

**Chesapeake Project: Integrating Sustainability Across the Curriculum**

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**FMSC 381: Families, Poverty, and Affluence  
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In this course requirement we focus on understanding the dynamics of socioeconomic status in the United States, including how social, historical, and economic patterns shape social policies – and how the creation of, and reaction to, such policies shape families' experiences with wealth and poverty. Students develop a critical perspective on socioeconomic dynamics, consider how culture and structure shape daily experiences of families, and examine their own experiences and perspectives on social class and family life. We use the core concepts of culture and structure to open up an exploration of emerging inequalities in the United States.

By integrating sustainability into the course, I would like to extend the reach of the course, to examine social, cultural, economic, and *environmental* domains – and how sustainability can serve as a new paradigm for understanding inequalities across families. For example, we address five key public goods – food, housing, education, jobs, and health. Consideration of sustainability can transform student understanding of each of these public goods. It can also challenge the accepted remedy of addressing inequality primarily through economic growth.

Specifically, I will redevelop the following course elements through integration of sustainability:

1. Application of poverty definition: Students will examine the effects of Hurricane Katrina, and the epidemic of obesity in Mississippi, to rework federal poverty guidelines, to include variations in household poverty due to bioregional practices and experiences.
2. Consumerism: Students will begin with a viewing of film *No Impact Man*, and relate the material to understanding of culture and structure, the triple bottom line, and cradle to cradle design of consumption goods. A discussion of globalization and inequalities will be related to sustainable family life – and call into question the process of growth to address gaps between wealth and poor.
3. Food: Students will explore food insecurity issues and how they differ by bioregions. They will discuss localvore options and new technologies to address food insecurity among families, such as vertical farming (and the provision of new jobs and redesigned community schools).
4. Jobs: Students will engage in a broad discussion of families and generational changes in jobs and infrastructure in Detroit and Chicago. They will read and consider green jobs initiatives (Van Jones) and issues of intergenerational inequity in boom towns.
5. Housing: To complement existing discussion of the Healthy Homes Initiative, students will further link the development of suburban sprawl and the push for family home ownership to a vision of a sustainable future.
6. Health: Students will examine differential access to housing, taking into account the impact of environmental degradation on disadvantaged families. Lecture, reading, and discussion materials will address air quality concerns, conversion of brownfields in urban communities, dumping of waste, and the tragedy of the “commons”, such as chemical dumping in Lake Michigan (and consequences for health within and across generations in local Michigan families).