

Rethinking Prosperity: Well-being In A Sustainable Future

Political Science 405A / Communication 495B

Spring 2015

Instructor: Lance Bennett (lbennett@uw.edu) / office hrs 2-3.20 Weds., Gowen 115)

Team facilitators: Caterina Rost, Kate Vavrousek, Arista Burwell-Chen

The Big Picture

The current global economic order creates many challenges for human well being, from food shortages, poor wages and living conditions, to growing crises with the environment, energy and other resources. Despite these limits to growth, calls for more economic growth continue to be issued by politicians and economists across the political spectrum. Even if continued growth is possible, it is likely to create more sustainability issues and climate change, along with economic and social instability. This class explores these dilemmas facing our civilization and considers alternative models for economics and politics that may lead to new ways of thinking about prosperity in a low growth but happier future.

Responsibilities

This small class is a learning community. This means sharing ideas, helping others with their work and participating in thinking together about the challenges of creating sustainable societies and economies.

You are expected to do a number of things to make this community an interesting place to be:

- do the reading on time
- find resources of your own and recommending them to the group
- participate in class discussions
- develop content and market the "Rethinking Prosperity" blog:
<http://rethinkingprosperity.org>
- conduct original research and write a report on challenges and prospects for the kind of prosperous society that you think can work and that you want to live in.

Learning Goals

- * understanding the relationships between consumer economy, growth, and the limits of energy, resources, and climate change
- * thinking about alternative political and economic models that would address some of these issues and provide people with other ways of thinking about prosperity
- * participating in team learning activities such as finding and sharing original resources and blogging about new ideas
- * conducting original research and writing a report that may be published on a project website

Approach

- * students generate discussion questions each week and share resources on the blog with the class
- * instructor covers key points and leads discussion based on student questions posted on the canvas site

Assignments

- blog about readings, new resources you find and want to talk about, videos that tell important stories, models of sustainable communities you find interesting, etc.
 - <http://rethinkingprosperity.org>
 - each student will do a post every other week – minimum of 5 blog posts for the quarter – and comment on other posts
- everyone contributes one discussion question each week – half the group on Tuesdays, and half on Thursdays. POST DISCUSSION QUESTIONS ON THE COURSE CANVAS SITE. Start each discussion post with Week x, session y (e.g., week 3 session 2) to keep different question groups clear.
- develop a project idea as early as possible and feed materials you find into our resource pool and blog – project reports will be presented in class the last weeks
- grading is based on discussion questions & participation (30%), blog posts & resources gathered (30%), and the final report (40%)

Course outline and readings

Some readings will be emailed and posted on the canvas site under files

These books are required and can be purchased at the University Book Store

Title: Enough Is Enough
Author: Rob Dietz and Dan O'Neill ISBN: 978-1 60994-805-4
Publisher: Berrett-Koehler (BK)
PubYr: 2013

Title: An All-consuming Century: Why Commercialism Won In Modern America
Author: Gary Cross ISBN: 978-0231113137
Publisher: Columbia University Press
PubYr: 2002

Title: Republic, Lost: How Money Corrupts Congress--and A Plan To Stop It
Author: Lawrence Lessig ISBN: 978-0446576444
Publisher: Twelve
PubYr: 2012

Title: Let My People Go Surfing: The Education Of A Reluctant Businessman
Author: Yvon Chouinard ISBN: 978-0143037835
Publisher: Penguin Books
PubYr: 2006

Section 1 (2 weeks): *The current world order and how we got here*

Week One:

First class:

VIDEO: Annie Leonard, The Story of Stuff

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9GorqroigqM>

VIDEO: Tim Jackson, Investment for the Whole Human

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVfIRnqDQ-w&list=PLFdhPoCXFuc8xUJT2xkCznIkZN6ZzND_X

Class session 2

READING: *Enough Is Enough*

Preface, chapters 1-4

Week Two:

Session 1

READING: *Enough Is Enough*, chapters 5-11

Session 2

READING: *Enough Is Enough*, finish book

Section 2 (2 weeks): What's The Alternative?

Week 3

Reading

Prosperity Without Growth? The Transition to a Sustainable Economy

The UK report/book on sustainable economics

PDF available here: <http://www.sd-commission.org.uk/publications.php?id=914>

Also available in canvas files

Session 1: Prosperity without Growth? pp. 1-46

+ read blog posts from class members

Session 2: pp. 47-66

+ read blog posts from class members

Week 4

Session 1

Prosperity Without Growth? pp. 67-92

+ blog posts from class members

Session 2

finish Prosperity Without Growth?

+ blog posts from class members

Section 3

What Drives the Growth Engine? Consumerism (2 weeks)

Week 5

Session 1:

Cross, All Consuming Century, chs 1,2

Short reading:

*Jared Diamond, "What's Your Consumption Factor," NY Times, 2008.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/01/02/opinion/02diamond.html?pagewanted=all>

Session 2: All Consuming Century chs 3, 4

+ blog posts from class members

Week 6:

Session 1: Cross, All Consuming, chs 5, 6

+ Josh Allan Dykstra, "Why Millennials Don't Want to Buy

Stuff," <http://www.fastcompany.com/1842581/why-millennials-dont-want-buy-stuff>

+ Evgeny Morozov, "Making It: Hackers, Makers, the Next Industrial Revolution," The New Yorker, 1/13/2014

http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/atlarge/2014/01/13/140113crat_atlarge_morozo
v?currentPage=all

Session 2: Cross Ch 7

+ VIDEO: Greg Koch (Owner of Stone Brewing), "Reject Abject Consumerism and We Save Ourselves," Tedx,

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_qgyMCVXJM (we will watch this in class)

+ Jeff Sommer, "Adbuster's War Against Too Much of Everything," NY Times Business Day, 12/22/2012

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/12/23/business/adbusters-war-against-too-much-of-everything.html>

Part II: What keeps the current system going?

Politics - how politics sets limits (2 weeks)

Week 7:

Session 1:

Lessig, Republic Lost, chs 1-8 (pp 1-87)

+ **blog posts from class members**

Session 2:

Lessig, chs 9- 10 (pp 91-166)

+ **blog posts from class members**

Week 8:

Session 1: Lessig, chs 11-14 (pp 172-226)

+ blog from class members

Session 2: Lessig, chs 15-21 & conclusion (251-319)

+ blog posts from class members

Section 4 (2 weeks) :

New Ideas:

What Big Business Is doing: Corporate Social Responsibility

Week 9:

Yvon Chouinard (Patagonia's founder): *Let my People Go Surfing: The Education of a Reluctant Businessman*.

Session 1: First half –

VIDEO: Jason Clay, "How Big Brands can Help Save Biodiversity," Ted, 2010

http://www.ted.com/talks/jason_clay_how_big_brands_can_save_biodiversity.html

+ blog posts from class members

Session 2: second half of Chouinard

+ blog posts from class members

Week 10 –

Presentations of projects