

**V36.0450.001**

***Topics in Environmental Values and Society***

**Thinking Globally, Acting Locally: Sustainability in Context**

**Professor Anne Rademacher**

**Fall 2009**

**Monday and Wednesday, 2-3.15**

**SILVER 720**

This course investigates the complex conceptual and practical terrain of sustainability. As global scale languages and metrics of sustainability develop and diffuse, they engage with cultural and political settings in which they may be challenged, revised, or even rejected. This course asks, how, and when, are notions and practices of sustainability shaped by local contexts? When, and how, can sustainability be defined, cultivated and assessed at non-local scales? How do we discern the most practical, meaningful, and effective social scales for understanding sustainability? Five analytical themes will guide our inquiry. These are: 1, the link between sustainability science and the social experience of sustainability; 2, the cultural and political norms of environmental conservation institutions; 3, the cultural and political contexts within which sustainability policies are applied; 4, the counter-logics and counter-movements that emerge in response to institutionalized sustainability initiatives; and 5, the special case of urban sustainability in international context. In order to explore these themes in depth, we will draw on case examples from diverse contexts in Asia, Africa, and the Americas.

### **Course Format and Requirements**

This is a seminar course in which we will work together to understand the relationship between sustainability and social context. The emphasis is on analysis and discussion, so we will meet each week having read all required readings and having prepared a contribution in the form of questions and insights. On six occasions, we will host guest speakers who will address specific aspects of the problem of sustainability and context. Four of these speakers will deliver public lectures as part of the evening series *Situating Sustainability*; the content addressed in those lectures is required content for this course.

Other course requirements:

- Three short reaction and analysis papers
- One long reaction and analysis paper
- One long reaction and analysis presentation
- Active participation in every class discussion
- Attendance at all class meetings and four evening lectures

Grading breakdown:

Three short (2 page) reaction and analysis papers 30%  
One long (5 page) reaction and analysis paper 15%  
One in-class reaction and analysis presentation 15%  
Attendance and participation in every class meeting and evening lecture 40%

### **Required Readings**

- Siegel, RP and Roger Saillant. 2009. Vapor Trails. New York: Sustainable Stories.
- Walley, Christine. 2004. Rough Waters: Nature and Development in an East African Marine Park. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Douglas, Mary. 1986. How Institutions Think. Syracuse University Press.
- Price, Steven. 2003. War and Tropical Forests: Conservation in Areas of Armed Conflict. New York: CRC.
- Tsing, Anna. 2004. Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

### **Guest Lectures**

*Evening guest lectures meet from 6.30 to 8pm. Most will meet in 19 Washington Square North. Each required session is exchanged for one daytime required attendance session. See the course meeting schedule, below.*

#### **Evening Guest One: Collaborating to Entertain and Inform...The Story Behind *Vapor Trails***

**Roger Saillant**

**Sustainability Advocate and Author**

Dr. Roger Saillant has served in senior executive positions at The Ford Motor Company, Visteon Corporation, and, most recently, Plug Power where he was the CEO for more than seven years. He is deeply committed to promoting improvements in the way businesses are agents of change in the world both socially and environmentally. He presently serves on several NGO boards and the boards of two start-up companies in the energy field and teaches climate change at the Marlboro Graduate School in Brattleboro, Vermont. He is a strong advocate for sustainability, speaks frequently on various environmental topics and has just completed his first novel with an energy theme.

#### **Evening Guest Two: “Reconceptualizing urban heterogeneity: consequences for understanding and enhancing ecological processes to foster sustainability”**

**Mary Cadenasso**

**Assistant Professor, Department of Plant Sciences**

**College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences, UC Davis**

Dr. Cadenasso is a pioneer in the development of urban ecology. Through her research on the effect of urban structure on ecosystem functions such as nutrient dynamics, and by integrating ecological and social theories and urban design, she works from the

standpoint of ecology to enhance the development of cities as sustainable, coupled human-natural systems.

**Evening Guest Three: “Challenges of developing sustainable architecture and design models in Indian cities”**

**Roshni Udyavar Yehuda**

**Professor of Architecture**

**Head, Rachana Sansad’s Institute of Environmental Architecture**

**Academy of Architecture**

**Mumbai, India**

Roshni Udyavar Yehuda is an architect, professor, and director in the postgraduate department of Environmental Architecture at the Rachana Sansad Academy of Architecture in Mumbai, India. Her Institute of Environmental Architecture initiated the course curriculum for ‘Environmental Architecture’ as a postgraduate discipline; this is now widely accepted by colleges all over India. Ms. Udyavar Yehuda has been involved in a wide range of pedagogic and practical projects concerning the integration of knowledge and technology for green buildings. Her focus in the last few years has been on developing indigenous rating systems, guidelines and techniques for sustainable building models in Indian cities with specific emphasis on energy and water – drawn from vernacular wisdom and cultural tradition of India. Her lecture explores the parameters that define sustainable building design in modern Indian urban context and the major challenges in developing models, policies and evaluation techniques for green building design for Indian cities.

**Evening Guest Four:**

**“From the Garden to the Garrison: Sustainability and Insecurity in Port-au-Prince, Haiti”**

**Greg Beckett**

**Collegiate Assistant Professor and Harper Fellow**

**University of Chicago**

Greg Beckett is Collegiate Assistant Professor in the Collegiate Social Sciences Division at the University of Chicago. He received his Ph.D. from the Anthropology Department at the University of Chicago in 2008. His dissertation, "The End of Haiti: History Under Conditions of Impossibility," explores the cultural, historical, and political factors that have produced the so-called "permanent crisis" in Haiti. Moving beyond the frequent designations of Haiti as a "crisis country," his research explores the social experience of disjuncture and disintegration, with a focus on the relationship between the material destruction of the environment and a politics of mourning that imagines the “end” or “death” of Haiti as a viable nation-state. His scholarly interests include: political ecology and the built environment; democracy, political imaginaries, and the state; and natural disaster, and global emergency. Greg is currently working on a book manuscript based on his dissertation and on a number of articles exploring such issues as US military interventions in Haiti and humanitarian crises and disaster response.

**Evening Guest Five: “Fantasies and Fears: Reading Eco-City Development in Shanghai”**

**Julie Sze**

**Associate Professor, American Studies, University of California, Davis**

**Founding Director, Environmental Justice Project of the John Muir Institute of the Environment**

Julie Sze is an Associate Professor of American Studies at UC Davis as well as the founding director of the Environmental Justice Project for UC Davis’ John Muir Institute for the Environment. Sze’s book, *Noxious New York: The Racial Politics of Urban Health and Environmental Justice*, won the 2008 John Hope Franklin Prize. Her research investigates environmental justice and environmental inequality; environmental culture and politics; race, gender and power; and community health and activism. Sze’s recent collaborative work with colleagues in the humanities, social sciences, sciences and engineering focuses on climate change culture and politics in China and California. Dr. Sze’s current research examines contemporary cultural attitudes and ideas about the “environment” in China and the United States, through a focus on eco-city development and suburbanization near Shanghai, host of next year’s World Exposition. From the framework of transnational American Studies, this research explores how the contemporary environmental politics of globalization and concern with China’s pollution connect with American anxieties in the 21st Century.

**Class Meeting and Reading Schedule**

**Wednesday September 9: Situating Sustainability**

Course Introduction

**Monday September 14: Sustainability as a Concept**

“Environmentalism and Images of the Other,” *Nature Across Cultures* pp1-18.

“The Global Mobilization of Environmental Concepts,” *Nature Across Cultures* pp.19-46.

“Variation and Uniformity in the Construction of Biological Knowledge Across Cultures,” *Nature Across Cultures* pp.48-74.

“The Perception of Nature and the Environment in Sub-Saharan Africa,” *Nature Across Cultures* pp. 211-28.

**W September 16: How Institutions ‘Think’ and Work**

*How Institutions Think*, Chapters 1-5.

**M September 21: Thinking Like a Conservation Institution**

*How Institutions Think*, Chapters 6-9.

**W September 23: Sustainability Interventions in North America**

*Greening of Southie*

First ½ of *Vapor Trails*

**M September 28: “Collaborating to Entertain and Inform...The Story Behind *Vapor Trails*”**

*Class will not meet from 2-3.15 in exchange for required class meeting from 6.30-8. We will meet in 20 Cooper Square, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor (Dept of Social & Cultural Analysis) Room TBA.*

Finish *Vapor Trails*

Review these sites in advance of the evening lecture:

[http://scitizen.com/screens/blogPage/viewBlog/sw\\_viewBlog.php?idTheme&idContribution%29](http://scitizen.com/screens/blogPage/viewBlog/sw_viewBlog.php?idTheme&idContribution%29)

<http://behindtheplug.americaspower.org/2009/07/recs-stanford-university-studies-ways-to-make-ccs-effective-and-safe.html>

**W September 30: Nature and Development in the Twenty-first Century**

*Rough Waters* Introduction and Part 1

**M October 5: Conservation Encounters ‘Place’**

*Rough Waters* Part II, pp. 67-168

**W October 7: Making Environmental Change in Context**

*Rough Waters* Part III, pp. 168-264.

**M October 12: Understanding Urban Ecosystems**

*Class will not meet in exchange for required class meeting time 10-14 6.30-8.*

Pickett, STA and ML Cadenasso. 2006. “Advancing urban ecological studies: frameworks, concepts, and results from the Baltimore Ecosystem Study.” *Austral Ecology* 31:114-125.

Cadenasso, ML S Pickett, and K. Schwartz. 2007. “Spatial heterogeneity in urban ecosystems: reconceptualizing land cover and a framework for classification.” *Frontiers in Ecology* 5(2): 80-88.

Cadenasso, ML, et al. 2008. “Exchanges across Land-Water-Scape Boundaries in Urban Systems: Strategies for Reducing Nitrate Pollution.” *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1134: 213–232.

**W October 14: Urban Ecosystems and the Problem of Context**

*Mary Cadenasso in class and required evening lecture.*

Pickett, STA and ML Cadenasso. 2008. “Linking ecological and built components of urban mosaics: an open cycle of ecological design.” *Journal of Ecology* 96: 8-12.

Cadenasso, ML, S Pickett, and JM Grove. 2006. "Dimensions of ecosystem complexity: heterogeneity, connectivity, and history." *Ecological Complexity* 3: 1-12.

**M October 19: Understanding 'Sustainable' Architecture**

*Readings TBA*

*Class will not meet in exchange required class meeting time 10-21 6.30-8.*

**W October 21: Sustainable Architecture and the Problem of Context**

*Readings TBA*

*Roshni Udyavar in class and required evening lecture.*

**M October 26: Reaction and Analysis Presentations: Cadenasso**

**W October 28: Reaction and Analysis Presentations: Udyavar**

**M November 2: Reimagining American Schools, Part One**

*Leah Mayor, The Cloud Institute, Invited Guest*

David Orr (2009) On Climate Change and Applied Hope Excerpt from Down to the Wire.

[http://www.ecoliteracy.org/publications/david\\_orr\\_climate\\_change.html](http://www.ecoliteracy.org/publications/david_orr_climate_change.html)

Meadows, Randers, and Meadows (2005). Moving Toward a Sustainable Future

<http://www.thesystemsthinker.com/V16N9.pdf>

Henke, Linda (Forthcoming). Metaphor and School Transformation.

<http://www.mrbsd.org/pdfs/Lindas%20Site/MetaphorandSchoolTransformation.pdf>

Selby, David. The Need for Climate Change in Education

[http://www.bne-](http://www.bne-portal.de/coremedia/generator/pm/en/Issue__001/Downloads/01__Contributions/Selby.pdf)

[portal.de/coremedia/generator/pm/en/Issue\\_\\_001/Downloads/01\\_\\_Contributions/Selby.pdf](http://www.bne-portal.de/coremedia/generator/pm/en/Issue__001/Downloads/01__Contributions/Selby.pdf)

View these websites in advance of class:

[www.cloudinstitute.org](http://www.cloudinstitute.org)

[www.ed4wb.org](http://www.ed4wb.org)

**W November 4: Reimagining Schools, Part Two**

Review the materials for 11-2.

**M November 9: Sustainability and Scale**

*Friction*, selections.

**W November 11: Sustainability and Problem Definition**

*Friction*, selections.

**M November 16: Sustainability and Stability: The Problem of Political Context**  
*Class will not meet in exchange for required class meeting time 11-23 6.30-8. I will be in Abu Dhabi.*

McNeely, J. "Biodiversity, War, and Tropical Forests" in *War and Tropical Forests*

Kaimowitz and Faune. "Contras and Comandantes: Armed Movements and Forest Conservation in Nicaragua's Bosawas Biosphere Reserve" in *War and Tropical Forests*

Alvarez, Maria. "Forests in the Time of Violence: Conservation Implications of the Columbian War" in *War and Tropical Forests*

**W November 18: Sustainability and Stability II**

Plumptre, A. "Lessons Learned from On-the-Ground Conservation in Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo" in *War and Tropical Forests*

Rechlin, et.al. Lal Salam and Hario Ban: the effects of the Maoist insurgency on community forestry in Nepal. *Forests, Trees and Livelihoods*, 2007, Vol. 17

**M November 23: Sustainability and Political Context: Greg Beckett**

Davis, Mike. 2006. Planet of Slums. London: Verso. [Chapter 6, "Slum Ecology," pp. 121-150]

Harvey, David. 2002. Spaces of Hope. Berkeley: University of California Press. [Chapter 8, "The spaces of Utopia," pp. 133-181, (pp 133-156 can be skimmed or skipped)]

**W November 25: Reaction and Analysis Presentations: Beckett**

**M November 30: Ecocities and the Future of Sustainability**

*Class will not meet in exchange for required class meeting time 12-2 6.30-8*

May, S. 2008. "Ecological citizenship and a plan for sustainable development City 12:2,237 — 244.

May, S. 2010 (forthcoming). "Ecological Urbanization: Calculating Value in an Age of Global Climate Change" In *Worlding Cities*, eds. Aihwa Ong and Ananya Roy. New York: Blackwell Wiley.

**W December 2: Making an Ecocity**

*Julie Sze in class and required evening lecture*

<http://www.greencenturyinstitute.org/califia.htm>

<http://www.triplepundit.com/pages/treasure-island.php>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ovly1dQGKH4>

*Readings TBA*

**M December 7: Reaction and Analysis Presentations: Sze**

**W December 9: Global Concepts, Local Contexts, Regional Systems, and Global Environmental Change**

Readings TBA

**M December 14: Conclusion: Social Complexity and Forging Environmental Change**