

**Class:** Ecology and the Politics of Sustainability– PA 5353  
**Semester:** Summer 2020  
**Professor:** Dr. Dianne Rahm  
**Time:** Internet (June 1 – August 6)  
**Place:** Internet  
**Office location:** UAC 374  
**Office Phone:** 512-245-1565  
**Office Fax:** 512-245-7815  
**Email:** dr37@txstate.edu  
**Office Hours:** By appointment (zoom).

**Course Description:**

This course is an examination of key issues and theories involved in the crisis areas of declining energy resources, arable land, water, and food amidst increasing population and pollution of the environment. The course is designed to allow you to read a great deal of material, thoughtfully consider it, and write about it.

**Course Objectives:**

- Students will critically restate complex relationships between ecological and social change underlying environmental problems around the world.
- Students will explain the role of political institutions in formulating a policy response to environmental problems.
- Students will describe the various strategies to enhance sustainability.

The course will draw on materials in several books. The Reisner book deals with water scarcity issues in the American West and the history of water development primarily west of the 100<sup>th</sup> meridian. The Rich book focuses on climate change and the role that leaders in the decade of the 1980s played. The Thiele book is an introduction to the concept of sustainability and issues associated with achieving a sustainable society. Each of these books will be read and students will provide an essay in response to the questions listed in the syllabus associated with each book. Citations to the book need include only page numbers (if you use an e-book without pages, just list the header under which the material appears). Citations to other sources, if used, should be complete citations. There is no expectation that students will consult materials other than the assigned book.

**Required Readings:**

Reisner, Marc, *Cadillac Desert: The American West and its Disappearing Water* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993). ISBN 0-14-01-7824-4

Rich, Nathaniel, *Losing Earth: A Recent History* (New York: MCD Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2019). ISBN 9780374191337

Thiele, Leslie Paul. *Sustainability* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013). ISBN 978-0-7456-5610-6

**Participation Requirements:**

This is an Internet course. See the exact requirements below:

1. It is imperative that you use your university assigned email address already contained in TRACS for all activities (*not* an alternate email address). All communication must be through your correctly assigned university email.

2. General questions and comments should be sent via TRACS Forum (PA5353 Ecology & Pol Sust Forum) so that we can share questions and I only have to answer once. This will be just like asking a question in class.
3. Specific questions regarding personal issues should be sent to my email and I will return a private answer. You can also reach me by phone. To schedule a phone call exchange, email me, and I will set up a zoom meeting.
4. Students should upload and submit their essays via the Assignments tool by the date specified.

**Communication in the Course:** The course will use Forums, Gradebook, and Assignments for communication. Students should always use their assigned Texas State email account for communication (not an alternate account). When you use email, be sure to put PA 5353 in the subject line.

There are 2 Forums set up on TRACS for your use:

1. PA5353 Ecology & Pol Sust Forum

This is where you can post general questions or comments about reading materials and assignments. I may reply, but *anyone* can reply to these postings. This Forum is not graded. It is the equivalent of raising your hand in class and asking a question or making a comment for discussion.

2. Student Lounge

This is where you can have informal discussion with other students regarding any thread you might wish to post -- as if you were having a conversation with other students in the hallway or student lounge. I will not participate in this forum.

Protocol for all postings in all forums:

1. Be polite, civil, and use appropriate language at all times.
2. Follow all university established procedures for online communication.
3. Private matters should go through email directly to me.

**Honor Code:**

The student handbook states: "Violation of the Honor Code includes, but is not limited to, cheating on an examination or other academic work, plagiarism, collusion and the abuse of resource material." The Department of Political Science's policy on plagiarism is as follows: "A student who submits plagiarized work earns a failing grade for that work. This act of academic dishonesty may also warrant a failing grade in the course. All students should be familiar with the policies described in the Texas State Student Handbook."

**Students with Special Needs:**

Students with special needs should identify themselves within the first several weeks of the semester and provide the necessary documentation from the Office of Disability Services so that accommodation may be made.

**Program Learning Outcomes:**

The Department of Political Science has adopted student learning outcomes for general education courses (POSI 2310 and POSI 2320) and for all undergraduate and graduate degree programs offered in the Department of Political Science. These outcomes are available for your review at

<http://www.polisci.txstate.edu> Pull down the Student Resources menu and go to “Learning Outcomes.”

**Department of Political Science Information:** Undergraduate Academic Center (UAC) Rm. 355; Telephone number: (512) 245-2143; Fax number: (512) 245-7815; Website: <http://www.polisci.txstate.edu>

**Classroom Computer Lab:** Undergraduate Academic Center (UAC) 342  
Liberal Arts Computer Lab: Undergraduate Academic Center (UAC) 440; Website: <http://www.polisci.txstate.edu/resources/computer-lab.html>

**Grading:**

Essays: 33 points each. Grades will be posted to Gradebook. Students may look up their grades in Gradebook.

**Grade Symbols:**

A = excellent work (class GPA equal to or greater than 90)  
B = good (class GPA between 80 and 89)  
C = average (class GPA between 70 and 79)  
D = passing (class GPA between 60 and 69)  
F = failure (class GPA below 60)

**Class Schedule:**

**June 1 (class begins)**

**Week of June 1** read Introduction & chapters 1 & 2 of *Cadillac Desert*.

**Week of June 8** read chapters 3, 4, 5, & 6 of *Cadillac Desert*.

**Week of June 15** read chapters 7 & 8 of *Cadillac Desert*.

**Week of June 22** read chapters 9, 10, & 11 of *Cadillac Desert*

**Week of June 29** read chapters 12 - end of *Cadillac Desert*.

The following essay (no more than 5 pages double spaced) is **due by 8 am Monday July 6:**

In *Cadillac Desert* Marc Reisner discusses the history of water development in the U.S., albeit with a focus on the American West. Reisner looks at the rancorous competition between the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Bureau of Reclamation. Discuss these two primary government agencies that played a key role in the West’s water development, the role they played, and the potential consequences that have or may still result from their undertakings. Also, comment on whether or not you think Reisner correctly analyzes the situation of water scarcity in the arid West.

**Week of July 6** read Part I & II *Losing Earth*.

**Week of July 13** read Part III to end of *Losing Earth*.

The following essay (no more than 5 pages double spaced) is **due by 8 am Monday July 20:**

In *Losing Earth* Rich discusses climate change and why we have not been able to forge a binding political solution to the problem, even though the science has been clear for at least half a century. Describe the argument Rich lays out. Do you agree with this analysis? Why or why not?

**Week of July 20** read chapters 1 - 4 of *Sustainability*.

**Week of July 27** read chapters 5 - end of *Sustainability*.

The following essay (no more than 5 pages double spaced) is **due by 8 am Monday August 3:**

In *Sustainability* Leslie Paul Thiele provides an overview to a concept that has been widely adopted by many people, businesses, and governments yet implemented by few. Sustainability is frequently treated as little more than a public relations “trick” that justifies business as usual rather than a driver of fundamental change. But in this era of living in an ever more populated planet, achieving true sustainability is needed more than ever. What key approaches to achieving a sustainable environment, economy, and social equity does Thiele advocate? Do you agree with his analysis? Why or why not?