

**NR 5014 Constructing Sustainability**  
Offered: Fall Semester

**INSTRUCTOR:** David P. Robertson, Ph.D., [davidrobertson@vt.edu](mailto:davidrobertson@vt.edu)

**REQUIRED TEXT:** All reading materials will be provided by the instructor.

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course examines the theory and practice of sustainability and sustainable development in a local to global context. We will examine the history, current status, and future prospects of sustainability and sustainable development from economic, social, and ecological perspectives. In the past several decades, sustainability and sustainable development have gained increasing status in political, scientific, business, religious, and cultural arenas. While sustainability norms, goals, and indicators have long been an important part of some communities and cultures worldwide, these concepts are now commonplace and cosmopolitan, embedded in policy and practice within a wide variety of public and private institutions throughout contemporary society. This transdisciplinary course encourages students to consider how they can engage diverse stakeholders—including government, business, and civic organizations—in constructing sustainability. The course places special emphasis on the role of corporations and cities as drivers of sustainability performance between now and 2050.

Learning Objectives

Following successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate a broad, transdisciplinary understanding of sustainability, sustainable development, and related concepts such as resiliency and the Anthropocene
- Apply critical and creative thinking regarding sustainability
- Conduct independent research and writing regarding sustainability

**Evaluation**

- Class discussion – 40%
- Written assignments – 60%