January 30, 2006: Introduction to the course

This narrative should help you get organized so you can begin to experience the path to sustainable development. Much of the focus in this introduction is on helping you become familiar with the course web pages and learn the weekly routine of this case method format course. Please try not to fall behind! Let the teaching assistants or the Instructor know if you are having any problems understanding what is expected of you as you begin the course. If this is your first case method course, it is likely that you will experience some early anxiety. We want to help you get through this feeling and really enjoy the experience that this course will offer you.

Introduction

Welcome to Strategies for Environmental Management: The Path to Sustainable Development! This course was designed to bridge the gap between the subjects of environmental degradation and environmental regulation (i.e., Environmental Management I & II) and the pursuit of sustainable development on a regional and global level (i.e., Sustainable Development). We have chosen to take a local (i.e., bottom-up) perspective to sustainable development since all paths have to begin somewhere. It is at the local level where there is a nexus between the local government, its citizens, organizations, institutions and businesses. At this local level, people directly experience what is happening in the environment, the social issues prevalent in that location and the economic condition that is often closely related to the environment and social issues.

The Instructor felt that environmental management in the title of the course should be broadened to include the social responsibilities of such management and the economic responsibilities. By carefully integrating these three responsibilities, it is possible to move an organization on its path to sustainable development. This course is not limited to what some people are calling “environmental sustainability.”

Selecting a local perspective created an opportunity of introducing a sense of practical reality for the students taking this course. There is an opportunity for students to develop some skills needed for the planning and implementation of sustainable development instead of just learning what others are accomplishing in other places. To realize this opportunity, we have introduced a case involving a “virtual” printing company located in the City of Cambridge (Massachusetts, USA). Students use this cases each week to learn more about each of the topics covered in the course applies to that business. They also learn how to integrate these topics to help the virtual company move down the path to sustainable development.

This year (Spring 2006) we are focusing on the City of Cambridge (Massachusetts, USA). People from the city government helped us prepare for the course. They hope to
improve their programs based on your participation in the discussion of the cases that will be presented. With the help of your classmates, you will all keep appraised of current events with the City of Cambridge during this semester. This knowledge will be used to discuss these cases on the course discussion board.

Except for the first class, there will be no lectures in the course. You will help each other learn about the topics and will work as a group to apply your knowledge to the cases. Our live sessions on Monday evenings will be used to summarize the discussion that took place on the discussion board. This is a case method pedagogical approach to this topic of sustainable development will be discussed in greater detail in a section below.

Please read this introduction material carefully. Please approach the teaching assistants and/or the Instructor if you have any questions once you have finished reading this section.

**Home Page – Course Web Site**

One of the very first things that you should do is to “bookmark” the course home page found on the Internet at [http://courses.dce.harvard.edu/~envre105/](http://courses.dce.harvard.edu/~envre105/). Whether you are a resident student or a distance learner, this page will be the source for all the content in this course. The tool bar is on the left-hand side of the home page. Information on the Harvard Extension School and course registration can be found below the Welcome to Cambridge photograph. Take a few moments to familiarize yourself with the many features on the course web site. We will provide some further information in the sections below.

**Weekly Course Material and Schedule**

The table found at this location on the course web page is your link to all of the content in the course. Make sure that you have Adobe Reader installed so you will be able to retrieve all the PDF files that are posted on the web site. The course syllabus provides a brief outline of the topics that constitute the path to sustainable development.

You will note that each week begins on a Tuesday in this course. When you click on the weekly topic, you will find out that each week has its own “home page.” Everything you need for that week will be linked to that home page. For each of the 14 topics covered, there will be a narrative like this one that describes the topic that is being covered that week. As early in the week as possible, you should carefully read this narrative and become familiar with that topic. If this topic is of great interest to you, you might want to research the topic on your own through the use of the Internet search engines (e.g., Google) or by going to some of the reference links provided in the weekly narrative.

Each week ends with the summary discussion that will take place each Monday evening in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The list below provides a listing of these discussion sessions. Resident students will assemble to discuss what was presented on the discussion board during the week for the topic under consideration. Distance learners can
be matched with a resident graduate student in order to have information presented during these sessions or they can submit information directly to one of the teaching assistance or the Instructor. The weekly discussion sessions are videotaped and posted to the course web page for all to observe.

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<td>Feb 6</td>
<td>What are Others Telling Us About Sustainable Development?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 13</td>
<td>Starting Our Journey to Sustainable Development</td>
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<td>Feb 20</td>
<td>\textit{Holiday} – No Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 27</td>
<td>Finding Partners for the Journey and Learning about the Cases and the Community (Cambridge, Massachusetts)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 6</td>
<td>Discovering Our Environmental Responsibilities</td>
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<td>Mar 13</td>
<td>Discovering Our Social Responsibilities</td>
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<td>Mar 20</td>
<td>Discovering Our Economic Responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 27</td>
<td>\textit{Spring Break} – No Discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 3</td>
<td>How Do We Integrate These Environmental Responsibilities</td>
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<td>Apr 10</td>
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<td>Organizing and Conducting Sustainability Projects</td>
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<td>Apr 24</td>
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<td>May 15</td>
<td>Where Will All the Continuous Improvement Lead Us? \textit{– Review}</td>
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Students always ask how much they have to read! You have to read the weekly narrative and the case. However, to intelligently discuss the case, it is likely that you will want to read some additional information. How much you read is left to you! In this course, you will not be tested on content per se. Instead, we are interested that you share what you know and learn with your fellow classmates on the course discussion board. Each student can read a different item and briefly summarize how it applies to the case. When your fellow students reference an item, you can decide if you wish to read it as well or
read something else. As a class, you will be pooling your knowledge. This is a major difference in the case method approach. You will be tested on how you are able to **integrate** the individual topics to help the virtual printing company and its local partners (i.e., the City of Cambridge, local citizens, organizations, institutions, and other businesses) move down the path to sustainable development.

After you read the paper on the weekly topic, you should then read the case. Remember that it is not sufficient to just discuss the case. The purpose of the case is to use the situation that is described to help you apply what you have learned about the subject. It is the situation faced by the virtual printing company that is the focus of the discussion that will ensue on the discussion board. Please notice that on this week’s home page there is a link to an article entitled, *Guide to Using the Case Method*. Since most of you will not be familiar with the use of a case method in a class, it is very important that you are able to quickly learn the skills that are necessary for effective participation in this course. Again, please do not hesitate to contact the teaching assistants and/or the Instructor if you are having problems getting involved with this pedagogical method. In the past four years, most students caught on quickly and loved the experience of actually applying what you are learning.

During the first full week of the course (i.e., starting on January 31, 2006), there will be an example case presented. You will not be required to discuss this case. You will read the paper on the *What Are Others Telling Us About Sustainable Development* and read the case. The Instructor will simulate the discussion of this case on the discussion board. You can learn more about this feature of the course web site in a section below.

**Video of the Discussion Session**

The classroom discussion of the weekly topics and cases take place on Monday evenings at 17:30 Eastern Standard Time. The Harvard Extension School will videotape this discussion session and link it to the weekly home page on the course web page. This is typically completed within 48 hours of the class. After the third week of the course, students will need to have a “user name” and “password” to obtain access to the video.

In past years, your “**user name**” is the first 8-digits of your Harvard University Identification Number (HUID) beginning with 00. This is the number that is assigned to you by the Registrar and appears on your registration confirmation that was mailed to your by the Harvard Extension School.

Your “**password**” is the first 8-letters of your last name (all lower case letters). Only eight (8) characters are allowed, so if your name is longer, only use the first 8 letters. If your name is shorter, just type in your name. For example, if your last name is “Washington,” your password will be “washingt.” If you last name is “Ng,” your password is “ng.”

If you have not received, or cannot locate, your HUID, please contact the Registrar’s office:
Once you have selected the video link from the weekly home page ("content"), a popup window will prompt you to enter a user name and password. Type in the correct information in the appropriate boxes and click “OKAY.” You will then be able to view the video. You also are expected to meet the computer system requirements and software necessary to enable you to access the information on the course web page. The requirements can be found by clicking on the Help/FAQ link and looking for the “technical requirements” link on the left-side tool bar.

Class Notes
During the weekly summary discussion, one of the teaching assistants will take notes of what was covered by those attending the class. These notes will be posted as a PDF version of MS PowerPoint slides that can be viewed when you play the video link. Students can compare their own notes to those that are posted. These class notes are provided as a courtesy and should be used only to complement your own class notes or the notes you take when viewing the videotape.

Discussion Board
The discussion board is one of the most important components of this class. There is a document (Guide to Using the Discussion Board) that explains what the discussion board is and how to use it. You can find a link to this document on the Introduction week home page and on the “What Are Others Telling Us” home page.

To help you become familiar with the use of the discussion board, you will post an introduction to yourself during the first week. If you are having problems using the discussion board, please contact Kevin Horner horner@fas.harvard.edu.

You should also watch the postings the Instructor will be making on the “What Are Others Telling Us” case discussion. It will provide an example of the type of interaction that you will be required to participate in during the “Journey” week of the course that starts on February 7, 2006.

Course Requirements
You will find a comprehensive listing of what is required of you in this course by clicking on the “requirements” link on the tool bar. This is one of the most important parts of the course web site. EVERY STUDENT is expected to read the section that pertains to your course status (i.e., distance or resident; non-credit, undergraduate, and graduate). Please print out the pages that pertain to you and keep them available as you participate in the course. Read these pages before you ask the teaching assistants and/or
the Instruction questions about the course requirements. We would be happy to help you with requirements that you do not understand or need some assistance with.

We have included a number of guides on the web site to help you perform well in this course. The following guides have been prepared and posted:

- Guide to Using the Case Method
- Guide to Using the Discussion Board
- Guide to Participating in the Weekly Summary Discussion
- Guide to Preparing the Book Report
- Guide to Writing the Semester Paper (Graduate Students Only)

All of these guides need to be read closely and followed.

**Contact Teaching Staff**

This link on the tool bar will provide you with ways to contact the Instructor and the teaching assistants in this course. We are looking forward to assisting you in any way we can. Please let us know how we can assist you. We are prepared to use Yahoo chat tools and Skype Voice over IP to interact with you in real time. You will have to make the proper arrangement with the teaching assistant of the Instructor to use these discussion tools.

**Help/FAQ**

This area links to the Harvard Extension School’s requirements for hardware and software. There is some technical support available through the Extension School. The teaching assistants will help you in any way we can – this will usually be by helping you contact the correct person in the Distance Learning information technology group. The use of electronic media in a course like this always presents challenges during the course of a 15-week semester.

**Should You Need Assistance**

The Instructor and the teaching assistants are committed to helping you enjoy this course. As we have stated many times above, please contact us to let us know how we can be of assistance to you. We may even contact YOU to make sure you are taking full advantage of all the tools and information that we have provided. The Instructor can post broadcast messages to the entire class. This will be done several times during the semester to make sure that you are aware of issues that others have raised and to handle important notices.

It’s time to move to the first full week in the course. You should go to the “Schedule” page and click on “What Are Others Telling Us About Sustainable Development.” Everything that you need for that week is posted on the site. Work hard and, by all means, enjoy the course!