



SOS 598 – Sustainability Decision Lab

(Cross-listed as ESS 598, HSD 598 and JUS 598)

Fall 2015 – 3 credit hours

Wednesday, 4:30 – 7:15pm, PSH 330

This graduate seminar integrates concepts and ideas from three different fields of scholarship – sustainability, complex systems and cognition – to explore the way individuals and groups think, feel, make decisions and behave in various contexts that are relevant for sustainability. While we touch upon various policy areas, climate change will be a central and recurring theme and case study. Students will learn about basic theories of cognition and complex systems that will allow them to understand the basic components and structure of belief systems. We will explore the importance of different kinds of belief system for decision-making at different levels of sustainability governance, from the individual to the global. Students will reflect on their own cognitive patterns and choices, and develop analytical skills that will enable them to identify and understand the belief systems of other people or groups. The course mixes lectures and class discussions with individual exercises and group decision-making games that offer experiential learning opportunities. Topics include rationality and emotion, coherence and cognitive dissonance, the temporality of choice, and dealing with issue complexity.

Assignments target introspective analysis of students' decision-making patterns and seek to hone skills required in a professional context, including offering strategic advice and policy-maker support.

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