

Proposed First Year Seminar: Toward Sustainability
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Introduction

The Brundtland Commission, in a 1987 report to the United Nations, defined sustainability as “meeting the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The world of today is dramatically impacted by humans and their lifestyles (Orr 2002, Glasser 2004). Most of our environmental problems are a direct but unintended consequence of our failure to understand the dynamics of the natural world and our place in it. We may be fast approaching the point at which the global ecosystem cannot recover from the impacts of our actions (Orr 1994, 2002). Climate change, a loss of biodiversity and human health costs are attributable to those actions. There is a fundamental disconnect between our professed desire for environmental protections and our active pursuit of economic development (Orr 1994, 2002; Glasser 2004). In practice, sustainability is a concept that must be an overriding principle underlying any specific goal, whether it is economic, political, social or cultural (White 2002) and it is only by choosing sustainability as our guiding principle that we will be able to do anything more than chase after a patchwork of attempted fixes that do little more than waste time and further energy.

In much of our reading this semester, the issue of sustainability and the roles education and educational institutions play in it has come up again and again. McNeill (2000) implies that as things stand now we must find a way for sustainability to have political and economic impact that will compete with “more jobs, higher tax revenues and stronger militaries?” (355). Unfortunately, political and economic impacts like more or better jobs, higher tax revenues and the like are short-term, specific goals that under the current economic paradigm do not fit a long-term goal of sustainability. What we need is a permanent solution that incorporates human

enterprise into the function of the global ecosystem rather than continually trying to bend natural systems to our will (Orr 2002, Corcoran and Wals, 2004).

Lombourg (2001) argues that we have the technology and talent to develop further technology to combat any environmental problems that arise from our actions. There are two problems with that approach. First, the reality is that many environmental problems already exist that we have been unable to solve. Second, it is not from a lack of physical technological solutions that the environment is suffering, but rather from ignoring behavioral solutions. The key to implementing behavioral solutions is education and a foundation in ecological literacy (Cone and Hayes 1984, Orr 2002). The only way to make the shift to implementing behavioral solutions is to transform the dominant paradigm that says economic growth at any cost. To accomplishing this shift will require education, education that changes behavior. Producing students who are capable of solving the problems we currently face is not enough; we must alter our actions so that we do not create the problems in the first place.

That said, any shift in paradigm is often a slow, even glacial, process. This is in part because the shift must begin at the beginning, in education, before those being educated are launched into the world where economics and politics rule to the exclusion of all else (Orr, 1992, 1994). Unlike political entities, educational institutions not only have less to gain from short-term successes (like more jobs, increased investment by corporations) but also act as microcosms of society in general and thus may be the only hope for an eventual conversion to sustainability (Glasser 2004). It is only by educating the next generation that a true shift will occur that will allow the day-to-day short term demands of sustaining the world's population to be based on sustainable principles.

While there are many routes an educational institution can take on the path to a culture of sustainability, the growing consensus among the academic and scientific community is that any path to sustainability must have certain essential components in place. Courses are important, the commitment to sustainability must be central at ideological, operational and curricular levels (White, unpublished report; Corcoran and Wals 2004). The strength of the power of example cannot be negated. The culture of the educational institution impacts students' learning; if that culture reflects the philosophies inherent in those environmental courses, students and the community as a whole will incorporate those principles of sustainability into their actions (Cone and Hayes 1984, Orr 1994, Corcoran and Wals 2004). This means mission statements that guide operations, curricular and faculty hiring and promotional decisions. It requires institution of sustainable practices at all operational levels. Richard White in his unpublished 2002 report, "Sustainability at Smith College" lists the following specific steps which coincide with many of the essential components recommended by sustainability advocates for educational institutions desiring to achieve truly sustainable campuses:

- Establish a single policy committee to coordinate and advocate efforts toward campus sustainability
- Endorsement of the Tailloires Declaration of the Association of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future;
- Participation in the Clean Air-Cool Planet college and university partnership for climate protection;
- definition of a new position of a sustainability coordinator to work with the sustainability committee in developing and implementing a sustainability master plan;
- establishment of a Center for Sustainability at Smith College;
- adoption of specific initiatives for sustainability including an explicit mandate for best technological practice in new construction and renovation; establishment of a revolving fund to facilitate implementation of capital projects that yield long-term cost savings; and commitment of work-study funds to support ongoing research about sustainability initiatives.

Middlebury College is one institution that provides specific evidence for the ways in which these steps can be a catalyst for change. As a leader in environmental education since the 1960s, Middlebury is setting the standard for integrating education for the environment and sustainability into higher education (Jenks-Jay 2004). While Middlebury has the highest number of courses with environmental content of all the liberal arts colleges surveyed by Kolod and DiLaura in EVS 300, Spring 2003 (Figure 1), this is merely an outgrowth of their commitment to sustainability at every level (Jenks-Jay 2004). In addition to the commitment to sustainability at operational and curricular levels as mentioned above, a critical component of a truly sustainable campus is a commitment to annual self-assessments. Middlebury has designed a self-assessment system which is easily repeatable on an annual basis, focusing on quantitative records already compiled yearly which helps track improvements and sets the agenda for realistic goals for the succeeding year.

In the design and building of a new science center Middlebury not only incorporated principles necessary to achieve LEEDs certification, they reincorporated over 97% of the outputs from the deconstruction of the old science center in the construction of the new building (www.middlebury.edu). This was accomplished at a cost equal to estimates for straight demolition and reconstruction and won the College a 2002 State of Vermont Governor's Award for Environmental Excellence and Pollution Prevention. The College continues to use this approach in all its construction projects aiming for 90% regeneration of demolished construction. This example goes counter to the widely-held belief that recycling and green building costs more than traditional building practices (Cone & Hayes 1984) and produced substantial goodwill and public support that may have future financial rewards for the College.

Mount Holyoke College, although having fewer courses with environmental content than Smith, also appears to have made substantial steps toward a paradigm shift. They have employed all of the steps that Orr and others propound as essential in producing ecologically literate graduates. In addition to an overarching mission statement incorporating ideas of sustainability, the College has created a Center for the Environment which operates in conjunction with its Center for Environmental Literacy and its Center for Community, Science & Environment Program (CSEP). Each of these Centers has its specific mission statement and agenda. The mission statement for the Center for the Environment was written by consensus of students in a senior environmental seminar at Mount Holyoke (www.mtholyoke.edu). The very presence of the Centers has had a dramatic impact on the Mount Holyoke community's behavior as illustrated by their reduction in paper product usage (Aguilar and Gossett, pers. comm.). Those reductions were achieved only with the cooperation of students, faculty, staff and administration. It is evident that by tying activities to a consistent conceptual framework that true lasting behavior modification is achieved (Cone and Hayes 1980, Jenks-Jay 2004). And, in fulfillment of arguably the most important impact a sustainable campus can have (Corcoran and Wals, 2004) the activities of the CSEP has had broader community impacts by providing annual workshops linking scientists from Mount Holyoke and beyond with members of the local and national community for cooperative environmental efforts. Two such projects (clean-ups of military bases, Westover Air Base and Yucca Mountain) were completed last year as a direct result of that year's workshop (www.mtholyoke.edu).

The reasons that make a college like Smith the place to begin this paradigm shift are myriad. They include the fact that the ecological footprint of such campuses is considerable, and more sustainable practices will have immediate beneficial effects both locally and regionally

(Smith, pers. comm.). Perhaps most notably, graduates from liberal arts colleges have a disproportionate effect in shaping society's views. A 1998 study found that while only 3% of all U.S. college graduates came from liberal arts colleges, their alumni accounted for:

- 8% of Forbes magazine's listing of the nation's wealthiest CEOs in 1998
- 8% of former Peace Corps volunteers
- 19% of U.S. presidents
- 74% of Pulitzer Prize winners between 1960 and 1998 (www.collegenews.org).

Thus, the conversion of liberal arts institutions like Smith College to a culture of sustainability may have far-reaching, long-term effects with potential for exponential growth in the world beyond Smith College and the Pioneer Valley.

The standard liberal arts education, while valuable, evolved to fit a world that no longer exists and perhaps never existed. The concept of a liberal arts education must be expanded and adapted to fit a changing world, a world where many of the changes are the unintended but direct result of human actions. Orr calls for a reconstruction of our educational institutions and outlines a list of academic and practical items in which every college graduate should be knowledgeable (1994). Those items make up a range of concepts and skills from the laws of thermodynamics and principles of ecology to least-cost, end-use analysis and steady-state economics on the academic side and from growing food and building shelter to a knowledge of local soils, flora, fauna and the local watershed. As a small step toward that end, I designed the curriculum for a proposed first-year Smith College course in sustainability. The seminar will address many of the educational "fixes" and issues David Orr raises in The Nature of Design and Ecological Literacy.

According to Tom Riddell, dean of the first year class, first year seminars are intended to serve several purposes and over the past six years have proven to be quite successful in accomplishing those purposes. The seminar is small, facilitating discussion and extensive interaction between students and faculty. This sets the stage for serious, continued discourse

throughout students' college careers and beyond. The class focuses on a specific topic that serves as a vehicle to develop students' speaking and writing skills in a format they otherwise might not encounter until further along in their college careers. In addition, by their very nature, first year seminars may foster a sense of connection to the students' class and help formulate their ideas of what Smith College values and stands for. By extension, this seminar could be a conduit to develop a sense of responsibility toward Smith and the local community, one of the essential precursors to developing a sustainable lifestyle (Meyrowitz 1985, Orr 1992). While this proposed seminar focuses on the topic of sustainability, I believe that it not only meets the intention of past and current first year seminars but that it develops skills in addition to communication skills that will serve students well in both their academic careers and their lives as engaged, concerned citizens through exposure to a variety of academic and practical areas as they relate to sustainability (see syllabus, Appendix I).

Methodology:

I reviewed three of last year's EVS 300 projects, "Towards a More Sustainable Curriculum," Emily Kolod; "Sustainability and Environmental Curriculum: How Does Smith Stack Up?" Sarah DiLaura, and the results of student surveys made in conjunction with those two projects; and the course design, "A Sense of Place," by Jocelyn Brown-Saracino.

I reviewed the websites of Mount Holyoke, Oberlin and Middlebury Colleges, and the Center for Regenerative Studies at California Polytechnic College at Pomona, all institutions with proven track records in sustainable and regenerative studies to discover what steps they had taken, what worked in promoting sustainability and producing ecologically literate graduates and the ways in which their efforts impacted the greater community. I also reviewed Mt. Holyoke

and Middlebury Colleges' curricula and compared it to DiLaura's and Kolod's 2003 projects to see whether there had been any modifications to the curricula.

I researched primary literature on education in general and environmental education specifically.

I researched multiple nonprofit organizations' websites relating to sustainability, ecological and media literacy and ecological design for inspiration and guidance on possible course activities.

I interviewed Professor Virginia Hayssen of Smith College's Department of Biological Sciences, currently designing a course in environmental literacy in cooperation with Assistant Professor Leslie L. King, Department of Sociology. I also interviewed Professor Susan Etheredge of the Department of Education and Child Study. I communicated with Professor Stephen Roof of Hampshire College's Department of Natural Sciences. Each of these interviews provided me with substantial guidance on successful teaching and assessment methods, including feedback on units and activities I had designed.

A portion of the course will address media and media literacy, using information obtained from and activities modeled on materials obtained from the New Mexico Center for Media Literacy and the Media Literacy Project in Northampton.

I investigated the possibility of integrating guest lecturers from both the Media Literacy Project and other organizations and businesses in the area of sustainable design in and around the Pioneer Valley into the proposed curriculum.

Results and Discussion:

The intention of this course is to expand students' awareness of some of the critical environmental issues we face today and the complexities that surround them; to improve critical

thinking and graphical analysis skills; improve communication skills, both oral and written; to encourage students to work toward solutions and provide them opportunities to investigate such solutions; and to make incoming students cognizant of Smith as an institution serious about sustainability. As noted previously, our activities are negatively impacting the natural systems of the earth. We got here in large part as a result of our inability or unwillingness to make connections between our actions and their impacts. Our attempts at solutions have often only perpetuated that lack of interdisciplinary connection, resulting in narrow, ineffective solutions, or worse, solutions more harmful to people and the environment in another place or another time. Dealing with the complex nonlinear systems that are characteristic of society and the natural world requires exposure to a wide range of disciplines and methods (Orr 1994). While no single course can cover all the ground that Orr and others lay out, this course will attempt to give a basic background in ecological literacy, emphasizing systemic thinking and the need for interdisciplinary approaches to solutions.

Since learning depends not only upon the information encountered but also how the information is processed (Von Glasersfeld 1988, Bowen et al. 1996), this course was designed with minimal lecture format, focusing instead on hands-on activities like worksheets, group projects, and student-led discussions. Von Glasersfeld (1988) finds that in order to incorporate what is learned, it is essential to be able to attach the information to a schematic or representational framework. With that in mind, there will be a number of field trips incorporating both demonstrative (visits to a sewage treatment plant, a recycling station, and a landfill) and experiential activities (visits to local nature areas, local Department of Fish and

Wildlife field office and monitoring stations, several local organic farms employing a variety of methods and a wind farm).

The overview of this course is as follows:

<u>Concept</u>	<u>How that will translate</u>
Sustainability v. Consumerism	Media Literacy
Anthropogenic Effects on Environment	Biogeochemical Cycle, Global Warming and Climate Change
Agriculture	Does organic = sustainable?
Energy Issues	Energy Bill and the workings of Congress (Public Policy), Investigating Alternative Sources, Environmental Justice
Ecological Design	Sustainability and Regeneration – The New Paradigm (There is hope.)

The syllabus (Appendix I) outlines the specifics of each unit and the overall philosophy of the course as well as specific readings and activities. I anticipate that some topics or units will require a single class meeting (media literacy) while others may entail three or more (energy issues).

Since this course uses a variety of media and is intended to be taught to a range of students from the arts, literature and philosophy, and social, natural and behavioral sciences I chose a variety of assessment methods. Weekly, three-minute essays in response to a choice of three questions derived from the week's reading will open each class meeting. There will be a mid-term exam with both objective, quantitative skills tested (deriving primarily from the biogeochemical cycle and global warming unit) and more subjective essay questions (deriving from the balance of the units covered by that point in the semester).

As their final graded assignment, students will be asked to produce an individually written report based on one of the group projects completed over the course of the semester.

Finally, to assess not only students' progress but also to assess the overall effectiveness of the course, during the first class meeting students will be asked to devise three questions regarding sustainability and answer them to the best of their ability. These questions and responses will not be graded. In the last class meeting, each student's questions (minus the answers) will be returned to him or her, and the student will be asked to answer those questions again and devise three additional questions they can choose to answer or not. This will provide a means for students to see if and how their own attitudes and perceptions regarding the environment and issues of sustainability changed over the course of the semester. In addition, this exercise will provide the instructor, the department and the administration valuable feedback on course content and methodology. It is hoped that this combination of assessment methods will not only address variability in students' strengths but also enhance instruction and learning (Pellegrino 2001).

In addition to improving students' communication and critical thinking skills, this course will provide a basis in ecological literacy and the skills necessary to make them more effective stewards of the environment both here at Smith and in their future personal and professional lives. I also hope participation in this course will empower incoming students to steward ongoing recycling and sustainability efforts both within the Smith community and the Pioneer Valley and perhaps initiate new ones, ultimately fostering a true culture of sustainability at Smith and forming an underlying basis of sustainability for endeavors beyond Smith. Perhaps more than these skills and abilities, my hope is that this course will promote a connection and

responsibility to the places where students live, a realization that they are part of the natural world and its systems and a desire to work to sustain rather than dominate those systems.

Conclusions

The implementation of a course in sustainability is particularly important to Smith College at this point in time. While Smith College currently does not rival Mount Holyoke or Middlebury College in terms of sustainability and ranked third among regionally comparable liberal arts colleges in terms of number of environmentally-based course (Figure 1) it has made some recent strides toward sustainability. The signing of the Clean Air-Cool Planet Campuses for Climate Action Agreement in the spring of 2004 was an important step. Smith College's engineering program has taken the initiative in its collaboration with Nuestras Raices, a grassroots organization in Holyoke, to improve local air quality by designing a modification to a local bakery's current chimney structure and improving the oven's combustion process and building ventilation system, thereby reducing emissions. Efforts to achieve LEEDs certification for Smith College's new science center are also steps in the right direction. Offering a course specifically on sustainability sends the message that all of these efforts are valued and provides a venue in which to expose incoming students to the potential for greater efforts toward sustainability at Smith.

For Smith to achieve leadership status in the area of sustainability, however, key elements remain to be put in place. The founding of a Smith Center for Sustainability, mission statements at the administrative and departmental levels and coordination of campus-wide efforts throughout the campus sustainability coordinator and committee will be essential. In addition, adoption of annual self-assessments, leading to annual sustainability agenda-setting, modeled on those of Middlebury and Mount Holyoke Colleges will put Smith at the forefront of this

movement at a critical juncture in our national and global history. We have an ever-narrowing window of opportunity to reverse the processes transforming the natural world, impacting biodiversity and public health. Again and again the literature points to the fact that while content and methodology of courses are important the lessons of culture and the built environment are at least equally as important (Orr 1994, 2002; Rohwedder 2004). Students are taught in various and subtle ways over and above content of courses (Orr 2002, Jenks-Jay 2004) and a disconnect between words and actions over time can convey more than specific lessons. (Glasser 2004).

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Proposed Course: Toward Sustainability
Proposed First Year Seminar
Elizabeth Callaghan
EVS 300 Spring 2004

Syllabus

To understand, live in, and sustain a world liveable for generations to come requires a foundation in ecological literacy. The fact is that there is a fundamental problem with the way we view the world. We treat it as though we believe resources are unlimited, that the only way for individuals, communities and nations to prosper is through continual economic growth. This is a paradigm that the world as it existed could sustain albeit temporarily. The earth can no longer support the demands made upon it to support such continued economic growth. A paradigm shift is therefore essential and that shift is dependent on environmental literacy as its foundation.

Unit 1: Introduction to concept of sustainability and ecological design.

The purpose of this week's readings and discussion will be to acquaint students with some historical moments and figures in early conservation and environmental protection efforts in order to illustrate that environmentalism and sustainability are not entirely new concepts. We will examine the way things we may accept as advances and the next miracle cure for what ails our environment may in fact have unanticipated and unintended consequences in much the same way the miracle pesticides and chemical fertilizers of the past did. Rachel Carson's indictment of the pesticide industry came at a time when there was virtually no public dialog about the dangers of DDT and other pesticides and chemicals. Far beyond that there was no environmental movement. The term environmentalist had not even been coined. Carson's book in fact went against the established view of the scientific community that man was the master of all he surveyed and that through the growth of science humans would eventually conquer and control everything in nature. One of her critics (and there were many at the time of publication) stated, "The crux, the fulcrum over which the argument chiefly rests, is that Miss Carson maintains that the balance of nature is a major force in the survival of man, whereas the modern chemist, the modern biologist and scientist, believes that man is steadily controlling nature."ⁱ

Readings: Orr, D.W. 1994. Chapters 1 and 2 in *Earth in Mind*, Island Press,

Washington, D.C.; Leopold, A. 1949. "The Land Ethic" in *A Sand County Almanac*
Oxford University Press, New York. Carson, Rachel. 1962. Selected passages. *Silent
Spring*.

Unit 2: Sustainable Agriculture.

Wes Jackson and The Land Institute. Field trips to explore and discuss local examples.

Unit 3: Media Literacy.

Since environmental and societal change will depend upon an aware, engaged and educated public acting primarily as citizens rather than primarily as consumers (Kilbourne 1999) it is important to understand the forces pushing us toward consumerism and away from making our own choices about what we take in (both literally and figuratively). Group Activity:

Deconstruct an advertisement from any medium (See Appendix II). Discussion of deconstructing a newscast. Is what is presented all there is?

Ongoing activity: Tracking Purchases (Appendix III).

Unit 4: Introduction to Biogeochemical Cycle, Global Warming, Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change.

Possible Guest Speaker.

Key questions:

- How does CO₂ enter the atmosphere?
- How does CO₂ contributed to the earth's atmosphere from fossil fuels compare with that from natural processes?
- How will anthropogenic CO₂ be returned to the earth (a closed cycle)?
- Predictions of CO₂ increases over the next century?
- What will a rise in sea level mean?

In addition to the obvious significance of this topic to issues of sustainability, this unit provides ample opportunity to develop critical reading and graphical analysis skills (see Appendix IV) and will entail reading primary literature as well as secondary sources.

Readings: Gornitz, V. et al. "Global Sea Level Change in the past century." *Science*

Vol. 215, March, 1982; Tian, H. , J. M. Melillo, D.W. Kicklighter, A.D.

McGuire, J. Helfrich III et al. "Climatic and biotic controls on annual carbon storage in Amazonian ecosystems." *Global Ecology and Biogeography*, pp. 315-335, Vol. 9, No. 4. July 2000; Schneider, S.H. "The Greenhouse Effect: Science and Policy." *Science*. Pp. 771-81, Vol. 243, 1989.

Unit 5: Energy Issues.

This unit will provide opportunities for critical reading and discussion. Students will explore how policy is made by researching and discussing the energy bill. (Discussion will also highlight obfuscation in naming of bills and content.)

Discussion of alternative, sustainable sources. (Guest Speaker: Mia Devine, Wind Farm Field Trip.)

In the early 1980's, the United States accounted for 95 percent of the world's installed wind energy capacity. The U.S. share has since dropped precipitously; other countries have increased their capacity while U.S. capacity stagnated. According to *Wind Energy Developments: Incentives in Selected Countries*, the decline in the U.S. capacity share was due to a combination of economic factors and changes in government-sponsored support programs that impeded development of new capacity. We will research and discuss what happened and why.

This unit will provide ample opportunity for student research and student-led discussion of examples of successful conversion to sustainable energy alternatives from other parts of the world.

Unit 5: Ecological Design

“I believe we can accomplish great and profitable things within a new conceptual framework—one that values our legacy, honors diversity, and feeds ecosystems and societies . . . It is time for designs that are creative, abundant, prosperous, and intelligent from the start.” (McDonough 2001)

Regenerative processes are those that recover and renew their own sources of energy and materials through cyclical flowsⁱⁱ¹

Can we design human habitats that are sustainable and ultimately regenerative?

Much of what has been maligned in the current industrial paradigm of the global economy has to do with the conflict between industry and the environment. This unit will examine some possible solutions to that conflict, building on the idea that the conflict is merely the result of opportunistic design that grew out of the Industrial Revolution and what we knew at the time. While the IR produced huge gains in productivity and dramatic changes in quality of life for the industrialized world, as we now know its (some would say) unintended consequences have produced a host of environmental and social justice problems throughout the world. William McDonough and others offer a new design paradigm built on what we now know about the earth and employ “the intelligence of natural systems.” The ‘cradle to cradle’ design protocol evaluates the materials in products according to their characteristics within the desired application, and placed into one of four categories based on human health and environmental relevance criteria. After all materials are assessed, the materials in a product application are optimized by positively selecting replacements for chemicals characterized ‘X-list’ chemicals. (Those that should be phased out as soon as possible.) These include all known or suspected carcinogens, endocrine disruptors, mutagens, reproductive toxins, and teratogens and using ‘green’ materials as available.

(Readings from David Orr, Carol Franklin, John Lyle; Center for Regenerative Studies; Germany: roof gardens, non-obsolescence of “durable goods”.)

ⁱ www.nwhp.org/tlp/biographies/carson/carson-bio.html

ⁱⁱ www.calpolypomona.edu (*John T. Lyle Center for Regenerative Studies, Cal Poly, Pomona*)

DECONSTRUCTING AN AD

(Worksheet adapted from "Deconstructing an Alcohol Ad" Media Education Foundation, 60 Masonic Street, Northampton MA 01060, www.mediaed.org)

STEP 1: MAKE OBSERVATIONS

List five adjectives that describe the ad:

Where did you find the ad?

If on TV, during what type of program? _____

If on radio, what station and type of program? _____

If magazine, what type of magazine? _____

If newspaper, in what section? _____

Other? _____

How much do you think the ad cost?

If possible, find out about how much the ad cost

1. to make: _____

2. to run: _____

Does the medium in which you found the ad have any connections to the product being sold? (E.g., does the same company or one of its subsidiaries own both the product and the medium?)

Evaluate the ad's aesthetics:

What type of product is being sold? _____

How does it look? _____

Is the product placed prominently or does it blend into the scene?

What is the brand name?

Where does the name appear?

How many times do you see/hear the name?

Does the product have a slogan? _____ Is it familiar to you? _____

Are there people in the ad? _____ What gender(s)? _____

What ethnicity(ies) re represented? _____ What age(s)? _____

What aspects of the people are portrayed? (E.g., their sexuality, their lifestyle, their values.)

What do the people look like? (Old, young, sexy, etc.) _____

What role does the product play in what they are doing? _____

What feelings or emotions are being represented? _____

What is the tone of the ad? (funny, sarcastic, serious, etc.) _____

Does what the ad say differ from the scenario depicted? _____

What about lighting? Are certain parts of the ad/scene highlighted and others dimmed/shadowed? _____ If so, why do you think that is? _____

What colors are used? Black and white? Subdued/bright? _____

What effect does the coloration give? _____

Anything unusual about graphics? _____ Any animation? _____
If so, what do you think the advertiser is trying to accomplish by their use? _____

If the ad has audio, what does it sound like? _____
Is anyone speaking? _____ Who? _____ Who does not speak? _____
Does the ad have music? _____ Do you recognize it? _____
Why do you think the advertiser chose this music? _____
How does it affect you? _____

STEP 2: DETERMINE THE PURPOSE OF THE AD

(The purpose of any ad is always to sell something: a product/service/point of view, etc.)

What is being sold? _____
Is the "product" appealing to you? _____ Why or why not? _____

Who is the target for this ad? _____
Is it targeting a particular gender, age group, income bracket, other demographic? _____

What feelings or emotions is the ad attempting to attach to the product? _____

Do you think the ad does this successfully? _____ Why or why not? _____

STEP 3: DETERMINE THE ASSUMPTIONS THE AD MAKES AND THE MESSAGE IT SENDS

What assumptions does the ad make? _____
(E.g., couples are always heterosexual, the world is ethnically homogenous, men are only interested in sex, women are only interested in marriage, etc.)
Do you see any contradictions between what the message(s) suggest and reality? _____
What are the contradictions you see? _____

Are the ads assumptions/messages realistic? _____ Why or why not? _____

Does the ad send any messages about what we want or desire, how we feel about ourselves? _____
If so, do you really want what the ad says we do? _____
Why or why not? _____

STEP 4: CONSIDER THE CONSEQUENCES

Is the ad environmentally and/or socially responsible? _____ Why or why not? _____

What are some of the effects of the product that are not mentioned? _____

Tracking Purchases

The purpose of this activity is to facilitate the necessary shift from a culture of consumerism by helping us to focus on sustainability in our day-to-day activities. Even though most students have limited funds, in general, our buying power is often more than that of many entire families both within the United States and in other parts of the world. By tracking what we purchase and examining our motives for buying (peer pressure, advertising, distraction, feel better) we become more conscious consumers. The second part of this project will be to discuss what we buy that we could do without or obtain in other ways. The third part will be a group project researching the life cycle of one of the items on a group member's list and presenting the research to the class. An example of such a life cycle study is attached and illustrates some surprising facts: for example, a cell phone weighs only 7 ounces but making the 2 g. chip requires 80 g. of various chemicals, 70 lbs. Of water and 3.5 lbs. of fossil fuels. Note the cultural costs related to the mining of coltan, an integral part of cell phones. It is hoped that this combination of activities will help us find ways to do without, use recycled or re-engineered products and again make us better educated, more conscious consumers.

Step 1: Tracking your purchases.

List:

- the item;
- the date and time you bought it;
- where you bought it;
- why you bought it;
- how you were feeling before you bought it;
- how you felt after you bought it (immediately after);
- how you felt about the item a week or more after its purchase.

