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17.181 / 17.182 Sustainable Development: Theory and Policy
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**17.181-17.182 –
Sustainable Development – Theory & Policy**

Mid Term Exam – Take Home

Instructions

The purpose of this mid-term is to for you to: (a) show your understanding of the reading assignments and relations to the seminar discussions, (b) demonstrate your grasp of sustainability issues at this point in time, and on this basis (c) obtain some feedback from the instructor.

It would be useful to outline your answers before actually writing. Since you will demonstrate familiarity with the assigned readings, please feel free to draw from materials across various weeks – as needed. When doing so, please indicate the specific reference(s). Please be sure to note references for general points you make, and specific pages for specific points or direct quotes. Try to use at least 3 different sources in your answer to each question. You can use the same sources across questions, as long as do not use only the same 3 throughout the midterm. (Wikipedia is not on the syllabus)

Finally, please make sure that the first and last paragraphs of your essays are coherent and related to each other. It would be a simple reminder that you are retaining your chosen focus.

The Questions

Please answer **2(two)** of the **4(four)** questions below – with no more than 5-6 pages for each question – double space (roughly 250 words per page). Each answer is in essence an ‘essay’ on the topics you have selected. (Note that you have choices for question 3).

1. The terms “sustainability” and “environment” are closely connected, and often used interchangeably in the context of sustainable development’, but they are not identical. Given that each is in the nature of a ‘moving target’ – in the sense that we are in the process of obtaining more knowledge and greater understanding – please (a) review the differences and similarities between these two concepts; (b) summarize key issues pertaining to an economist’s view of environment; and (c) indicate similarities and/or differences with a bio-geo-chemical-physical (or ecology-centered) view. Where do the “politics” fit in?

2. “The Tragedy of the Commons” is often used as a conceptual device through which to articulate key sustainability dilemmas. What is the ‘tragedy’? What are the commons? What are the issues? What does this representation mean for sustainability conditions within countries? Is the ‘tragedy’ relevant to actors and units other than the state? If so, how? if not, why not?

3. What is the relevance of population (and population issues) to the challenges of sustainability? How do different authors (or analysts) factor in the population variable(s) in discussions of sustainability (in any of the many perspectives or contexts)? What information, evidence, or knowledge would you need in order to better address such questions?

OR

What is the relevance of energy (and energy issues) to the challenges of sustainability? How do different authors (or analysts) factor in the energy variable(s) in discussions of sustainability (in any of the many perspectives or contexts)? What information, evidence, or knowledge would you need in order to better address such questions?

OR

What is the relevance of knowledge (including concepts, data, metrics, etc.) to the challenges of sustainability? What information, evidence, or knowledge would you need in order to better address such questions? How do different authors (or analysts) factor ‘old’ versus ‘new’ knowledge variable(s) in discussions of sustainability (in any of the many perspectives or contexts)?

4. *Time* and *space* -- along with *scale* and *scope* -- are key factors or terms shaping our understanding “sustainable development”. Please write an essay on these factors as they bear on our understanding of sustainability challenges. In this context, be sure to define the terms, provide specific examples, and illustrate their implications. Wherever relevant, please signal where the “politics” might be evident.