

UNIV501: Experiential Learning

Understanding UBUNTU and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Uganda

Sustainability Studies
University of Calgary
Spring 2020

Instructor: Dr. Sarah Skett

Email: sscskett@ucalgary.ca

Office: PF4203 (office hours by appointment)

Dates: May 7th – May 31st (back in Calgary June 1st)

Location: Mukono District, Uganda, East Africa

In-field Facilitator: Leslie Weighill, Director, The Real Uganda

Prerequisite: Consent of the Instructor.

Course Description and Context

This course engages students to show them the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in action through, and in contradiction with, the philosophy and practice of Ubuntu, the moral authority and prevailing culture found in Uganda. Ubuntu is the essence of humanness. Humans exist through the relationships they maintain. Taken from the southern African Bantu language, Shona, Ubuntu roughly translates to “I am because you are. You are because I am” In Luganda, the main language in south central Uganda, it is called Abantu, simply meaning “People”. Ubuntu assumes people to be relationship-oriented rather than individualistic. Humans depend on others for their well-being. Communal solidarity is the ultimate goal. Professional and private activities are interconnected, and work toward the well-being of the entire society. An individual is not subordinate to the collective, but pursues their own good, by pursuing the common good.

Through this prevailing culture to Ugandan life, UCalgary students will be immersed in Ubuntu, and asked to connect and challenge this philosophy to the SDGs. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries - developed and developing - in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests. But what does this look like in a country like Uganda which ranks #162 (out of 189 countries) on the Human Development Index (HDI)? What does sustainable development mean in a country of 42 million people, 70% of which live in rural areas, with an unemployment rate of 52%, and a Gross National Income (GNI) of just USD1,658?

The SDGs are unique in that they cover issues that affect us all. They reaffirm our international commitment to end poverty, permanently, everywhere. They are ambitious in making sure no one is left behind. More importantly, they involve us all to build a more sustainable, safe, and prosperous planet for all humanity. But when we compare them with the moral tenants of Ubuntu where do they align and where do they differ? This is what this course will explore...

<u>Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)</u>	<u>Moral Tenants of Ubuntu</u>
No poverty	Do not kill
Zero hunger	Do not rape
Good health and wellbeing	Do not deceive others
Quality education	Do not steal
Gender equality	Do not break promises
Clean water and sanitation	Do not discriminate
Affordable and clean energy	The latter six below, less common in the west, are adhered to just as deeply:
Decent work and economic growth	Consensus over majority rule
Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Reconciliation over retribution
Reduced inequalities	Cooperation over competition
Sustainable cities and communities	Need over right
Responsible consumption and production	Traditions and rituals over industry/efficiency
Climate action	Marriage and creating a family is an obligation
Life below water	
Life on land	
Peace, justice, and strong institutions	
Partnerships for the goals	

The philosophy of Ubuntu echoes the foundations, theories and applications of sustainability needed tackle many of our imminent global challenges through the SDGs. Furthermore, these challenges demand an interdisciplinary and holistic approach through systems thinking, among other theories, as we begin to understand the interconnectedness of these issues but also the solutions needed to solve them. The challenges include, but are not limited to poverty, health, education, climate change, food insecurity, eco-system fragility, species extinction, global security and more.

Learning Objectives: By the end of this course, it is expected that students will be able to:

1. Explain, debate, critique and defend foundational concepts and theories of sustainability, sustainable development and Ubuntu as it applies to Uganda and beyond;
2. Formulate and articulate values consistent with Ubuntu and sustainability (e.g. our place in the natural world, inter and intra-generational ethics, diversity, equity and social justice);
3. Analyze real world problems, issues and debates and design solutions consistent with sustainability theories, concepts and values; and
4. Demonstrate an understanding of Ubuntu culture as it applies to sustainable development and the SDGs in theory and research application

Teaching Approach

Your course instructor(s) and guest speakers will offer perspectives on sustainability, Ubuntu and sustainable development from academia, the not for profit sector, business, and government. This field school will include in-situ learning, lectures, discussions, and active participation in group work and learning activities. We will be immersed in real world issues and realities of those living in poverty on a daily basis. You will be encouraged to be engaged in the course, asking questions, challenging your positionality, and formulating your own ideas.

Course Readings

Required readings:

- Wiegrratz, Jorg (2014) Uganda – Culture Smart: The Essential Guide to Customs & Culture
- Metz, T. (2007) "Toward an African Moral Theory", *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 15(3): 321-341.
- Mangena, F. (2016) "African Ethics through Ubuntu: A Post-Modern Exposition", *Africology: The Journal of Pan-African Studies* 9(2): 66-80.
- Robert, Kates W., Thomas M. Parris, and Anthony A. Leiserowitz. "What is sustainable development? Goals, indicators, values, and practice." *Environment: science and policy for sustainable development* 47.3 (2005): 8-21.
- Le Blanc, David. "Towards integration at last? The sustainable development goals as a network of targets." *Sustainable Development* 23.3 (2015): 176-187.

*Further readings to be determined by the Instructor prior to course.

Important Adherences whilst in Uganda

Whilst in Uganda, students are encouraged to maximise the learning that can happen *in situ* through instruction and your own observations. Students will have the opportunity to experience the stark contradictions that have come to characterise the ambience of developing countries but it is vital that students work within the parameters of the group to keep our schedule running smoothly. To this end, all activities will be carried out collectively, even though individual or team work may happen within that time. Changes to schedule can occur due to factors outside of the control of the instructor, and will be announced as necessary, so be prepared to be open-minded and adaptable to changes. The group will have review and reflection sessions where we will go over the day's activities and learn from them. Students are not allowed to initiate activities on their own, or to participate in activities that are not scheduled by the instructor without explicitly seeking permission to do so. The pre-departure sessions and activities will allow students to understand the instructor's expectations for student behavior and participation in the program, as well as student's responsibilities to insure a successful and safe program for all.

Course Requirements and Evaluation

Means of Evaluation

No final exam. Students must obtain an overall passing grade to pass this course. Quality of writing (spelling, grammar, clarity) will be a component of the assessment of all assignments.

SDGs Research Assignment	20%
SDGs Presentation & Discussion	20%
Positionality Paper	20%
Reflective Journal	20%
Participation	20%

Note: (all assignments subject to up to 5% grade reduction for every day late)

SDGs Research Assignment (20%)

Before going to Uganda, students will prepare an assignment that incorporates the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). This assignment is to familiarize students with the SDGs, begin research on/about Uganda and give students an opportunity to listen and learn from each other. This project

is designed to be broad enough to allow students to research their interests. This work will begin prior to departure for Uganda.

Students will:

1. Find a partner (groups of 2).
2. Each group will be assigned a specific SDG (so no replication from other groups)
3. Choose one topic from the list below.
 - a) A person (e.g. an activist, historical figure, government official, youth, etc.)
 - b) A place (e.g. a specific site in Uganda)
 - c) An event (e.g. a historical event, an important governmental ruling, a social justice movement, etc.)
 - d) A project (e.g. community-led program, social justice group, government-funded program)
4. Students will connect their SDG to their chosen topic and ground their research in Uganda. Students must research the implementation of the SDG in relation to their topic. An example: Researching SDG 3 (Good Health) and place (Kinshasa Highway), I will highlight the importance of HIV/AIDS education in Uganda.
5. Students will submit a collaboratively written 8-10-page paper which presents their findings, this will be shared with the class (without any grading shown)

SDGs Presentation and Discussion (20%)

Building on their SDG Research Assignment (above) students will present their key learnings and findings in a 10-minute oral presentation (since we will be in the field, they will likely have to do so without any PPT or media support). From their presentation they will prepare 3 key discussion questions for students and facilitate a 5-10-minute discussion.

Positionality Paper (20%)

Whilst in the field, students will submit a 5-page paper commenting on sustainability challenges in Uganda as they have observed from their time with the communities and individuals they interact with. Students must write about the culture and practice of Ubuntu as they see it on the ground in Uganda. They must connect it to the required readings as well as find 3 other academic sources, and 2 non-academic sources to support their paper. Students must also connect their own 'positionality' in the field as it relates to Ubuntu and acknowledge their biases in their understanding of Ubuntu and the sustainability challenges in Uganda.

Reflective Journal (20%)

For this assignment students will be asked to keep a regular journal throughout the GSP and will be given time throughout to reflect and write. Students will not have to submit the journal but rather use this as an opportunity to be reflective, critical, and open about their learning process. This is a tool for them to use, not something they will need to share with anyone else. This final assignment will be a 5-page summary of their journal reflecting on their learning. Themes to consider for the journal are:

- What were my most significant learnings?
- What was my process of learning?
- What did I learn about myself?
- How has my understanding of sustainability and the SDGs change?

Participation (20%)

Unlike some of the other forms of learning that take place in this class, participation in a GSP and a small-group environment is not an individual activity. How and what you learn from listening to a lecture, reading a textbook, doing research, or studying for an exam is quite different from what you can gain when you have immediate access to approximately 20 different, informed points of view on a single issue. As well, how you engage with individuals from the communities we learn from will be pivotal, do you demonstrate a willingness to learn and to understand their culture, needs and successes? And how do you build from this in the discussions and your written work.

In discussions, if you do not prepare effectively and contribute positively, other students miss out on one of those points of view, and their learning experience suffers. This is also true of your group work, when you do not come prepared to group meetings, work sessions and conduct your work as agreed upon in the group contract you are impeding your colleagues from completing their work and putting forward the best work possible. For this reason, our evaluation of your course and group participation will be based on how you have improved the learning experience of your peers, both in class and your group work. Supporting, engaging, and listening to your peers does not mean that you must always agree with them. Rather, you should make a sincere effort to respond to their comments and support their work. Playing an active role in discussions involves volunteering your opinion, asking questions, and listening carefully. The best discussions are the ones that move beyond the simple questions and answers. You will be rewarded for bringing up more challenging ideas and for trying to deal with them collaboratively with your classmates. To do this effectively, you must have read all the assigned material carefully. If you haven't, it will become clear quite quickly.

Grading Scale

Grade	Grade Point	Percent	Description
A+	4.00	92.5-100	Outstanding
A	4.00	85-92.49	Excellent - superior performance showing comprehensive understanding of the subject matter
A-	3.70	80-84.99	Very good performance
B+	3.30	76-79.99	
B	3.00	73-75.99	Good – clearly above average performance with knowledge of subject matter generally complete
B-	2.70	70-72.99	
C+	2.30	66-69.99	
C	2.00	63-65.99	Satisfactory – basic understanding of the subject matter
C-	1.70	60-62.99	Receipt of a grade point average of 1.70 may not be sufficient for promotion or graduation (see individual undergraduate faculty regulations)
D+	1.30	56-59.99	
D	1.00	50-55.99	Minimal pass – marginal performance
F	0.00	0-49.99	Fail – unsatisfactory performance or failure to meet course requirements.

Notes

1. Written work, term assignments and other course related work may only be submitted by e-mail if prior permission to do so has been obtained from the course instructors. Submissions must come from an official University of Calgary (UCalgary) email account.

2. It is the student's responsibility to request academic accommodations. If you are a student with a documented disability who may require academic accommodation and have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre, please contact their office at 220-8237. (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/drc/node/46>) Students who have not registered with the Disability Resource Centre are not eligible for formal academic accommodation. You are also required to discuss your needs with your instructor no later than fourteen (14) days after the start of this course.

3. Plagiarism - Plagiarism involves submitting or presenting work in a course as if it were the student's own work done expressly for that particular course when, in fact, it is not. Most commonly plagiarism exists when:(a) the work submitted or presented was done, in whole or in part, by an individual other than the one submitting or presenting the work (this includes having another impersonate the student or otherwise substituting the work of another for one's own in an examination or test),(b) parts of the work are taken from another source without reference to the original author,(c) the whole work (e.g., an essay) is copied from another source, and/or,(d) a student submits or presents work in one course which has also been submitted in another course(although it may be completely original with that student) without the knowledge of or prior agreement of the instructor involved. While it is recognized that scholarly work often involves reference to the ideas, data and conclusions of other scholars, intellectual honesty requires that such references be explicitly and clearly noted. Plagiarism is an extremely serious academic offence. It is recognized that clause (d) does not prevent a graduate student incorporating work previously done by him or her in a thesis. Any suspicion of plagiarism will be reported to the Dean and dealt with as per the regulations in the University of Calgary Graduate Calendar.

4. Information regarding the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/secretariat/privacy>) and how this impacts the receipt and delivery of course material

5. Emergency Evacuation/Assembly Points (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/emergencyplan/assemblypoints>)

6. Safewalk information (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/security/safewalk>)

Contact Info for: Student Union (<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/page/affordability-accessibility/contact>); Graduate Student representative (<http://www.ucalgary.ca/gsa/>) and Student Ombudsman's Office (<http://www.su.ucalgary.ca/page/quality-education/academic-services/student-rights>).

Electronics Policy

The success of the program is contingent upon students, facilitators and instructor being fully engaged and fully participating to the life of the group through the activities, the meals, and the day to day work. Due to the fact that you will be completing assignments whilst in the field, taking notes and probably searching up resources for your papers and presentations, students are allowed to bring their computer; printing facilities will be arranged on the ground. You, however, do not need to bring the computer with you for every engagement. We will be able to store your computers safely as necessary, when on the ground. You are allowed to bring a tablet for reading. You are also allowed to bring your phone (to take pictures, listen to music and to use in a Wifi zone).

Teaching Evaluations / USRI (Universal Student Ratings of Instruction)

At the University of Calgary, feedback provided by students through the Universal Student Ratings of Instruction (USRI) survey provides valuable information to help with evaluating instruction, enhancing learning and teaching,

and selecting courses. **Your responses make a difference, please participate!** Website: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/usri/>.

Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act

The University of Calgary is committed to protecting the privacy of individuals who work and study at the University or who otherwise interact with the University in accordance with the standards set out in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Please refer to the following link for detailed information: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/legalservices/foip>. The Department of Anthropology and Archaeology's FOIP (Freedom of Information and Privacy) policy requires all reports/examinations to be returned to students during class time or the instructor's office hours. Any term work not picked up will be placed in the Anthropology and Archaeology Office (ES620) for distribution. Any student not wishing to have their work placed in the office must make alternative arrangements with the course instructor early in the term.