

# Envisioning a Sustainable Future: Managing and Protecting the Environment

George Buckley & Tim Weiskel

Syllabus outline for [ENVR E106](#)  
Spring Semester of 2017

## Description:

It is widely recognized by the scientific community that current trends in our collective human behavior are not sustainable. Populations are growing at rates that cannot be maintained as food supplies per capita decline and the ecological “costs” of providing energy and materials for many people exceed the regenerative capacities the ecosystems upon which they depend. In addition, the waste products of our increasingly urbanized and consumer-oriented civilization have now reached the point of compromising the restorative functions of the biogeochemical cycling systems required for human survival.

In response to these demonstrable trends numerous outstanding thinkers and environmental leaders have begun to envisage and implement strategies for a sustainable future. The purpose of this course will be to expose students to innovative thinkers and inspired activists over a wide range of fields engaged in the transition to sustainability.

## Requirements:

There are no prerequisite courses for this class. Students will be expected to read, listen to and respond to a series of thinkers who have made significant contributions either to our thinking about management and protection strategies or to concrete action to implement their visions of a sustainable future.

In addition to systematic contributions online within a student blog designed for public exchange about the topics of the weekly classes, students will be required to submit a research paper of not more than 20,000 words demonstrating how they have investigated and engaged with a project of their own choosing in managing and protecting some aspect of their environment.

When it proves feasible, George Buckley and Tim Weiskel will arrange for occasional “guest” speakers to contribute to the topics outlined in the weekly sequence (see attached class sequence outline). Particular attention will be given to the writings and outlook of these chosen guest speakers, with the expectation that students will be prepared to receive these guests and interact with them with questions and conversation in class. In addition, students will be expected to view the relevant online video material for each class sessions with links provided on the weekly syllabus page.

Whenever possible, readings for the class will be made available through the course website in HTML or PDF files. In addition textbooks for the course include:

E. O. Wilson

[Half-Earth: Our Planet’s Fight for Life](#)

Sylvia A. Earle

[The World Is Blue](#)

Elizabeth Kolbert

[The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History](#)

Donella Meadows

[Thinking in Systems: A Primer](#)

and

Richard Manning

[Against the Grain: How Agriculture Has Hijacked Civilization](#)

## [Weekly Schedule of Class Sessions](#)