along these lines for instruction in critical thinking.

We will forever have this problem with question A1 as long as it reads the way it does. (At this point I just received Betsy's email where she has basically the same argument I just stated, but here it is anyway.)

B4 and B5. I'm personally not satisfied with the answers to either question as they seem general enough to apply to almost any course if you substitute the appropriate words. If he used words directly related to his material, it would make it evident that his course addresses these issues (which traditional disciplinary boundaries present limitations in isolation and how should work in this area be interdisciplinary?)
Proposal for
HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS
a Common Core course of the IUSB General Education Curriculum

NAME: Sernau Last Scott First R Initial Soc-Anth/CLAS Department/Division

Course title: Human Behavior and Social Institutions – Sustainable Communities

First Semester to be offered: Spring 2009

Instructions: Attach a course description and sample syllabus. Please respond briefly to each question in the space provided. The syllabus will provide primary data regarding the suitability of the course as a version of Human Behavior and Social Institutions. Use the comment section to clarify, expand, and/or guide the reviewer through your syllabus.

Section A of this form addresses general characteristics of all Common Core courses. Section B is specific to Human Behavior and Social Institutions. Feel free to repeat any information that fits in both areas.

A. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF Common Core COURSES

Briefly discuss ways in which the course meets the expectations listed below. Details of these expectations can be found at http://www.iusb.edu/~gened/GenEd_RepRec.pdf

1. How does the course include instruction in at least one of the fundamental literacies (writing, speaking, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, computer literacy, information literacy, visual literacy)? This will be a reading and writing intensive course that asks students to reflect on accessible but challenging reading in a series of short seminar papers and also to write a short research paper. Critical thinking will also be developed in comparing, assessing and synthesizing different points of view.

2. In what ways is the course interdisciplinary? This topic is inherently interdisciplinary, particularly as it emerges from the campus theme. Since this is a social science seminar and I approach the topic as a sociologist, a strong emphasis on the way people construct communities and societies will thread through the course, drawing on sociology, anthropology, geography, economics and political science. Given the nature of the course, we will also bridge a bit to other discipline clusters including environmental science and environmental ethics. The readings proposed are thoroughly multidisciplinary. The topic also allows an approach that is truly interdisciplinary in not just approaching from several angles but looking at where these different ideas intersect. For example, with action on climate change there is the interaction of environmental education, political awareness and social action.

3. What ethical issues will be addressed in the context of course material, and how will the course include instruction in what constitutes ethical and unethical responses to these issues? Al Gore likes to remind his audiences that these are fundamentally moral and ethical questions rather than purely political questions. Maybe so. We will begin with the idea that underlying details and controversies are key ethical questions about the communities we protect and construct: are they both equitable and
sustainable, providing a good life for all members? Building on this, course topics will include land ethics, environmental justice/environmental racism, and other topics that address these concerns

B. SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF Human Behavior and Social Institutions

In response to the questions below, consider the ways in which the course meets the stated objective for Human Behavior and Social Institutions:

_In order to understand themselves and their relationships to others in society, our students need to develop insight into human nature and the nature of social institutions, as well as the major events and social processes that have shaped the world of the 21st century. This course will serve to introduce students to the distinctive perspectives of the social sciences in building an understanding of our world. It will also focus on the individual in relation to and as a product of that social world. It will develop in students an appreciation of the processes of social interaction and emphasize the analytic frameworks and techniques social scientists use to explain the causes and patterns of individual and institutional behavior._

1. In what ways will the course introduce students to major perspectives on the study of human behavior and social institutions?

In particular students will be introduced to the study of human ecology/social ecology and its roots in several social sciences and interface with physical and life sciences. Books such as Korten’s and Diamond’s will introduce an anthropological biogeography of how people have interacted with their environment over time to form human communities, while the many of the readings will highlight studies of current social and political action.

2. In what ways will the course develop insight into human nature?

The course will focus on several aspects of being human in community including issues of community building in times of social isolation, the problem of media-driven consumerism, contrasts in seeing ourselves as citizens rather than primarily as consumers, etc.

(PS: Note to you social constructionist sociologists and behaviorist psychologists out there: shouldn’t this question ask about insights into human behavior instead of “human nature”?)

3. In what ways will the course develop insight into the nature of social institutions?

A core element of the course will be examination of social institutions at multiple levels: neighborhood and community groups; local, state and national governments; multinational corporations; and national and international organizations, networks, NGO’s, to explore both their role in creating problems of non-sustainable societies, and their potential role in addressing those problems.

4. How will the course reflect upon the value and limitations of the disciplinary approaches (analytic frameworks and techniques) employed in the course?

A key theme will be that the demands of building a sustainable future transcend traditional disciplinary boundaries and that work in this area must necessarily be interdisciplinary.
5. In what ways will the relationships between individual behavior and social institutions be integrated into the course?

In good sociological fashion, the course will emphasize the reciprocity between social action and social institutions: that our lives and perspectives are shaped by the social institutions in which we are embedded, but also that those institutions are recast by concerted citizen effort and social action.

6. How will attention to major events and social processes be integrated into the course?

This is a course in which leaving out major current events would be almost impossible! We will look closely at large-scale processes such as globalization, trade liberalization, peak oil and global fossil fuel dependence, and so forth. This will be balanced by more community-level case studies as well, such as the impact of coal mining on both Appalachian and Navajo communities and their ability to sustain traditions and livelihoods.
This is an addendum to my B399 proposal to answer the questions raised by the subcommittee.

A1. It will be this summer before I have time to fully flesh out each seminar paper assignment and how would like each to build on the previous. However, each paper asks students to draw conclusions on a major theme and to assess the thesis of the book based on course material. I find that students tend to have difficulty bringing evidence to bear on their propositions or on their critiques of a reading. In class we discuss how a good seminar paper is not a “book report” that merely tries to summarize the book nor is it pure unsupported personal opinion, nor (and this is the most likely and hardest to overcome) not the first followed by the latter. In class discussions we bring other ideas, concepts and data to bear on the author’s thesis. In their papers, they then continue and extend this process into an analysis of the work. I have recently found Ocourse to be a useful tool in extending this beyond the classroom. In Forum threads the students submit short entries in which they raise both substantive and analytical questions on the reading, and these are logged sequentially so that they can see one another’s responses in advance of class discussion. After a paper is completed, students also post one of their central conclusions and the evidence supporting that conclusion. In written comments, I challenge them to build on and extend their analysis, and we usually discuss points of consensus and dispute, such that each paper becomes more analytical and maybe more reflective over time.

Since this seminar will emphasize synthesis of a large amount of material, I don’t envision a term paper. A shorter research paper will build on the critical writing skills developed in the shorter papers, while incorporating the fundamentals of a good social science research paper, including proper citations, list of references and the use of quoted material without plagiarism. I’m sure these are taught somewhere back in W130 or similar, but I find that junior-level students are still developing their skills in these areas. The idea of sustaining and documenting a line of argument, developed in the short papers, will be continued in the research paper.

B4. Of course much of the writing on environmental sustainability has come out of the natural sciences and, to a certain extent, the humanities in literature and environmental philosophy. The social sciences have a great deal to contribute, especially linking sustainability to the idea of social and cultural communities. Social science disciplines have each contributed aspects: issues of space and land use in geography, public policy and political action in political science, motivation and attitude formation in psychology, eco-feminism in Women’s Studies, ecological economics, and so forth. Sociology of the environment has often come out of the study of social movements. Anthropology has the approach of cultural ecology, looking at how environments have shaped human societies over place and time. This makes it quite easy to be multidisciplinary putting these approaches side by side. I would like to challenge students to begin an interdisciplinary dialog on approaches. For example, one way to consider the role of institutions is to look at the traditional divisions between the public, private, and social (non-profit) spheres and look at new alternatives that propose bringing the efforts of all three more closely together.
B5. It is true that I would emphasize the reciprocal nature of individual behavior and social institutions in any course I taught. The theme of sustainability is particularly useful for thinking about both the possibilities and the limits of individual action, and the ways that these actions are shaped and constrained by an institutional context. For example, we are currently bombarded with suggestions and ideas, mostly good, about saving energy and reducing “carbon footprint,” ranging changing lightbulbs to changing driving habits. An individual concerned about the environmental, or at least about gas prices, may buy a more fuel efficient car or even try to walk more and drive less. Yet these changes soon confront the problem that many cities lack reliable public transportation and may have their entire built environment centered around the automobile with attendant sprawl, space given to parking and so forth. These latter challenges require changes in social institutions, both in the public and private sphere to complement and facilitate the individual behavior change. In this case, both public policy and private marketing worked together to create particular consumer behavior based around cars. Those choices over time are fossilized into both the physical and social construction of cities, which then constrain a new generation’s individual and collective behavior. This is just one example of the ways in which the idea of sustainable communities can be used as a platform to explore the connections between behavior and institutions.