AHE 603 Portfolio/Proposal for
2xx Sustainability

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Introduction to Sustainability (HES2xx), or sustainable development, is the first course at the University of Alabama on sustainability available to all students, this will be an on-line class. The student will utilize a systems perspective of family systems theory to understand an overall multi-disciplinary perspective and its inter-relationships, while further developing an understanding of sustainability within their specific chosen field of study or interest.

1. Audience & Purpose
The audience for this portfolio are hopefully as multiplicitous as one could imagine; other instructors, administrators, students, etc.

The most specific reason for someone to bother to review this material is development for myself in Dr. Claire Major's class, AHE 603: College and University Teaching. It is to intrinsically become a more effective and engaging instructor through the process of developing this course portfolio for a proposed class. In working through the process of researching a class subject to propose, I discovered a gap in the College of Human Environmental Sciences on-line class offering at the 200-level. More specifically, I further discovered a gap at the University of Alabama in not offering a single class to students on sustainability. After further review and research of institutions like ourselves, I discovered we were the only Human (Environmental) Science College or School not offering a class on sustainability.

Further, based on the enthusiasm I have harnessed for this class portfolio project, another primary audience is administrators who may have some interest in course portfolios, specifically this portfolio on sustainability and to a greater end, the creation of this course for students. Possibly a good example of a portfolio communicates the value of such an instrument and its contents.

There may be parts of this portfolio that would interest students. For them there would be other parts of the portfolio protected from their view. The public at large may also have interest in some parts of this portfolio, and again there may be parts protected from general viewing.

For all of these audiences, the primary purpose is sharing. A secondary purpose is simply documentation of my course, my thoughts in terms of design and implementation, and the accumulation of ideas, techniques and activities that have been effective.

2. Course Objectives
This course introduces students to a broad academic approach to sustainability using a multidisciplinary approach and explores how to define and apply sustainability principles and best practices within their academic program while developing personal and professional values.

Student Learning Outcomes
Upon the completion of this course, you will be prepared to do the following:
   • Demonstrate professional communication skills.

- Participate and discuss sustainability as it relates to our environment/community, from a multidisciplinary approach.
- Broad knowledge of how natural, economic, and social systems interact to foster and/or prevent sustainability.
- Locate and cite reliable resources for information as it relates to sustainability within your chosen field.
- Reflect on the academic approach of sustainability and explore how today's human societies can endure in the face of global change, ecosystem degradation and resource limitations.
- Discuss sustainability as it relates to your chosen major within the HES family systems theory.
- Consider sustainability principles while developing personal and professional values.
- Recognize trends and information pertaining to sustainability, and the importance of remaining current on topics.
- Develop management systems and performance frameworks for sustainability practices for use in a variety of organizations.
- Critical assessment of sustainability principles and best practices as they pertain to sustainability in your major field of interest.
- Determine ways to foster and grow sustainability in your chosen industry.
- Effective written and oral communication skills of a range of approaches, frameworks, principles, and practices of sustainability, especially as they relate to your chosen industry

These are the intended learning outcomes this course should address, listing objectives and outcomes in specific language.

3. Context
The official course outline and syllabus are a few of several institution documents that can help set the overall context of HES2xx as a course, from development through my assignment as the instructor.

The College of Human Environmental Sciences at the University of Alabama
HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES is the relationship of humans and of humans to their ENVIRONMENT, improving the quality of life for individuals, families, and communities.

Goals: to improve the life conditions of clients, to promote the best selection and use of consumer products and services, and to conduct research to solve individual, family and community problems.

Academic Departments in CHES:
- Clothing, Textiles, and Interior Design
- Consumer Sciences
- General Studies in HES
- Health Science
- Human Development and Family Studies
- Human Nutrition & Hospitality Management

Each department contains a diverse group of majors… so… How are they related?
Through a…
Systems Perspective: An integrated way to understand the individual, the family, and the community… and the relationships created by their dynamic, interconnected, interdependent interactions.
And…

Family Systems Theory that binds CHES majors together and allows us as CHES professionals to better understand our clients/the consumer.

Catalog Description
Introduction to the interdisciplinary (multi-disciplinary) perspective and its inter-relationships of sustainability, while further developing an understanding of sustainability within their specific chosen field of study or interest.

Demographics
This 200-level HES class is proposed as an on-line class for both campus learners and distance learners. This means there will be some traditional undergraduate students, but most of the students will be part time students who also have full time jobs and/or other full-time obligations. Many of them are returning to college or beginning college after some time in the workforce or raising families, while some serve in the military.

Refer to http://bamabydistance.ua.edu/ for more information.

Constraints
In addition to the challenges of a diverse population of students, there are other constraints. Primarily, I'm not at complete liberty in designing this proposed course. The University of Alabama, the College of Human Environmental Sciences, the College of Continuing Studies, its advisers, administrators, and faculty would have to review, discuss, dissect, and propose changes and/or improvements prior to the development phase.

Constraints to on-line education can be broken down into four components as reflected on NCSU's website discussion of the pros-and-cons-of-online-education.
Limited Social Interaction: There is a limited opportunity to interact face-to-face to professors and other students.
- Especially in self-paced courses – difficult to develop relationships with classmates
- Possibility of limited local networking opportunities
- Most of the communication through e-mail, chat room or discussion groups, but no offline get-together
- No personalized attention from instructor with regards to face-to-face interactions and feedbacks
- No campus atmosphere to create social interaction

Technology Cost and Scheduling: Some of the key elements are –
- Computer boot-up time, software programs, and connection to Internet
- Students may be required to learn new or enhanced computer and troubleshooting skills
- Additional cost of high-speed Internet
- Log into your class while at work (unless your employer permits you to complete your course work at the office)
- Plan and adjust your studying schedule around instructor's assignment due date. For example, east coast versus west coast in the U.S., International course or student, etc.
- If a student is scheduling to study in the night, then he/she will have to wait for response from the instructor or classmates by next day

Effectiveness of Assessment: Most educators agree that memory testing is not the best measure of learning in any environment, but classroom tools are difficult to apply. It is difficult to measure program results. Question remains: are students learning what instructor is saying that they should be learning?

Problematic for Instructors: As software is getting more and more advanced, instructors are constantly trying to learn how to keep up.

- Traditional instructors believing in lectures and handouts may have tough time in adopting the system and software.
- Student must be self-motivated and disciplined to progress through his/her program in a timely manner