

Institutions and Sustainable Development

Vlad Tarko

Time of class: TBD (Spring 2018); *Location:* TBD

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General description

Why do some societies and communities prosper, while others stagnate or collapse? The course starts by exploring sustainability problems in relatively small scale communities. How are tragedy of the commons problems solved? We are looking at fishing villages, forests, and water management. The second part of the class covers large scale societies, and explores why various past civilizations, from the Maya to the Roman Empire, have collapsed. Throughout the course we will also discuss methodology: what methods – case studies, game theory, statistical analyses – are best suited for answering specific questions, and how different methods complement each other.

Prerequisites: Intermediate Microeconomics (ECON278), especially game theory; Intermediate Macroeconomics (ECON268); Contending Economic Perspectives (ECON288)

Useful but not required: Development Economics (ECON236, ECON349); Economics of Natural Resources (ECON332)

Learning outcomes

1. The theory behind the tragedy of the commons.
2. Elinor Ostrom's "design principles" for sustainable development.
3. How to apply Elinor Ostrom's Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework to specific cases.
4. The bundle of rights theory of property.
5. Adam Smith's development model.
6. Ecological causes of collapse.
7. Socio-political causes of collapse.

Grading policy

All assignments should be submitted by email. You will need to write two papers of case studies of your choice. In the first paper (due before the spring break) you have to apply the methods discussed in class – the IAD framework. The

topic of the second paper (due at the end of the semester) is a historical episode of your choice, applying the ideas we discuss in class. Each paper is worth 30% of the final grade. You will also have a class presentation for each paper – 10%. Class participation is another 20%.

Required books

Vlad Tarko. 2016. *Elinor Ostrom: An Intellectual Biography*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Joseph Tainter. 1988. *The Collapse of Complex Societies*. Cambridge University Press.

Further Readings

Elinor Ostrom. 1990. *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*. Cambridge University Press.

Jared Diamond. 2005. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail Or Succeed*. Penguin.

Sustainability Investigations

This course satisfies Dickinson College's sustainability graduation requirement. Sustainability has multiple and contested meanings. Most definitions reflect concerns for the wellbeing of people and living systems in a rapidly changing world, now and into the future. A working definition of sustainability adopted at Dickinson is *the ability to improve human wellbeing equitably in this generation while protecting the environment and creating the conditions necessary for future generations to sustain a world that is environmentally healthy, socially just and economically robust*. This framing of sustainability encompasses and emphasizes interdependencies among issues of human security, social justice, economic development, and science and technology, as well as many others, in relation to environmental systems. In this course, we will cover sustainability issues from an institutionalist perspective both in small and large scale societies. This means that we are looking at how sustainability is influenced by the choice of institutions.

Accommodating Students with Disabilities

Dickinson College makes reasonable academic accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students requesting accommodations must make their request and provide appropriate documentation to Disability Services in Biddle

House. Because classes change every semester, eligible students must obtain a new accommodation letter from Director Marni Jones every semester and review this letter with their professors so the accommodations can be implemented. The Director of Disability Services is available by appointment to answer questions and discuss any implementation issues you may have.

If you have specific questions about this, please call Stephanie Anderberg at 717-245-1734 or e-mail disabilityservices@dickinson.edu.

Academic integrity

Don't cheat, don't lie, don't present others work as your own. Become very familiar with what counts as plagiarism, and never do it. See Dickinson's

- Community standards:
http://www.dickinson.edu/info/20273/dean_of_students/867/community_standards
- Student conduct rules:
http://www.dickinson.edu/homepage/69/student_conduct

Outline of the class

Week	Topic	Readings
1	Introduction to the course	
2	Fundamentals of institutional economics	Tarko, Introduction
3	The tragedy of the commons	Tarko, ch. 3
4	Road trip: Understanding forest complexity	
5	Resilience	Tarko, ch. 4
6	The Institutional Analysis and Development framework	Tarko, ch. 5
7	Paper presentations	
	SPRING BREAK	
9	Why complex societies collapsed?	Tainter, ch. 1 and 2
10	Environmental causes of collapse	Tainter, ch. 3, pp. 31-61
11	Social-political causes of collapse	Tainter, ch. 3, pp. 61-91
12	Why is adaptation so hard?	Tainter, ch. 4
13	Case studies: Roma, Maya, Chaco	Tainter, ch. 5
14	Overview of the economic approach to sustainability	Tarko, ch. 2; Tainter, ch. 6
15	Paper presentations	
