

EC 7250 Economic, Social and Ecological Systems

Spring 2023, Wright State University, Department of Economics

Time and Place: Monday 6:30-9:10, Rike Hall 036

Professor: Zdravka Todorova zdravka.todorova@wright.edu

Instructor-Student Consultation Hours: I am available to meet you in my Office,

Rike Hall 231

Monday: 5 – 6 pm

Tuesday: 12:30 - 4:30 pm

Thursday: 12:30 – 4:30 pm

and by appointment on campus or virtually.

Course Description and Purpose

The course introduces an integrated systems and evolutionary approach to economics. The economy is understood as a social provisioning system embedded in connection to socio-cultural, political, and ecological systems. Students articulate links among nature, culture, and economy, and inquire into the economic, social, and ecological aspects of complex issues and problem solving.

The course consists of 4 **Modules:**

I. Ecological-Social-Economic Conceptions and Issues

II. Concepts of Evolving Capitalist Institutions

III. Questions about Systems of Social Stratification and Invidious Distinction

IV. Problem Solving for Social Costs: Public Service Job Design

Each module results in an assessment exercise that asks you to: 1) make connections and identify ecological-economic-social dimensions of issues that lead to social costs; 2) discern conceptual differences and apply evolving system concepts to contemporary contexts; 3) formulate research questions about social stratification that integrate evolutionary concepts; and 4) apply an integrated economic, social, and ecological approach to identify a local problem, and formulate a proposal for a public service job design to address social costs. The course concludes with your presentations of the problem-solving proposals.

Course Outcomes

1. Connect social, economic, and ecological aspects of current issues, and analyze those as processes that are part of interconnected systems.
2. Discern conceptual differences in economic analyses, and apply integrated systems and evolutionary concepts to contemporary contexts.
3. Formulate research questions to critically explore inequities and sustainability as systemic problems.
4. Design a problem-solving proposal that integrates economic, social, and ecological solutions.

Course Objectives

1. Students will discern conceptual differences in economic analyses, and will apply concepts of evolutionary system thinking to contemporary developments.
2. Students will recognize and articulate links among concepts, analytical methods, theories, economic reality, and problem solving.
3. Students will analyze economic problems of social costs, policies, and decisions as interconnected processes that are part of social-natural systems.
4. Students will research multiple dimensions of an issue, use appropriate sources, and engage in critical thinking and discussions about power and social justice and sustainability of systems.
5. Students will integrate conceptual knowledge and facts in a critical manner to formulate research questions and solutions about sustainability of systems, utilizing an institutional, systems, and evolutionary economic perspective.
6. Students will prepare effective presentations and summaries of complex issues and evolutionary concepts.

Skills Developed by Course Work

1. Application of system and contextual thinking
2. Writing effective summaries and presentations
3. Developing a research proposal
4. Collaborative work
5. Utilization of Zotero bibliographical and citation program

The Approach: Evolutionary Systems Thinking:

We will discuss the economy as a system of interconnected and evolutionary social and natural processes. The economy is part of evolving culture, society, and nature. This means that economic issues are historical, contextual, interrelated, material, and interconnected. We will build primarily on institutional economics that studies social arrangements of material provisioning, power, resource creation, and social stratification, to understand and evaluate sustainability, social costs, and change, and think critically about problem-solving.

Tools and Communication

Pilot: The course will be led through the university learning system Pilot. I will be keeping an up-to-date Pilot Grading Book. Along with scores, you will be able to read Feedback on Pilot. News updates will be posted on Pilot, in addition to e-mailing.

Zotero – a useful free tool for collecting, organizing, and citing sources for your proposal. Create a free account and download it: <https://www.zotero.org/>

Library Research Support: <https://libraries.wright.edu/selfhelp/research-toolkit>

Required Books and Readings

1. Mulligan, Martin. *An Introduction to Sustainability: Environmental, Social and Personal Perspectives*, ISBN: 9781138698307, **Edition: 2nd**, Paperback, 2017, Routledge
2. Veblen, Thorstein. *Absentee Ownership: Business Enterprise in Recent Times - The Case of America*. ISBN: 9781560009221, Paperback, 1996, Routledge.
Available for free:
<https://archive.org/details/AbsenteeOwnershipAndBusinessEnterprise>
3. McGhee, Heather. *The Sum of Us What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together*. ISBN: 9780525509585, Paperback, 2022, One World
4. Tcherneva, Pavlina. *The Case for a Job Guarantee*. ISBN: 9781509542109. Paperback, 2020, Polity.

Special Accommodations

If you need special accommodations for the fulfillment of class requirements and your successful participation, contact the Office of Disability Services. Please let me know as soon as possible.

Office of Disability Services: disability_services@wright.edu

Phone: 937-775-5680; TTY: 937-775-5844

<https://www.wright.edu/disability-services>

Other Resources to Facilitate your Learning

University Writing Center: feedback, computer stations, and other resources:

<https://www.wright.edu/student-success/academic-support/university-writing-center>

You can access **WSU Student Healthcare and Wellness Services:**

<https://www.wright.edu/student-health-services/health-care-and-wellness-services>

Veteran and Military student services: computers, printing, study rooms, and more

<https://www.wright.edu/veteran-and-military-center/about>

Library and Technology Center:

<https://lake.wright.edu/campus-life/library-and-technology-center>

Academic Dishonesty

The university policy on academic dishonesty can be found in the student handbook which is available on the WSU website and provides information on how to avoid academic dishonesty. <https://policy.wright.edu/policy/3710-academic-integrity-standards-and-process-misconduct>

Class Schedule

It is important to use the Class Schedule below, and to plan for completing the requirements promptly. Any changes will be announced in class, through e-mail, and posted on the Pilot News.

Class Requirements and Communication

NO recording, please!

Attendance is very important for participation and for achieving the course outcomes. Please, notify me if you must miss a class. I will be checking with you when you miss a class. Please note, that if you miss two consecutive classes, I will ask student success services to check with you. This is to ensure that you get the appropriate help, if needed. Please note, that the work we do throughout the class, builds on itself. See the conceptual map below.

Instructions and expectations for assignments will be accessed through Pilot. Due dates are signified on Pilot, as well as in the Class Schedule below. Assignments are to be submitted in the designated Dropbox folders on Pilot. Please let me know if you need an alternative way to submit assignments. I will be posting Feedback on Pilot and I will be recording grade scores in Pilot Grade Book. Feel free to reach out to me, and to ask questions after each feedback and grading score.

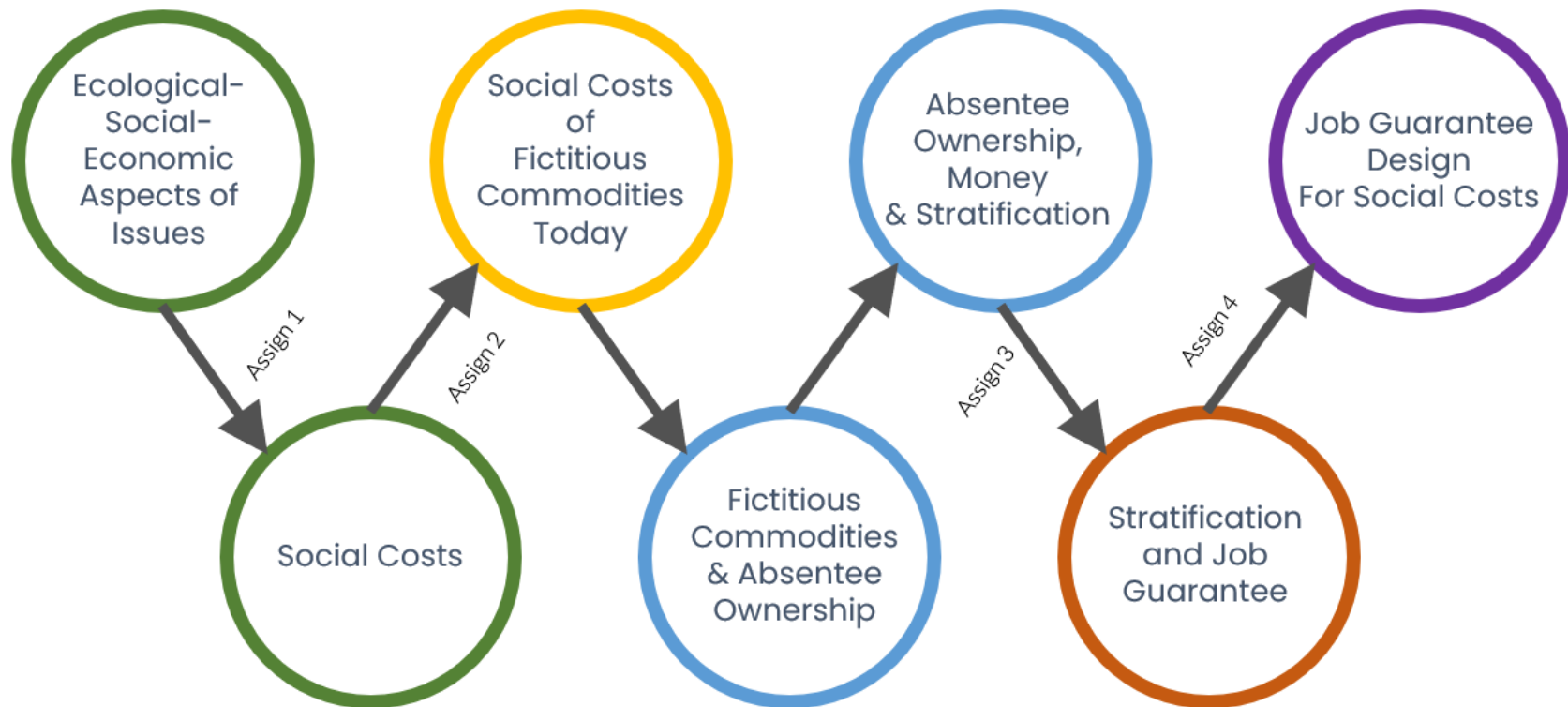
	Score	Overview: Assessment of Quizzes & Writing Assignments
Grading Scale A 90-100% B 80-89% C 70-79% D 60-69% F <60%	100	All parts of the question are fully answered. Answers demonstrate complete understanding of the problem.
	90	Demonstrates considerable understanding of the problem. There are some omissions in following the requirements.
	80	Demonstrates some understanding of the problem with some omissions.
	70	There is some understanding of the problem. There are significant omissions in the answer – parts of the question are not fully answered; or some parts of the questions are answered incorrectly.
	60	Attempts an answer. Demonstrates no understanding of the problems. Needs a significant review of the material.

Assessment

Weight of Assessment Component	Description	Due Date
Attendance & Participation 30 %	1) Sharing, presenting, and discussing prepared questions, tasks and reflections. 2) In-class Group Work and discussion	Weekly Tasks
Assignment 1 15 %	Exploring economic-ecological-social links of an issue: Economic and Social Aspects of a selected “ecological service”	Feb 6
Assignment 2 15%	Applying Evolutionary Concepts to Current Issues: Social Costs of Fictitious Commodities Today	Mar 13
Assignment 3 15%	Formulating Research Questions: Linking Veblenian Concepts to Problems of Social Stratification Today.	Apr 3
Assignment 4 15 %	Designing Public Service Jobs for Social Costs: exploring public service jobs for local problem-solving that addresses economic-social-ecological aspects of social costs.	Apr 21, F by 8 pm.
Presentation 10 %	PowerPoint presentation of Assignment 4	Apr 24, M

Conceptual Map of EC 7250

Economic, Social and Ecological Systems – Z. Todorova, 2023



WEEKLY CLASS SCHEDULE

Book Notations: *Sustainability* *Absentee Ownership* *The Sum of Us* *Job Guarantee*

READINGS	IN-CLASS ASSIGNMENT/ ACTIVITY	DO BEFORE CLASS & DUE THAT DAY
I. ECOLOGY-SOCIETY-ECONOMY CONCEPTIONS AND ISSUES [ASSESSMENT: ASSIGNMENT 1]		
Jan 9 – Introduction and Systems		
<p><i>Sustainability</i> - ch. 1, 2, 6</p> <p>Todorova, Z. (2015). “Social Provisioning within a Culture-Nature Life-Process” <i>Review of Political Economy</i> 27 (3) 390-410.</p> <p>De Groot, Rudolf, Matthew Wilson and Roelof Boumans. (2002). “A Typology for the Classification, Description and Valuation of Ecosystem Functions, Goods and Services,” <i>Ecological Economics</i> 41 (3) 393–408.</p>	<p>Discussion of Syllabus</p> <p>Use “ecological services” table from De Groot et al to brainstorm about ecological-social-economic aspects of issues.</p>	<p>Read Syllabus.</p> <p>Start readings and use MLK week to finish them.</p>
M 17 – NO CLASS (MLK DAY): USE THIS WEEK TO READ THE ARTICLES FROM THE FIRST AND SECOND SESSIONS, AND TO SELECT A TOPIC FOR ASSIGNMENT 1.		

Jan 23 – Social Costs	In Class	Before Class
<p>William Kapp. 1950. <i>Social Costs of Business Enterprise</i> (Ch. 2) http://www.kwilliam-kapp.de/documents/SCOPE.pdf</p> <p><i>Sustainability</i>: ch. 7 Resilience; ch. 12 Assessment; ch. 13 Water; ch. 14 Food & Agriculture</p> <p>Robinson et al. “Ecosystem Restoration is Integral to Humanity’s recovery from COVID-19”. <i>The Lancet</i> 6, 2022.</p>	<p>Discuss Topics for Assignment 1</p> <p>Group Work: Discuss social costs concept. Connect to issues.</p>	<p>Select topic for Assignment 1.</p> <p>Prepare to discuss preliminary links.</p> <p>Make connection to social costs.</p>
Jan 30 Social Processes		
<p><i>Sustainability</i> Ch. 3 Consumption; ch. 5 Energy; ch. 15 Urban; ch. 16 Waste</p> <p>Todorova. “Consumption as a Social Process,” <i>Journal of Economic Issues</i> 48 (3): 663-79, 2014</p>	<p>Share data source</p> <p>Elements of social process</p>	<p>Identify relevance for “social process” in your topic.</p> <p>Prepare to share relevant data source for your topic.</p>
Feb 6 Valuation		
<p><i>Sustainability</i> – ch. 4 Ch. Assessment</p> <p>Wenning & Tomasi. 2022. “Using US Natural Resource Damage Assessment to Understand the Environmental Consequences of the War in Ukraine” https://doi.org/10.1002/ieam.4716</p> <p>Sustainable Development Goals. https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/</p> <p>OXFAM. June 2020. “Care in Time of Coronavirus”. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/bp-care-crisis-time-for-global-reevaluation-care-250620-en.pdf</p>	<p>Discuss Completed Assignments</p> <p>Group Work: Sustainable Development Goals</p>	<p>Assignment 1 DUE (Use also readings from Feb 6.)</p>

II. CONCEPTS OF EVOLVING CAPITALIST INSTITUTIONS [ASSESSMENT: ASSIGNMENT 2]		
Feb 13 – Fictitious Commodities and Social Costs		
<p>Karl Polanyi. 1944. <i>The Great Transformation</i>: Ch. 6 12, 13, 15: https://archive.org/stream/in.ernet.dli.2015.46560/2015.46560.Great-Transformation_djvu.txt</p> <p>Robertson, Morgan. 2008. “Discovering Price in All the Wrong Places: The Work of Commodity Definition and Price under Neoliberal Environmental Policy”, ch. 5 in <i>Privatization: Property and the Remaking of Nature-Society</i>, Becky Mansfield (ed.), Blackwell Publishing: Malden, MA, USA.</p>	<p>Discussion Questions</p> <p>Group Work: Contemporary Fictitious Commodities</p>	<p>Prepare Discussion Questions</p>
Feb 20 – Money and Social Values		
<p>D. Freund, Money is Productive, and Racist Institutions Create Money https://justmoney.org/d-freund-money-is-productive-and-racist-institutions-create-money/</p> <p>Todorova. 2013. “Connecting Social Provisioning and Functional Finance in a Post Keynesian – Institutional Analysis of the Public Sector” <i>European Journal of Economics and Economic Policies: Intervention</i> 10 (1): 61-75</p> <p>D. Jenkins. 2020. “Debt and the Underdevelopment of Black America” https://justmoney.org/d-jenkins-debt-and-the-underdevelopment-of-black-america/</p>	<p>Discussion Questions</p> <p>Group Work: Contemporary Fictitious Commodities</p>	<p>Prepare Discussion Questions</p>
Mar 6 - Absentee Ownership		
<p><i>Absentee Ownership</i> Part 1 – ch. 1-7</p>	<p>Connect to Money & Fictitious Commodities</p>	<p>Answer Questions</p>
Mar 13 - Veblenian Dichotomy & Credit Economy		
<p><i>Absentee Ownership</i> Part 2 – ch. 8-13</p>	<p>Discuss Completed Assignments</p> <p>Veblenian Concepts and Applications</p>	<p>Assignment 2 DUE</p>

III. SYSTEMS OF STRATIFICATION AND INVIDIOUS DISTINCTION [ASSESSMENT: ASSIGNMENT 3]

Mar 20 Social Hierarchies

The Sum of Us – Introduction, ch. 1-6

Darity, William A Jr. 2022. "Position and Possessions: Stratification Economics and Intergroup Inequality." *Journal of Economic Literature* 60 (2): 400
<https://www.aeaweb.org/articles?id=10.1257/jel.20211690>

FED Notes. 2020. "Disparities in Wealth by Race and Ethnicity in the 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances" <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/disparities-in-wealth-by-race-and-ethnicity-in-the-2019-survey-of-consumer-finances-20200928.html>

Group Work:
Connect
Stratification to
Absentee
Ownership
and Social Costs

Preliminary Research
Questions

Mar 27 Landscapes

The Sum of Us – ch. 7 & 8

G. Lipsitz. 2007. "The Racialization of Space and the Spatialization of Race: Theorizing the Hidden Architecture of Landscape" *Landscape Journal*, 26 (1): 10-23.

The Lasting Impacts of Segregation and Redlining
<https://www.savi.org/2021/06/24/lasting-impacts-of-segregation/>

Group Work:
Connect to
Absentee
Ownership
And Social Costs

Make connections to
Absentee Ownership

Apr 3 Crises and Inequities

The Sum of Us – 9 & 10

N. Banks. 2021. "What Should America Do for a Fair Economic Recovery? Sadie T.M. Alexander Had Some Thoughts" <https://policydialogue.org/opinions/sadie-alexander/>

Todorova. 2022. Care, Job Guarantee, and Revisiting "Socialization of Investment": Insights from Institutional Economics <https://www.postkeynesian.net/working-papers/2216/>

Discuss
Assignments

Assignment 3 DUE

Finalize groups for
Assignment 4.

**IV. PROBLEM SOLVING FOR SOCIAL COSTS: PUBLIC SERVICE JOB DESIGN
[ASSESSMENT: ASSIGNMENT 4]**

Apr 10 – Full Employment for Social Costs

<i>Job Guarantee book</i>	Workshop Assignment 4	Prepare Questions About JG: preliminary discussion of job.
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Apr 17 – Participation and Job Guarantee

Kolokotronis, Alexander. 2018. "Three Ways to Design a Democratic Job Guarantee." https://truthout.org/articles/three-ways-to-design-a-democratic-job-guarantee/ <i>Sustainability</i> – ch. 9, 10, 11	Workshop Assignment 4	Ensure all elements – soc, econ, ecological are addressed in Assignment 4. Incorporate the readings.
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Apr 21, F: Assignment 4 DUE by 8 pm.

APR 24, M: PRESENTATIONS OF ASSIGNMENT 4

Allocate approximately **6 hrs a week** to work on this class outside of the classroom.

EC 7250 studying time slots:

