

Full Spectrum Response to Environmental Degradation

It is five minutes past twelve. It would still be possible to avoid unacceptable damage for our children and grandchildren, but only through a quick and thorough transformation of laws, regulations, international relations, and cultural values, requiring a huge departure from current practices. The class surveys the full spectrum of what needs to be done to make human civilization sustainable. It assesses the resources available for and the obstacles to this transformation. Guided by the scientific study of similarly profound social transformations, reform proposals in the fields of energy, land use, and sustainable cities will be developed.

- > Class Goals
- > Jan 7, 9: For Sustainable Fu...
- > Jan 14, 16: Resource Exhau...
- > Jan 21, 23: Climate Change
- > Jan 28, 30: Great Transfor...
- > Feb 4, 6: Feasibility
- > Feb 11, 13: Financing
- > Feb 18, 20: Statehood
- > Feb 25, 27: Change Agents
- > Mar 4, 6: Policy Advice
- > Mar 11, 13: Spring Break
- > Mar 18, 20: Suggested Action
- > Mar 25, 27: Suggested Res...
- > Apr 1, 3: Climate Denial
- > Apr 8, 10: Nuclear Power
- > Apr 15, 17, 22: Geoenginee...
- > Apr 24: Final Exam
- > Utah downloads

University classes transmit scientific information and also teach the participants how to generate this information themselves. The decision what to do with this information is usually left to the participants themselves. The information transmitted in this particular class, however, is difficult to digest. The inexorably unfolding ecological crisis endangering civilization as we know it is frightening, and the gap between what needs to be done and what is actually done by businesses and governments is depressing. An additional learning objective of this class is therefore to explore what the individual class participants should do with this overwhelming information. After we have understood the coming danger and the depth of the transformation necessary to make human civilization sustainable, we will calmly discuss what we as individuals thrown into this situation can or might want to do. If we do not change our lives now while we have choices, if we ignore this information now and continue as in the past, then our lives will eventually be changed drastically, without our input or our consent, by the force of

Econ 3960, Section 2, Spring 2014.

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Do Not Despair, You are Not Alone

Civilizations have collapsed before. If you are young today, you will witness the collapse of modern industrial civilization during your lifetime (details) This collapse will be different in two respects:

- It is going to be world wide, it is taking many other species with it, and the planet's ecosystem will be much less hospitable to humans than what we have come to expect from the past.
- Humanity is going into the disaster with open eyes. The danger is known and the process has already begun. Nevertheless, only a small portion of the resources available to humanity are devoted to preventing or mitigating the disaster.

This class explores what can be done in such a situation: on a social/political level, on an interpersonal level, and in individual life-planning.

Politics is the art to make the necessary possible. This class will ask "what is necessary," then see if there are any scenarios, at this late point in the game, in which that what is necessary may become reality, and finally explore what everybody can do to make these scenarios, if there are any, more likely.

What if we fail? Remember you are not alone. Every human on the planet is in the same situation. Therefore unexpected hopeful developments cannot be ruled out. Nevertheless the chances of failure seem much bigger than the chances of success.

Even if collapse cannot be prevented, this collapse will take many years. What happens during that time will make a lot of difference to billions of people. We do have options, we make many choices every day. There is broad consensus that continuing as in the past will make things much worse in the future. Since so many people know that business as usual is not an option, they will try new things, and will be open to others with novel ideas as well.

This class allows an alternative to ignoring the unpleasant realities and wishing them away. It provides emotional support and the scientific and philosophical tools so that participants can look the situation in the eye and do what is rational, ethical, and rewarding. We will discuss how to best influence the social structures and change the culture we all are embedded in, how to overcome our own and our peers' denial, how to grieve the losses, and how to lead fulfilled and satisfactory lives. The emotional challenges living in such trying times are addressed in the new book *Collapsing Consciousness*, summarized here.

In the past, humans have been a highly successful species; we are about to learn what it means to be human during historic decline and calamity. The goal of the class is to enable the participants to rise to the challenge.

The class meets every Tuesday and Thursday 6 – 7:40 pm in OSH 111. First class Jan 7, last class Apr 22, 2014. HB 60 students welcome. Enrollment.

Requirements:

- Watch the videos and do the recommended readings for each week. You can do this either privately on your own schedule, or together with other class participants and the instructor after each class in the classroom.
- Attendance is required.
- Through Canvas submit a journal entry once a week summarizing your readings and thoughts regarding the preceding week's materials. These journals are pass/fail. If they do not pass you are allowed to resubmit a better version.
- There is an in-class final exam, but no midterm.
- Easy on-line quizzes about the assigned readings will be available on Canvas. You are allowed to re-take them if you are not satisfied with your grade.
- For extra credit, if you fall behind on the other assignments, you may attend a stakeholder or advocacy event regarding environmental policies, and submit a report about it through Canvas.
- 75% of your grade will be the quizzes, and 25% the Final Exam. If you attend less than 75% of the classes or submit an acceptable journal less than 75% of the time, you have to make up for it by a stakeholder meeting report, otherwise there will be a grade penalty.

The main challenge of this class is not academic but emotional. This is why attendance and participation are valued so highly. You will know exactly at every point in time where you stand regarding grades, and you have opportunities to improve your grade.

Purchase of a textbook or other class materials is not required. All materials can be downloaded from the internet, and some important printed materials will be on reserve to be checked out for 1 week. If you request the call number "Ehrbar P-5" the reserve desk in the Marriott Library will give you a thumb drive for 24 hours max with the pdf and mp4