Humanity’s 2050 Challenge: Our uncertain future

Course Overview and Mechanics

Instructors/Facilitators
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Lecture: 3:00 – 4:55pm, Wednesdays, 3096 McCarty Hall B
“Virtual Monday”: post and discuss links and videos (see www.challenge2050.wordpress.com)

Readings:
1) Assigned readings will be posted each week
2) Your own articles or videos – starting in week 2 you will find and read an article (or watch a video) that interests you each week

Office hours: by appointment (email us or see us after class)

Brief course overview:
This is an introductory course intended to explore current issues in human sustainability. We will begin the semester by exploring questions about human wellbeing and sustainability. The course is designed as a sampling of a wide range of topics rather than attempting to be comprehensive in scope. Throughout the semester you will be exposed to cutting edge topics in areas related to the food, environment, health, economic and social systems, and how these are all complex and overlapping. We hope that you will come away with 1) an appreciation for the role of both the social and physical sciences, as well as humanities/arts, in the challenge we face in sustaining human wellbeing; 2) a sense of the complex nature of the problems we face (food system/production, health, environmental change etc.); 3) a broader more global perspective on food, health, and environment; and 4) ideas and motivation for how you can personally contribute now and in your career to addressing the challenges we face. We will encourage you to ask questions about the topics, seek sources of information to answer these questions, evaluate information sources to understand the quality of evidence provided, and explore how to implement what we have learned in our individual career paths and as a community.
Class format:
Each face to face class period runs from 3:00-4:55pm (periods 8-9) on Wednesdays. In a given week you will hear a presentation by a guest lecturer or one of your instructors and you have an opportunity to work in groups to discuss the week’s topic and your readings. We will assign you to your groups, but you will have an opportunity later in the semester to change groups if you want. Please NOTE: this format is not an excuse to skip classes. Your grade depends on attending both parts of class, and you will be responsible for work from both parts of class.

Specific details will be provided below and in class each week, but in general you will be asked to do several things each week:

1) Find a current story or short article or video related to the topics we are covering and be prepared to briefly describe it to your group – you will be asked to highlight a ‘most memorable sentence’ from the article and keep track of questions you have about vocabulary or the topic. You will post your reading/video to our word press site.

2) Complete an assigned reading ahead of time and come prepared to discuss it in your group. The group will complete a worksheet to hand-in at the end of class.

3) Come to class and participate with your group.

4) Keep track of questions you have about the topics, and make note of terms you are unfamiliar with.

Group work:
In the third week of class, you will be assigned to a group. You will work with your group each week to share the current environmental stories you found, discuss weekly readings, and complete weekly assignments in-class.

Group folders:
Each week when you first arrive at class, one of your group members should come to the front of the classroom to pick-up your group’s work folder. We will number the folders so you will know which folder to pick up. Inside the folder you will find handouts and individual reflection sheets, and your graded papers from the previous week. Please leave the previous week’s graded group and individual reflection sheets in your folder – we will use these to track your progress in the course. Turn in all of your work in this folder at the end of class.

Reading:
Weekly readings are designed to help you come to class prepared for discussion with your group members. You will need to complete the reading assignment ahead of class and come prepared to discuss review questions, case studies, and any questions you have about the topic and vocabulary. We will not have a textbook this year.
Attendance:
We work very hard to try and bring in interesting and engaging guests, and one of our goals is to challenge you and expose you to a wide range of topics and ideas. You will not benefit if you do not attend class. Therefore a large part of your grade is based on your participation and attendance in class. Much of what you learn will come from your discussions with your classmates and engaging with the course instructors and guest speakers. Your participation matters! Attendance and in-class work counts for 50% of your grade.

Grading:
Your grade for this course will be based primarily on attendance and participation in class, as well as several assignments, and your reading and preparation for each class period. You will also have a final reflection paper (3-5 pages) to complete. NOTE: There are no exams.

1) Attendance and in-class work (group and individual worksheets) = 50%
2) Out-of-class work (readings and assignments) = 35%
3) Final reflection paper (based on your work throughout the semester) = 15%

NOTE: You will have the opportunity to drop your lowest weekly score for each of the following categories: attendance, in-class work (both group and individual), and pre-class work.

Academic Honesty
Students are required to be honest in all of their university class work. I, as a faculty member, have a duty to promote ethical behavior and avoid practices and environments that foster cheating. I encourage you, as a student in my classroom, to bring incidents of dishonesty to my attention.

In the fall of 1995, the UF student body enacted a new honor code and voluntarily committed itself to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

The Honor Pledge: We, the members of the University of Florida community, pledge to hold ourselves and our peers to the highest standards of honesty and integrity.

On all work submitted for credit by students at the university, the following pledge is either required or implied: "On my honor, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid in doing this assignment."

It is to be assumed all work will be completed independently unless the assignment is defined as group project, in writing by the professor.

Software Use
All faculty, staff, and students of the University are required and expected to obey the laws and legal agreements governing software use. Failure to do so can lead to monetary damages and/or criminal penalties for the individual violator. Because such violations are also against University policies and rules, disciplinary action will be taken as appropriate.
Campus Helping Resources:
Students experiencing crisis or personal problems that interfere with their general well-being are encouraged to utilize the university’s counseling resources. Both the Counseling Center and Student Mental Health provide confidential counseling services at no cost for currently enrolled students. Resources are available on-campus for students having personal problems or lacking clear career and academic goals that interfere with their academic performance. These resources include:

University Counseling Center, 301 Peabody Hall, 392-1575, www.counsel.ufl.edu
Student Mental Health, Student Health Care Center, 392-1171, www.hsc.ufl.edu/shcc/smhs.htm
Career Resource Center, CR-100 JWRU, 392-1602, www.crc.ufl.edu/

Accommodation:
We recognize that not everyone is equally able in terms of vision, mobility, hearing, or learning. If you need to request an accommodation to aid your participation in the class, please feel free to contact one of us.

Students with Disabilities Act
The Dean of Students Office coordinates the needed accommodations of students with disabilities. This includes the registration of disabilities, academic accommodations within the classroom, accessing special adaptive computer equipment, providing interpretation services, and mediating faculty-student disability related issues.
Disability Resource Center, 0001 Reid Hall (Building 0020), 392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc

Syllabus and Course Amendments
As your instructor I reserve the right to amend this syllabus as appropriate before the semester or if changes are necessary during the semester I will provide adequate notice to all course participants.
Weekly Preparation Guidelines

Weekly assignment overview:
The weekly assignments are an opportunity for you to 1) learn about an environmental topic that interests you, and 2) prepare for the discussion portion of class by completing the reading questions assigned for that week.

Each week you will be expected to complete three things to prepare for class:

1) Find and analyze an article/story/video about an issue related to class
2) Complete a short reading to prepare for class
3) Reflect on your learning

Article analysis:
Each week, locate a story, short article or video about an issue that interests you. You can find an article in the newspaper (e.g. New York Times, Washington Post, Capital Times), in a scientific journal (e.g. Science, Nature, New Scientist), a popular magazine (e.g. National Geographic, Smithsonian), or from an environmental group magazine or on-line site (e.g. The Sierra Club, The Nature Conservancy).

Read the article/watch the video and note a 'most memorable passage'. Keep track of terms that are unfamiliar or questions you have.

Prepare a short analysis of the article/video. Include the following: Title and where did you locate it? How reliable is the source? What was the author’s main point? What struck you most about the article?

Reading question:
Each week we will post a reading assignment and a question that you should answer before coming to class.

The site to use for class is www.challenge2050.wordpress.com
Go there to find your assignments and to post your videos etc.
Glad to have you in class!!!