

# STS 300

## The Environmental Context

### Subject Outline 2002

Pre-requisites: 24 cp at 100-level

Credit points: 8

Autumn Session 2002, Wollongong, Shoalhaven, Bateman's Bay and Bega campuses

## Contacts

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Read this handbook carefully and bring it to tutorials so you can refer to it and make a note of any changes to the arrangements for the subject.

# Subject details

## Objectives

- To promote critical thinking about environmental issues and the science and economics associated with them and to practice using social theory in the environmental area.
- To ensure familiarity with mainstream thinking about environmental issues as embodied in the concept of sustainable development.
- To provide exposure to alternative views, philosophies and ways of thinking that can be applied to environmental problems.
- To encourage independent examination of possible solutions and courses of action for reducing or avoiding environmental problems.
- To develop and improve oral presentation, research and writing skills.

## Outline

This subject introduces you to the social and political aspects of environmental issues and policies.

It examines the concept of sustainable development from a variety of viewpoints. In particular it analyses the principles of sustainable development including equity, valuing the environment, market-based solutions and the precautionary principle. Other aspects covered include the role of scientific uncertainty in regulation, the role of technological change, the participation of the public in environmental decisions and the part played by environmentalists.

## Method of delivery

This subject will be presented to you through internet materials and tutorials.

## Major text

Sharon Beder 1996, *The Nature of Sustainable Development*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Scribe, Melbourne.

## Internet

Many of the required basic course readings are provided on the internet site at <http://www.uow.edu.au/LOL>. This internet site substitutes for formal lectures. Students are expected to review the appropriate material on the site before each week's tutorial.

## Tutorial times (Wollongong campus)

Wednesday	10.30-12.30 pm	Room 19.2082
Wednesday	1.30-3.30 pm	Room 19.2082
Thursday	4.30-6.30 pm	Room 19.2061

## Additional Readings

Additional readings and links to useful web sites are provided on the internet site for seminar presentations and essays. However for the essays and group projects you will be expected to find additional material yourself, both on the internet, from the library and from other sources. Please note that electronic databases available through the internet are a good source of research material and a tutorial in electronic databases is available via the WebCT course material.

## Additional information

The STS Program Handbook should be considered a supplement to these subject notes. Consult the handbook for policy on late submission, plagiarism, etc. Staff are committed to the use of nonsexist and nonracist language in all work submitted for assessment. The subject coordinator reserves the right to hold an additional oral examination for any piece of assessment.

# Assessment guidelines

Task	Format	Length	Weighting	Due Date
Class activity	Segment of tutorial organised by student group	20+ minutes	15%	allocated in week 2 tutorial
Essay	Essay in dialogue form	2000 words	35%	noon 27 May
Bulletin board contributions	Contributions to online discussion group	variable	30%	Every week, weeks 2 to 13
Quiz	Multiple choice/ short answer	20 minutes	20%	7 June
Attendance			pass/fail	Every week

## Assessment tasks

### Assignment 1: Class activity

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You can work individually or in a group of two or three students to run a class on a topic agreed by the tutor. Normally the topic will cover both a case study from the weekly readings and one of the theories covered in the essay. For example, you might cover limits to growth from the perspective of feminism or environmental valuation under fascism. The class can be run as a presentation, debate, game, quiz, small group exercises or any other activity that helps others to learn. Facilitators do not have to stand and talk, but are welcome to use one or more activities. Consider using overheads, handouts, tapes and videos. You should also include some method to evaluate how well the class has *understood* what you are trying to get across (not just how well they liked the activity). This is important!

In designing your activity, use one or more methods developed by Edward de Bono, as described in books such as *Parallel Thinking*, *Six Thinking Hats*, *Serious Creativity*, *Six Action Shoes* and *Water Logic*. Provide a handout for the class describing the de Bono method(s) that you've used, why you chose them and how they relate to your topic. Books by de Bono are available in most bookshops and libraries.

Time allocated for each class activity will be at least 20 minutes times the number of group members, e.g. 60 minutes for a three-person group.

***Class activities will be assessed using these criteria (roughly equally)***

- knowledge of case study
- understanding of theory
- audience involvement
- aids (handouts, overheads, posters, videos, etc.)
- use of de Bono methods
- method of evaluating how well the class has understood your message.

### Assignment 2: Essay

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**Due date:** noon 27 May

**Weighting:** 35%

**Length:** 2000 words

**Submission:** All essays from all campuses go direct to Brian Martin for marking. Either (1) send by express post (posted by noon on 27 May) to Brian Martin, STS, University of Wollongong, NSW 2522, or (2) put under the door to my office (19.2059).

Put your name(s) on the cover sheet but not elsewhere on the essay.

**Note:** Enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope with the essay if you would like it returned (with comments) by post.

Write a fictional dialogue between two people (or possibly more) concerning an environmental issue covered in the subject. The people ostensibly engaging in the dialogue can be fictional or real, dead or alive, but should not be staff or students at the university. For example, the dialogue might involve George W Bush, Rachel Carson, Cleopatra, Lara Croft, Charles Darwin, Hamlet, Osama bin Laden, Madonna, Homer Simpson

or Mother Teresa, but not, for example, Sharon Beder or yourself. The dialogue should be as realistic as possible within the assumptions about the participants and situation. Virtually the entire essay should be dialogue. You may add the equivalent of “stage directions” (see typical plays for examples).

The topic of the dialogue should be how to achieve environmental goals, or whether it is worthwhile trying to achieve environmental goals. The focus should be on solutions and ways to achieve them rather than on problems and their causes.

Each participant in the dialogue should speak from and/or advocate a political or economic philosophy, such as liberalism, representative government, neoclassical economics, militarism, libertarianism, feminism, dictatorship, anarchism, fascism, marxism and pacifism. Variants can be used, such as liberal feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism and anarchafeminism. To find references about theories, consult introductory textbooks in economics, sociology or political science, or search library catalogues or the web using the name of the theory or related terms.

Participants in the dialogue should not normally refer to references explicitly (with the exception of well known writers). You, as the author of the dialogue, should provide footnotes at appropriate places, explaining what sources the speakers might be using, drawing inspiration from or bouncing off. A sample essay will be provided to show how this can be done. A minimum expectation is four different sources about the environmental issue and three different sources about each of the two political/economic philosophies.

In preparing to write the dialogue, you should listen to conversations about environmental issues to see if you can infer the standpoint from which people are speaking. In the dialogue, the participants should mention what they've picked up by listening to (or hearing about) such conversations.

You are encouraged to work in a team on the essay. For example, in a team of three, one team member could investigate the environmental issue and the other two members could study two political/economic theories. You can write your own individual essay or contribute to a group essay (for two or three students, no more). Group essays are the same length and are marked identically to individual essays, with equal marks to all contributors unless you specify otherwise.

***Essays will be assessed using these criteria (roughly equally)***

- knowledge of case study
- understanding of theories
- use of sources (including conversations)
- quality of the dialogue

### **Assignment 3: Bulletin board contributions**

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**Due date:** Weeks 2 to 13

**Weighting:** 30%

**Length:** 200 words or more

You will be automatically assigned to a particular bulletin board group. Each group will include students from different tutorials. Each week you should make a contribution to your group about the topic for that week. Make your contribution self-contained. For example, if you're commenting on someone else's contribution, summarise what they said in a sentence or two.

Assessment will be based on your contributions made during three weeks chosen randomly, one from weeks 2-5, one from 6-9 and one from 10-13. If your mark for that week is a fail, a second week will be chosen and your mark will be the average of the marks for those two weeks.

For each week selected, a single tutor will mark all contributions from all groups.

***Bulletin board contributions will be assessed using these criteria (roughly equally)***

- understanding of the week's topic
- understanding of a selected political/economic philosophy and its relevance to the topic (from week 4 onwards)
- argument (starting from clearly articulated premises; mobilising evidence and logic towards a conclusion; recognising assumptions made and limitations)
- quality of expression (organisation of material, clarity, grammar, spelling, etc.).

### **Assignment 4: Quiz**

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**Due date:** on or before 7 June

**Weighting:** 20%

**Length:** 20 minutes

There will be one test on the text book and WebCT material. It will consist of multiple choice and/or short answer questions. Students must do the test without help from others.

**Warning!** Have your clock of your own to keep time. Some students last year found the computer clock wasn't accurate – except that it did terminate the session after 20 minutes of elapsed time.

## Attendance

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To pass the subject, you must attend at least 80% of tutorials. (Tutorials are omitted from the calculation when a certificate is provided justifying absence on medical or compassionate grounds.) If you are present for only part of a tutorial, that counts as fractional attendance.

With the agreement of all students, the following modification will be used. For those with less than 80% tutorial attendance, a corresponding percentage will be subtracted from the overall mark. For example, with 72% attendance,  $80\% - 72\% = 8\%$  will be subtracted.

## Tutorial and Seminar Outline

### Week 1 (beginning 4 March): WebCT Tutorial (optional)

If you're able to figure out how to use the WebCT course material, just go ahead and start reading. But if you'd like some assistance, come along to any of these tutorials (Wollongong campus):

Wednesday 6 March, 10.30am, room 17.104

Wednesday 6 March, 1.30pm, room 17.104

Thursday 7 March, 4.30pm, room 17.104

Essential Reading this week: STS 300 Subject Outline; STS Handbook, pp. 19-27 (available from your tutor or at <http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/sts/bmartin/classes/>); [Section 1: Introduction](#), WebCT course material.

### Week 2 (beginning 11 March): Introduction

At this tutorial we will introduce each ourselves, plan tutorial activities for the rest of the session, and try out some de Bono and/or other techniques for thinking and learning.

Essential Reading: Any book by Edward de Bono dealing with creative thinking.

### Week 3 (beginning 18 March): The Limits to Growth

During the 1960s and 1970s there was a widespread debate about whether there were limits to population and economic growth. Consider the merits of the arguments put for limits to growth at that time, particularly economic growth, and whether those arguments still have merit today.

Essential Reading: Sharon Beder, [The Nature of Sustainable Development](#), Second edition, Scribe, Newham, 1996, chapter 3; [Section 2: Limits to Growth](#), WebCT course material.

### Week 4 (beginning 25 March): Sustainable Development

Sustainable Development has different meanings to different people but at a government policy level it has developed into a concept that incorporates economic growth as being compatible with environmental protection. Examine the various definitions and principles in the essential readings and consider which are best and why.

Essential Reading: Sharon Beder, [The Nature of Sustainable Development](#), 2nd ed., Scribe, Newham, 1996, ch. 4; [Section 3. Sustainable Development](#), WebCT course material.

### Week 5 (beginning 8 April): Valuing the Environment

There is considerable controversy over whether the environment can or should be given a monetary price. Consider whether you believe that putting a price on the environment will help save it or merely reduce everything to economic commodities that can be bought and sold.

Essential Reading: Sharon Beder, [The Nature of Sustainable Development](#), 2nd ed., Scribe, Newham, 1996, ch. 6-8; [Section 4: Valuing the Environment](#), WebCT course material.

Extra Reading: [Biodiversity Case Study](#), WebCT course material

### Week 6 (beginning 15 April): Market Instruments

The market can be used as an environmental policy instrument by governments using economic instruments to encourage firms to curtail environmentally damaging behaviour. It can also be used by consumers who use their purchasing power to encourage firms to produce environmentally sound goods. Why are market instruments so popular at the moment and to what extent should they replace legal instruments?

Essential Reading: Sharon Beder, [The Nature of Sustainable Development](#), 2nd ed., Scribe, Newham, 1996, pp.105-121; [Section 5: Market Instruments](#), WebCT course material.

Extra Reading: [Green Consumerism](#) and [Rights-Based Measures](#), , WebCT course materials

### **Week 7 (beginning 22 April): Equity**

Equity is about fairness. Environmental equity includes intergenerational and intragenerational equity. Consider the ways that environmental degradation can be exacerbated by inequities and the ways that inequity can be caused by environmental degradation.

Essential Reading: Sharon Beder, [The Nature of Sustainable Development](#), 2nd ed., Scribe, Newham, 1996, pp.166-185; [Section 6: Equity](#), WebCT course material.

Extra Reading: [Greenhouse Case Study](#) and [International Economic System](#), WebCT course materials

### **Week 8 (beginning 29 April): Environmental Standards**

Environmental standards are supposed to be set on the basis of scientific knowledge but in reality differ from country to country because of the differing social context and varying influence of pressure groups. Consider how social and political pressures can influence environmental standards, particularly where there is much uncertainty about the effects of various chemicals and human activities.

Essential Reading

Sharon Beder, [The Nature of Sustainable Development](#), 2nd ed., Scribe, Newham, 1996, pp.92-6. 121-127. 185-190; [Section 7: Science and Uncertainty](#), WebCT course material.

Extra Reading: [Regulation of Pesticides](#) and [Precautionary Principle](#), WebCT course materials

### **Week 9 (beginning 6 May): Technological Choice**

Technological change is not only determined by scientific inventions and market forces. A variety of social, cultural and political factors may also determine the choice of a technology and cause some technologies to be researched, developed and promoted at the expense of others. Consider what measures governments can take to encourage research and innovation that leads technological development in more environmentally sound directions.

Essential Reading: Sharon Beder, [The Nature of Sustainable Development](#), 2nd ed., Scribe, Newham, 1996, chaps 20 and 21; [Section 8: Technological Choice](#), WebCT course material.

Extra Reading: [Appropriate Technology](#) and [Clean Technology](#), WebCT course materials

### **Week 10 (beginning 13 May): Participatory Democracy**

In recent years, when environmental consequences are foreseen, it has become fashionable to involve the public in planning and developmental decision-making. It has been argued, however, that some of the consultation processes that have been adopted do not facilitate real public participation in decision-making. What would a genuine consultation process involve?

Essential Reading: [Section 9: Participation](#), WebCT course material.

Extra Reading: [Information Access](#) and EIA, WebCT course materials

### **Week 11 (beginning 20 May): The Environment Movement**

As the environment movement has grown and matured it has become more professional and institutionalised. Some groups, in their efforts to attract members, have also sought to portray themselves as respectable and mainstream, which has seen a shift in preferred strategies from activism to negotiation. Is this shift beneficial to the environment?

Essential Reading: [Section 10: Environmentalism](#), WebCT course material.

Extra Reading: [Greenpeace](#) and [Environment Groups](#) and [Issues and Strategies](#), , WebCT course materials

### **Week 12 (beginning 27 May): Controversies/Politics**

Environmental controversy is seldom based on technical issues alone. Usually there are differences of belief, philosophy or politics underlying the controversy. These underlying beliefs are frequently concealed behind, or obscured by, rational arguments and scientific evidence. Consider the ways that beliefs and self-interest can influence a person's position in environmental debates.

Essential Reading: [Section 11: Controversy and Politics](#), WebCT course material.

Extra Reading: [Environmental Philosophies](#) and [Environmental Politics](#), WebCT course materials

### **Week 13 (beginning 3 June): Evaluation**

Students will evaluate what they've learned during the session.