Ecological Economics has emerged over the last three decades as a subfield of economics seeking to integrate ecological truths into economic theory. Given the inherent connection between both the social and natural sciences in exploring ecological systems, ecological economics operates as an interdiscipline at the nexus of the social and natural sciences.

This course is designed to introduce students to the complex dynamics of ecological economics: its promise, potential, and challenges. The organization of the course falls into three parts:

- where the field has been
- where the field is going
- where the field might go

The first third of the course is dedicated to teaching the historical and theoretical foundations of the field. This includes the break of ecological economics from environmental economics, along with the foundational challenges ecological economics seeks to address, such as the limits to economic growth, the embeddedness of the economy within ecological systems, and the necessity of environmental justice. During this portion of the course, class will be centered around small group discussion, followed by a short lecture and larger group discussion.

The second third of the course is dedicated to cutting edge topics in the field, as dictated by the students’ interests. Pairs of students, or a student alone, will choose and research a topic, and meet with the instructors outside of class to select the readings and discuss the format of the course that week. We will still use small group discussions each week, but other activities will depend on the plan by student presenters on a week to week basis.

The class will conclude with a couple of weeks on the future of the field. Of particular focus here will be the ongoing tensions within the field as to its future direction, and the role of both neoclassical and heterodox economic theories in it. At this point the course will return to the initial structure, centered around small group discussions and short lectures, though the topics will be subject in part to student interests.

Despite being an ‘economics’ course, extensive knowledge of quantitative methods is not necessary to succeed in this course. Similarly, this is not a class designed to train students in the execution of specific modeling tools. Rather, this is a survey course, designed to demonstrate the major thought through lines within the field, and provide potential points of connection with the existing research interests of the students.
A Note on Student Evaluation
Your grade for this course will be based on the following: weekly responses (30%), in-class presentation (30%) the final paper (35%), and class participation (5%).

If you are taking this class for three credit-hours, you will be required to complete each of the graded activities listed above. If you are taking this class for two credit-hours, you will only be required to complete the in-class presentation and weekly responses. If you are taking this class for one credit-hour, you will only be required to do the weekly responses.

A Note on the Intellectual Journal: Each week, you will be asked to write a short response to the readings of the previous week. The weekly journal entry should be in in the range 350 - 650 words (about a page and a half). But entries can be as long as you like. Your goal should be to integrate some theme of the week’s learning that demonstrates your critical inquiry. The best entries will develop one theme or argument, rather than a scatter of observations. Also, it is important to document your theme or argument and to explain your reasoning. These journals will provide the basis for small group discussion at the beginning of each class.

A Note on the Final Paper
The central written work of the course will be an original piece of writing by the students, of a length between 10 and 15 pages. This paper should clearly integrate the readings and themes of this course into its composition. However, the format of the paper is entirely up to the students. Examples include a grant proposal, pages from a publishable paper or thesis chapter, or simply an investigation into a topic of interest to the student which may eventually become one of these things. Given the open-ended nature of this prompt, we ask that students meet with the instructors individually about a month into the semester to discuss ideas that you may have for how you wish to proceed. At that point the instructors will either approve of the project or provide feedback on how to strengthen the idea and ask for you to resubmit your idea. This conversation will compose 5 of the 35% for the final paper grade. The final paper is due a week after the last class of the semester.

A Note on Discussion Format
The bulk of each class session will be devoted to an open discussion of the day’s reading, in a sequence we might call reflection (what the reading says), refraction (what the reading should have said), and projection (what the reading means for our own work). The daily pattern will thus normally be as follows:

- meeting of the small groups
- discussion of points brought back to the full group from the muddles
- reflection, led by myself or the student organizers for that week
- refraction and projection

A Note on Class Participation
Your grade for class participation will not be a measure of how loud you were, or of how often you spoke. Rather, it will reflect the extent to which you were “there.” Grading in this area will be based on the initial assumption that everyone will get full credit, with deductions made for negligent or “unthere” performance, if necessary. (If we think things aren’t going well in this area, we’ll let you know, and we can talk about it.)
A Note on Getting Ahold of the Readings
All readings will be made available via Canvas no later than a week before the course you are asked to read them, and ideally much sooner than that.

Schedule of Course Readings

Week 1: Origins of Ecological Economics

Week 2: Embedded Economic Systems: Steady State and Degrowth Economics
Daly, H.E., 2007. From a Failed-Growth Economy to a Steady-State Economy, pp. 1-7

Week 3: Ecosystem Services
Week 4: Environmental Justice


Weeks 5-9 (approx.): Student Presentations (sample below from Fall 2017 semester)

**Week 5: Population Dynamics and Ecological Economics**


**Week 6: Sustainable Agriculture**


**Week 7: Trade and Unequal Exchange**


**Week 8: Water Systems**


**Week 9: Cities and Ecological Economics**


**Weeks 10-14: Instructor-led with student input (From Fall 2017 semester)**

**Week 10: The role of neoclassical economics in Ecological Economics**

Spash, C.L., 2013. The shallow or the deep ecological economics movement?. Ecological Economics, 93, pp.351-362.


Gómez-Baggethun, E. and Muradian, R., 2015. In markets we trust? Setting the boundaries of market-based instruments in ecosystem services governance.

Week 11: Ecofeminism, Feminist and Ecological Economics


Week 12: The Stern Review and Discount Rates


**Week 13: Indigenous Rights in Ecological Economics**


**Week 14: Synthesis, Review, and Looking Forward**


