

# Introduction to Ecological Economics

## SYLLABUS

This syllabus and supporting materials may be found at:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~gflomenh/VTLAW-EcoEcon/>

**Term:** Summer 2005, June 10-August 5

Class Hours: Fri, 9 AM – 12:00 PM

Office hours: Fri, 1-3 PM

**Instructor:** Gary Flomenhoft

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**Prerequisites:** None required. Some basic economics is useful.

### **Course Description:**

Conventional (neo-classical) economics assumes that the economy can continue to grow forever, that welfare is determined only by market goods, and that people always act selfishly. Ecological economics in contrast, starts from the understanding that the economy is a sub-system of the global environment, and subject to its bio-physical limits. In addition, human welfare is determined by many other factors besides market goods: friendship, love, status, rights, freedom, etc. Also human behavior is far more complex than simple self-interest. Ecological economics recognizes that the interactions between the human system and the global ecosystem cannot be understood from within the framework of any single discipline. Therefore ecological economics is a “transdiscipline” encompassing ecological, social, and economic perspectives.

### **Course Objectives:**

- Train students in the theory of ecological economics as it applies to society and the environment;
- Clarify the distinction between ecological economics and conventional economics;
- Apply the theory to real-life as you might apply it in your future work;
- Give you the opportunity to apply the theory to a real life problem of your choice during the course, to help you decide whether or not the theory is sound;

- Foster group work and research skills;
- Stimulate students to think outside the box, and question the conventional wisdom.

**Course Project and Assignments:**

In groups or individually, you will be asked to carry out a course project that will explain how in future careers as environmental attorneys you would use the concepts learned in the course to solve a real problem affecting your issues. The projects must address the three main themes in ecological economics:

- Scale-- the physical size of the economic system relative to the ecosystem that sustains it;
- Distribution— how are resources divided among individuals;
- Allocation—how are resources apportioned among different uses.

These concepts will be explained in detail during the course.

**Grading:**

Course project/Final paper 40%

3 Short Papers (scale, distribution, allocation): 20% each = 60%

Bonus for Class participation