

NR 5884 Navigating the Social Complexities of Sustainability
Offered: Fall and Spring Semesters

INSTRUCTOR: Marc J. Stern mjstern@vt.edu

REQUIRED TEXT: TBA

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This course is designed to provide students with a variety of tools for navigating the social complexities of environmental and other sustainability-related initiatives. Students will learn about a wide array of social science theories that help to explain human behavior. They will use these theories to develop strategies for approaching real world problems. Students' own interests will dictate the specific problems of focus. Through readings, presentations, discussions, and strategy development exercises, students will develop new tools for approaching sustainability-related challenges and interacting with diverse stakeholders.

Having successfully completed this course, the student will be able to:

- Describe the social dimensions of sustainability challenges.
- Communicate about social science theories effectively.
- Demonstrate the ability to apply social science theories to real-world problem-solving within the context of environmental sustainability.
- Articulate both the value and limitations of social science theories for problem solving.

Assignments:

- Problem statement (10%)
- Theory summary assignment (20%)
- Problem solving assignment (40%)
- Feedback and discussion (10%)
- Final exam (20%)