

# FAIR 397Q: **Economics and Ecology:** **Emergent Approaches to Holistic Resource Management**

WINTER 2020, 4 credits

TUESDAY & THURSDAY | 2:00p to 3:50p, FAIR 326

INSTRUCTOR: Jessica Kristine Navedo; [navedoj@wwu.edu](mailto:navedoj@wwu.edu) | FACULTY SPONSOR: John Tuxill

OFFICE HOURS BY APPOINTMENT

## **COURSE DESCRIPTION**

How do humans organize systems for accessing, allocating, and distributing resources in many different social, cultural, and ecological contexts worldwide? How do these systems impact both living standards for people and ecological health? Through this course, we investigate ways to meet human needs and goals within the boundaries of Earth's living systems. We also address economic tensions inherent in issues of environmental and social governance. Via a combination of learning modalities (lecture, critical discussion, movement, small group work, visual media, reading) we will engage in dialectical conversation considering the pragmatic realities of Economics and the ecological boundaries we live within.

When Aristotle originally spoke of "economics", he was referring to management of the individual household. In a shallow sense, Economics as a discipline is currently understood as the management of scarce resources at local and global scales. Acknowledging the urgency of environmentally-related crisis in this class, we consider the impact of current Economic systems on Earth's "household", assuming an alternative lens to economic designs. This radical orientation considers the complex and interconnected nature of all things, working toward holistic frameworks and methodologies to approach global change with systems thinking skills.

This course culminates with a workshop and presentation experience. This is a collaborative space of idea generation, intended to ground emerging theoretical principles in real-world actions and goals which impact future sustainability in the design of ecologically-bound economic systems and global development.

This is not a conventional Economics course nor is it an Environmental Studies course, though both disciplines are investigated in the course curriculum.

## **REQUIRED COURSE MATERIALS**

The Core: The Economy (free eBook)

<https://core-econ.org/the-economy/>

Ancient Futures | by Helen Norberg-Hodge (2016)

ISBN 978-0692530627

Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist | by Kate Raworth (2018)

ISBN 978-1603586740

***Additional reading materials and instructional content can be found on Canvas***

***(<https://www.instructure.com/>). Some of these materials will require printing.***

## GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### Fairhaven's Mission

Fairhaven College of Interdisciplinary Studies cultivates student responsibility for designing and assessing learning through interdisciplinary inquiry, creativity, and scholarship. With an emphasis on justice, social and environmental responsibility, and cultural diversity, we challenge ourselves through active, innovative, and experiential learning to examine our choices, roles, and purposes in the world.

Our collaborative learning community is defined by five attributes:

- 1) Interdisciplinary inquiry, creativity, and scholarship
- 2) Student-designed studies and evaluation of learning
- 3) Examination of power and privilege in a diverse society
- 4) Development of leadership and social responsibility
- 5) Active, innovative, and experiential learning through small seminars and independent study

### Course Learning Objectives

Through engagement with this course, you will:

- Have the ability to critique neoclassical Economic approaches in a broad sense
- Understand how complex living systems function and how an economic approach toward resource management interplays with these systems
- Have the ability to identify if particular systems and solutions are within the capacity of a living planet
- Have completed a collaborative workshop generating ideas and innovative systems of resource management moving toward a thriving global future
- Possess the ability to discuss emerging economic approaches and tensions with current Economic theory

## REQUIREMENTS FOR CREDIT & GRADING CRITERIA

- 1) Complete all required readings and assignments prior to deadlines.** Each class session builds onto content assigned outside of class. In order to participate in class activities and discussions, readings and other assignments must be completed on schedule.
- 2) Participation in class discussion and activities.** This course is discursive and generative requiring a committed level of engagement. You are expected to approach the content with a curious and critical mind, contributing to class discourse.
- 3) Collaborative workshop participation.** Because collective problems require collaborative and diverse solutions, a main component of this course is a two-week workshop. Everyone is expected to engage the materials learned and apply these tools to real-world applications in a collaborative and creative manner as outlined in class.
- 4) Delivery of student presentations.** Workshops will support the development of student presentations to be delivered the last week of classes. Presentations may be individual or group, as specified in class based on level of enrollment and class composition.
- 5) Write a reflective essay.** Reflecting on the experience of the course, how the information has impacted your perspectives, and demonstrating an understanding of the core themes, complete a 6- to 8-page essay. Other modalities may be accepted if the level of synthesis and effort is appropriate.
- 6) Completion of a self-evaluation.** All Fairhaven courses require a self-evaluation for completion and credit receipt. Be sure yours is submitted to Web4U by the deadline.

### Ability

Please let me know how I can support your strengths in learning or if you have any needs that I should be aware of in order to attend to.

Disability resources and accommodations can be located through WWU's Disability Access Center located in Wilson Library 170.

<https://disability.wwu.edu/> | Phone: 360.650.3083 | VP: 360.255.7175 | Email: [drs@wwu.edu](mailto:drs@wwu.edu)

### ACADEMIC HONESTY

Western Washington University does not tolerate academic dishonesty. All students must be familiar with and apply to the [University's Academic Policies](#).

## **Week: 1 – Jan 7, 9 | The Science of Economics**

*Theme: conventional tools*

### Objective:

Basic understanding of Economics as a discipline.

### Overview:

What is “Economics” and what does it have to do with me? During this introductory week we observe an overview of neoclassical Economic theory through a series of brief presentations punctuated by readings from scripted economic actors and class discussion.

### Homework:

**Refer to Canvas for details.** Readings from The Core’s *The Economy* and watch *How The Economic Machine Works* by Ray Dalio. Reading responses to two current Economics articles.

*We will not gain mastery of these tools, but rather gain a sense of how they are used in Economic theory. Simplified versions of these tools will be used in class exercises.*

## **Week: 2 – Jan 14, 16 | Economics Systems**

*Theme: what systems are & how they work – basic mechanics*

### Objective:

Generalized understanding of how the most basic Economic systems are used to regulate economies. Introduction of the concept of a “system”.

### Overview:

How are Economic tools and ideas applied and how do they affect us? Our second week we step into the systems of neoclassical Economics, using in-class activities to interact with data through some of the defining tools most utilized by the discipline. Movement-based activities help us understand the way parts of systems interact and why certain tools of resource management are used to produce the objectives they are set on.

**CLASS NOTE: Jan 16, Dr. Craig Dunn from WWU’s College of Business and Economics may come in to conduct an exercise with our group.**

### Homework:

**Refer to Canvas for details.** Readings from The Core’s *The Economy*. Complete data exercises.

*We will not gain mastery of these tools, but rather gain a sense of how they are used in Economic theory. Simplified versions of these tools will be used in class exercises.*

## **Week: 3 – Jan 21, 23 | History and Power**

*Theme: historical events, critiques and noticing patterns*

### Objective:

Awareness of historic figures and critiques of their contributions and approaches. Ability to note patterns in history and approaches.

### Overview:

Who wrote the book on Economics, why, and for whom? We develop an awareness of the figures and contributions of Economics as a discipline including commonalities in approach. We consider a counternarrative

analysis to these significant contributions. A discussion of power dynamics domestically and internationally brings in a critical lens which emphasizes the systemic nature of Economic policy and how it impacts folks throughout the world.

**CLASS NOTE: Jan 21, Fairhaven's very own Jacob Malloy (student) will present on Marxism and power.**

Homework:

**Refer to Canvas for details. Homework should be completed prior to the date noted to support class content.**

Jan 21: Read and summarize historical vignettes of predominant figures from The Core's *The Economy* prior to class.

Jan 23: Read Intro and Chapter 2 from *Doughnut Economics*. Watch *Requiem for an American Dream*. **This full-length movie may be best accessible if we all meet and watch prior to class! Let the instructor know if there are accessibility issues (like \$\$\$)!**

## **Week: 4 – Jan 28, 30 | Systems Thinking and Deep Ecology**

Theme: living systems & trophic loops

Objective:

Introduction to complex systems, biological and ecological functions, trophic loops. Introduction of very basic systems thinking modalities. Early application of systems thinking to economic concepts.

Overview:

If neoclassical Economic systems are mechanical and limited in scope, how can we understand all the parts and relationships of a system in complexity? Are there models which make sense of these complex and interconnected dynamics?

We now move into more complex systems by looking at natural ecosystems and biology. By investigating the regenerative and interconnected qualities of living systems, we begin to understand ecological methods of resource management and move away from a mechanical worldview.

**CLASS NOTE: Jan 28 is an OUTDOOR DAY! We'll be in the Outback and Arboretum regardless of the weather! Possible guest presentation from Terri Kempton (Outback Farm Manager) on Permaculture.**

Homework:

**Refer to Canvas for details. Homework should be completed prior to the date noted to support class content.**

Jan 28: Read Chapters 1 and 4 in *Doughnut Economics*. Read wiki on Deep Ecology. Watch Staish Kumar video on Reverential Ecology. Watch Eisenstein and Mackenzie's video *Sacred Economics*.

Jan 30: Read selections from Leyla Acaroglu and produce conceptual models. Apply one model to a case example.

## **Week: 5 – Feb 4, 6 | Ancient Futures by Helena Norberg-Hodge**

Theme: People, Place, and the Narrow Scope of Development

Objective:

Awareness of indigenous ways of life and knowledge systems. An understanding of how a people embed into ecology and experience happiness and community. The impact of development on the lived experiences of non-Western populations. Awareness of negative impact of conspicuous consumption and modern lifestyles on all people and land, such as pollution and depression.

### Overview:

How does development improve living standards? How does development actually impact people? Are there ways of living that don't use the same norms and rules which provide benefits to people? The first two sections of *Ancient Futures* are a case example of indigenous Ladakhi people intimately embedded into the land they live with and illustrates a way of being positioned as a counterpoint to Westernized and colonialist experience. In this unit we use the story of the Ladakhi as an access point to understand different ways of being and organizing within a society. We will look at several cultures in a variety of landscapes, reflecting on how ecology interacts with the way people design themselves and their identities. We then move into how development has impacted various cultures.

### Homework:

**Refer to Canvas for details. Homework should be completed prior to the date noted to support class content.**

Feb 4: Read the first two-thirds of *Ancient Futures*. Read Chapters 1 and 2 of *Sacred Ecology* (on canvas).

Feb 6: Read Chapter 3 of *Doughnut Economics*.

## **Week: 6 – Feb 11, 13 | Ancient Futures and Doughnut Economics by Raworth**

*Theme: place-based development & introducing The Doughnut*

### Objective:

An awareness of how decentralized systems work with local communities to empower people and enhance their wellbeing. Understand the framework presented in *Doughnut Economics* and ability to apply this framework to community-based projects. Ability to use The Doughnut model to critique development efforts.

### Overview:

Can development be culturally-sensitive and place-specific? What is disrupted through development and how can living standard improvements be multidimensional, keeping cultures, ecologies, and identities intact and empowered? What are ways to design scalable systems that are healthy for people and the planet? Who has the power in any development effort and who does it serve, in what way?

The last section of *Ancient Futures* presents the concept of “counter-development” where the Ladakhi people have begun reclaiming their cultural identity with dignity and leading their own improvement projects drawing on their own indigenous technologies and modern appropriate technologies. A series of specific community-centered projects are described. This reading should be done before the week begins.

In class, the week will begin with an introduction to Raworth's Doughnut model and an outline of her seven points which create a framework for thinking about a new, alternative economic theory. We will use the community-led projects described in *Ancient Futures* to contextualize Raworth's framework.

### Homework:

**Refer to Canvas for details. Homework should be completed prior to the date noted to support class content.**

Feb 11: Read the last part of *Ancient Futures*, including the epilogue and afterword. Read and respond to *Anticolonial Strategies for the Recovery and Maintenance of Indigenous Knowledge* by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson.

Feb 13: Read Chapter 5 in *Doughnut Economics*. Watch Janine Benyus' TED Talk, *Biomimicry's surprising lessons from nature's engineers*.

## **Week: 7 – Feb 18, 20 | Doughnut Economics by Kate Raworth**

Theme: transitioning to a 21<sup>st</sup> Century Economics

### Objective:

Understand the concepts in *Doughnut Economics*, systems thinking/livings systems theory, biomimicry, and other models to the extent that they can be applied as conceptual tools to resources and organization management and design.

### Overview:

This week is a tool development and frameworks crash course. We will dig deeper into Raworth's Doughnut model through lecture, discussion, and class exercises and bring in more ideas about how to design within the parameters of the Earth from sources like Janine Benyus, Complex Movements, and social permaculture.

### Homework:

**Refer to Canvas for details. Homework should be completed prior to the date noted to support class content.**

Feb 18: Read Chapters 6 and 7 in *Doughnut Economics*.

Feb 20: Conduct superficial research online for "social permaculture" and write a 500-word summary and response. Watch Leyla Acaroglu's TED Talk, *Paper beats plastic? How to rethink environmental folklore*.

## **Week: 8 – Feb 25, 27 | Workshop**

Theme: rapid prototyping our imaginations

### Objective:

Application of course content to possible futures outside of current economic constraints.

### Overview:

Applying the learnings we've unlocked throughout this course thus far, we now move into a quick-paced rapid-prototyping week with four 45-minute sessions. The intention of this experience is to generate ideas that are imaginative and in-line with the principles found in the alternative economic perspectives we've engaged, working outside of the economic, cultural, and political constraints we're accustomed to.

### Homework:

**Refer to Canvas for details.** Research and develop ideas prototyped in class during workshop. Feed imagination and innovation by bringing new information or concepts to class!

**If you're not already, start working on your 6- to 8-page narrative essay due at the end of this course!**

## **Week: 9 – Mar 3, 5 | Workshop**

Theme: application & projects

### Objective:

Refining concepts generated in previous work.

### Overview:

Building on work from the previous week, we each select an idea (or generate a new one) which is grounded in a specific case – imagined, personally lived, or in the world now – and use class time and collaborative resources to develop, working toward class presentations. We have an eye on an ideal future reality AND are thoughtful about

tools such as community organizing, policy reform, industry innovation, etc. which may aid in transitioning to these imagined futures as realities.

Homework:

**Refer to Canvas for details.** Prepare presentations for the following week. This may include modeling, story writing, research, framework building, etc. Specifically think about the current state of the world and any obstacles to making project ideas feasible. Develop strategies to overcome obstacles. Alternatively, consider important questions to ask your audience about ways to overcome obstacles if this is unclear.

**Continue working on your 6- to 8-page narrative essay due at the end of this course!**

## **Week: 10 – Mar 10, 12 | Presentations**

*Theme: peer presentations – from theory to practice... or more theory?*

Objective:

Demonstration of an applied understanding of new economic concepts through the design of student projects and their presentation.

Overview:

Students will create presentations based on their work in our prior two weeks of workshopping. They will demonstrate an applied understanding of new economic concepts through the design of their projects.

**Presentation format will emerge from class dynamics and composition. These may be individual, group, or collective presentations. MAKE SURE YOU CHECK CANVAS AND ATTEND CLASSES! Ask questions if unclear!**

Homework:

Congratulations! You have a meaningful project presentation! And witness all the other great ideas from your peers! Now – go forth, spread the knowledge you’ve learned throughout the world and save the human species!

**Remember: 6- to 8-page narrative essays are due at midnight the last day class is held!**