Philosophy of the Environment Laboratory Class
Abroad in Guadalajara, Mexico

CCAS 2190, GEOG. 3195

31 Dec. – 10 January 2020

This is a draft syllabus

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Prerequisites
There are no prerequisites for this course. However, the course will be demanding of your time. There is a fair amount of thinking.
**Grades**
The course can be done for one or two credits. The default is one credit. For the one credit you come to two preparation sessions, go to Guadalajara attend and participate in all of the talks and outings with the group, and you keep a diary: writing one page each evening about your experiences during the day. Every few days we put together the data and information from the diaries into a “compass table”. One week after returning we have a de-briefing session. For the second credit, as well as all of the above, after your return you write a long paper of 15 – 20 pages on a topic you choose, but negotiate with Michele Friend. The paper is due three weeks after the return.

1 credit version:
Participation – showing you have understood the readings, listening carefully to lectures, assembling observations from lectures, walks, the readings discussions with fellow students and general observations; translating them into data points for a table. Quality of discussion when analyzing the data gathered by you or fellow students. Practice on the mathematical aggregation technique for the data. 100%.

2 Credit version:
Participation 60%
Paper: 40%.

To pass the course, you need 45 %. Letter grades are distributed as follows: 95 – 105: A, 90 – 94.5: A-, 85 – 89.5: B+, 80 – 84.5: B, 75 – 79.5: B-, 70 – 74.5: C+, 65 – 69.5: C, 60 – 64.5: C-, 55 – 59.5: D+, 50 – 54.5: D, 45 – 49.5: D-, 0 – 44.5: F.

**Classroom/ Laboratory protocols:**
Classroom protocols are as follows:

**Mobile telephones, other communication devices or laptop computers are to be turned OFF and left in your bag, or beneath your seat while at lectures, on outings or in the bus. You may use them only in the evenings during your free time. 2% is deducted from your final grade if I catch you using an electronic device during class or during an outing. If you are expecting a very urgent call during the trip then I suggest that you do not take the class.**

**Texts**
You will be given a dossier with information about the area. Please read it through before the initial meeting. Seven papers will be available on electronic reserves. You should read these before the initial meeting as well. Before we meet in December, you should read the book by Satish Kumar: *Spiritual Compass*. (Green Books Ltd. 1989)

This class qualifies as a philosophy course. It counts towards (1) the minor in sustainability (2) G-PAC Quantitative Reasoning (3) G-PAC Cross Cultural Perspective. As such, you
are expected to listen to speakers with politeness and attention. You are expected to interact with the Mexican students who will be joining us from the university of Guadalajara.

**Content of the Course**
In close collaboration with the University of Guadalajara we have organised a laboratory course on philosophy of the environment. We shall be learning about Chapala Lake and the river basin of the Santiago river. We shall be listening to lectures about the ecology and geography of the region. We shall be talking with local politicians, academics, people involved in NGOs, with local farmers and indigenous peoples, and students from the University of Guadalajara. We shall be travelling together in a bus. We shall have the privilege to witness first-hand the landscape, the extent of the pollution in the area, how this is affecting the economy and the health of ecosystems and humans, and conversely, how our human activity and economic decisions affects the ecology. There will be between 5 – 7 lectures by academics, 3 from government officials and 2 – 4 from NGOs and locals. To keep costs to a minimum, we suggest that you reserve your flight as early as possible. An inexpensive flight should be in the range of $350 return. Because the laboratory takes place during the winter vacation which you will be spending in various places, you will have to reserve your own flight ticket. Once we know your flight schedules, we’ll set up meeting times and places in Guadalajara on the 31st. There will be a maximum of 15 students from George Washington University and twelve to fourteen students from the University of Guadalajara.

**Costs and Payment Schedule:** Registration for the course and a deposit of $1000.00, non-refundable, must be submitted by 28 October 2019. The collection comes with a form. You have to give details of passport number, expiry date of passport etc. Once you have made your own travel arrangements to get to and from Guadalajara, please inform Michele Friend and Max Gelber of the flight details. A balance of $1000.00 will be due 15 November. Failure to meet the deadline of payment will result in our keeping the initial sum. Students who are unwilling to share accommodation will have to pay extra. You will be responsible for buying your own food – it is not expensive in Mexico. We are looking into the possibility of having some of the student places sponsored. Sponsorship will probably cover the $2000 but not the flight or food.

**Schedule for laboratory course:**
This is a rough schedule. It will be up-dated if necessary. It will include lectures by academics, government officials, community activists, farmers, indigenous peoples and industrialists. Before dinner each evening, we shall convene to update a data table as per the paper on the policy compass for ecological economics. Simultaneously, we shall update the arrow in the compass, and watch it change over the days, as we gather more data and learn more about the river basin of the Chapala river, and learn from different people’s points of view.

A typical day will be scheduled as follows:
8:00 wake up, get dressed.
8:30 Breakfast, pack to go to another destination.
10:00 get on to bus to go for outing.
11:00 reach destination, listen to lecture, take notes.
12:30 short walk in surrounding area to make and record observations.
13:30 lunch.
15:00 Meet for second lecture.
16:30 A third of the students meet to add to data table discussion for full analysis of data.
So every three days you will come to one of these meetings.
Other students write their diary of observations. Students may consult e-mail and electronic messages.
19:30 dinner and free time.

6 Dec. 11:30 – 12:30 or 17 Dec. 1:00 – 2:00. Initial academic meeting. You should have read (1) the book by Satish Kumar: Spiritual Compass before this meeting, (2) the two papers by David Barkin, (3) the two papers by Rapport on health and the environment (4) the material prepared for us by the team at the University of Guadalajara and (5) the technical paper by Michele Friend on institutional compass construction. We have a general philosophical discussion about the material we read and we discuss flight, hotel, safety, protocol, food and general behaviour. This will include a skype meeting with Salvador who is organizing the trip for us.

31 Dec. Arrive in Guadalajara, meet up at the hotel or in the airport. Stay the night at a hotel near the centre of Guadalajara. If you arrive earlier in the day, you are welcome to visit Guadalajara. You will be asked to travel in groups. Welcome in the new year at the hotel.

1 Jan. Meeting with our friends from Guadalajara. Lecture by Michele Friend on data gathering and data analysis for the purposes of compass construction. Visit Huentitán to learn about and see the “biological corridors”. Lecture by government official. At the bottom of the dam and waterfall is one of the early colonial settlements of the Spanish Conquistadores. The town was deserted because of the damming project, that was abandoned because of a technical problem. Lecture by academic.

2 Jan. Visit Las Canadas, Cascada Cola de Caballo and Zapopan. We visit an energy generation plant powered by the waste-water from Zapopan. Lecture by government official. We then visit the origin of the waste water, and farms that use the waste-water for agriculture. Talk with the farmers.
3 Jan. Visit Huaxtla and Zapopan. We visit two landfill sites, that have infected the basin of the Milpillas River. This has affected the health of the people, the agriculture and the cattle. Lecture by academic.

4 Jan. Visit the indigenous community of Mezcala in San Pedro Itzicán. Dr. Lozano will explain an academic project on an indigenous community from the town of Coca. They are suffering from material poverty which has been imposed on them through the contamination of the water they use from the lake.


6 Jan. We visit Jocotepec. One of the major economic activities of the Chapala river basin is to produce berries for the international market. This type of agriculture is intense in the use of pesticides, fertilizers and ground water. This has a detrimental effect on the local rural population. We make observations, go for a walk to see the berry plantations for ourselves. We also visit AIPROMADES. This is a public governmental organization overseeing several communities in the Chapala river basin. We learn about their activities, projects in education, conservation and protection of the natural environment.

7 Jan. In Presa Corona we see two canals. One is to channel water generally. The other is for agriculture. Both carry pollutants from the city, from agriculture and from industry. In Ocotlán we witness a levelling of the surrounding land near the Santiago River that prevents the flow of the Chapala River to reach its natural destination. As a result, the municipality has suffered flooding, and much illness of the population because of the spread of pollution. Lecture by academic on the problems faced in the region.

8 Jan. In Cuexcomatitlán and Cajititlán we visit the lake of Cajititlán which is as clear as glass. This is because the pollution level is so high that nothing can live. The pollution comes from the industrial zone of Santa Cruz de las flores. We take a short walk after listening to an academic explain the problems.

9 Jan. We visit the industrial corridor of El Salto. We see the strategic points that contribute to the pollution of these small municipalities and the real and catastrophic effect on public health. Observations are supported by a lecture. This is followed by a lecture by David Barkin, on a communitarian conception
of life and governance as an eventual solution to the many a complex problems we face with pollution.

10 Jan. Return to Washington D.C.

**Academic integrity:**
In 1995, the students of George Washington University committed themselves to high standards of academic integrity by passing a 'Code of Academic Integrity'. By attending George Washington University you are obliged to follow this code. The 'Code of Academic Integrity' can be found in the "Student Planner and Handbook" and also in the "Guide to Student Rights and Responsibilities". The latter can be obtained in the office of the Dean of each school, and in the office of the Dean of Students. You are expected to be familiar with the Code, to understand what constitutes dishonest academic behavior, and to avoid any such behavior. Sanctions for offences include failure of an assignment, failure of a course, suspension from the university for a limited amount of time and expulsion from the university.

**Instructional Modifications for Students with Disabilities:**
None.

**The University Counseling Center (UCC)**
The University Counseling center (UCC) assists students in addressing personal, social, career and study problems that can interfere with their academic progress and success. This will be unavailable during our stay in Mexico, but there will be faculty with whom you may consult if problems arise.

**Security** Discussed at preliminary meeting.

**Learning Outcomes**
Through the lectures, readings and outings, the students will develop the values, discipline and commitment to pursue responsible public action. Students are asked to take their knowledge and try to use it to create solutions for the common good, integrating knowledge with environmental, ethical and civic concerns. The civic engagement concerns of this course includes active participation in helping to decrease our harmful impact on the environment. This is important not only for the people living locally and in the present. As we know, our impact reaches beyond municipal, states, countries, continents and generations. The students will learn to decrease their own ecological footprint, and the lesson should stay with them beyond the classroom and influence their decisions throughout their lives.

By the end of the course, the students will be able to:
- Identify and analyse the impact of diverse experiences and/or cultures (of Mexican students, faculty, scientists, farmers, farm labourers, government officials, NGOs) upon human behaviour, thought and expression.
- Use cultural comparison as a tool for understanding how social, cultural, or economic contexts shape understandings and behaviours.
- Represent mathematical information symbolically, visually, numerically and verbally.
- Articulate precise mathematical definitions and propositions and draw inferences from them.
- Use algebraic, geometric or statistical calculations to solve problems.
- Interpret and explain information represented in mathematical forms (e.g., graphs, equations, diagrams, tables).
- Understand the connection between the berries that we eat in the winter, and: the ecology of the river basin in Mexico, the farming practices and the health of the local community.
- To propose an intervention or solution based on broader theoretical knowledge.
• To balance diverse perspectives in deciding whether and how to act.
• To distinguish the multiple consequences and implications of actions.
• To increase awareness of the possible life-style options we can adopt.
• To critique our life style and analyse the changes we face with our growing impact on the environment.
• To instill a sense of responsibility in others for their relationship to the environment.
• To become familiar with several practical issues concerning sustainability: the use of public space, transportation and food policies, management of parks and land, the political, cultural and legal constraints on changing the status quo.
• To develop a coherent view on sustainability, what it is, what we should therefore aim towards, what practical measures advance us in that direction and which hinder our advancement.
• To develop the ability to carry on the analysis beyond the specific issues discussed in class.

Partial Course Bibliography


Daly, Herman E.. Beyond Growth; The Economics of Sustainable Development. Boston Beacon Press. 1996.

Daly, Herman E. and John B. Cobb, Jr.. For the Common Good; Redirecting the Economy Toward Community, the Environment and a Sustainable Future. Boston. Beacon Press. 1989.


Kumar, Satish. Spiritual Compass. (Green Books Ltd. 1989)


