

Focus the Nation Ecological Economics Teach-In on Climate Change

Tuesday, January 29, 2008

Sugar Maple Ballroom, Davis Center, University of Vermont

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

10:00 a.m. Welcome and introductory remarks
Jon Erickson (UVM faculty-Rubenstein School, Environmental Studies, and Gund Institute)

**10:15 a.m. Accounting for Climate Change:
Businesses Don't Manage What They Can't Count**

Panelists: Ida Kubiszewski (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources, session chair)
Allan Carpenter (UVM undergraduate student-Environmental Science)
Jennifer Johnson (UVM graduate student-Business Administration)
Steve Posner (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources)
James Barnes (UVM graduate student-Botany)
Marti Woodman (UVM faculty-Business Administration))

Synopsis: The status of environmental accounting methods and metrics and their application to current business accounting and reporting practices will be discussed by the panel. In addition, the application and possible integration of environmental accounting methods and metrics to current generally accepted accounting and reporting principles and procedures for business entities will be considered.

Questions: 1) What would the process of accounting for climate change look like for a business entity?
2) What does staying carbon neutral actually mean?
3) Should international standards for environmental accounting and reporting be developed?
4) Should social and human capital be incorporated with natural and built capital in a business entities balance sheet. If so, how would such resources be measured?
5) How would 'full' environmental cost accounting affect the prices of goods and services? If full costing was required by all business entities, how would this play out in national economies?
6) How would the public be informed about these new accounting and reporting mechanisms which would now include quantified (assuming they can be quantified) environmental costs and benefits?

11:00 a.m. Mitigation and Adaptation in a Warming Climate

Panelists: Ryan Salmon (UVM graduate student-Botany, session chair)
Laura Nagel (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources)
Michael Laramée (UVM graduate student-Business Administration)
Erin Haney (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources)
Paul Simonin (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources)
Gaby Mendoza (Visiting graduate student-Mexico)

Questions: 1) Carbon offsets are popular but are they a viable consumer solution?
2) Is the consumer insignificant in confronting climate change?
3) Can we retrofit unintentional communities without trampling the American dream?
4) How should responsibility for emissions be ascribed in climate change policy in Vermont?
5) How is the value of ecosystem services going to change with impacts of rising sea level?
6) Do we adapt as individual countries or as a whole world?

11:45 a.m. Designing Local Food Systems in Light of Global Climate Change:

Panelist: Chris Costello (UVM undergraduate student-Community & International Develop, session chair)
Dan Erickson (UVM graduate student-Plant & Soil Science)
Jesse Fleisher (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources)

Questions: 1) What is local?
2) What is the role of the consumer? Citizen? Food citizenship?
3) Can local food systems support communities?
4) What is the infrastructure currently in place? What still needs to be implemented in order to achieve the goal of local food systems?
5) What directions should/can communities take in order to improve or localize agricultural food systems?

**12:30 p.m. Beyond the Natural Resource Curse:
Community and Economy after the Extractive Industries**

Panelists: Mary Ackley (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources, session chair)
Samir Doshi (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources)
Katie Murphy (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources)
Saleem Ali (UVM faculty-Rubenstein School and Environmental Studies program)

Synopsis The exploitation of mineral resources inevitably results in environmental, social, and economic impacts from the local to the international level. Communities and governments throughout the world struggle to balance the need for economic growth with a desire for genuine development. Climate change is a direct result of the irresponsible exploitation of mineral stocks. How can we responsibly manage and invest the wealth from our finite mineral resources while planning for long term sustainable development?

Questions: 1) What is the role of government during and after the extractive industries?
2) How can community interactions with corporations be improved?
3) How do challenges encountered by mining communities compare between the developing world and the developed world?
4) How does environmental degradation resulting from mining impact the economy?
5) Corruption is one of the main problems associated with the resource curse and the mineral industry. What is currently being done to address corruption is it effective?

1:15 p.m. Behavior Change, Sustainable Consumption, and Rethinking Distribution of Local Foods

Panelists: Galen Wilkerson (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources, session chair)
Sara Mulford (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources)
Rachel Schattman (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources)
Katherine Kransteuber (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources)
Carl Etnier (Peak Oil Awareness)
Deb Sachs (10% Challenge)
Beth Sachs (Efficiency Vermont)
Stephanie Kaza (UVM faculty-Environmental Studies and Rubenstein School)

Synopsis: With the onset of climate change, it is increasingly necessary that consumer behavior be transformed to prioritize social, economic, and environmental sustainability. In order for individuals and communities to make informed responsible decisions to these ends, it is crucial that social patterns that encourage overconsumption, as well as methods that support sustainable lifestyles, be identified. Issues surrounding demand for and distribution of local food exemplify the characteristics of the greater challenge of changing behavior to limit the effects of climate change.

Questions: 1) What initiates behavior change oriented toward sustainable consumption?
2) On what levels are local food sourcing more sustainable than national or international food sourcing?
3) How does social context influence consumer behavior?
4) What alternatives are available to centralized distribution of food and how do they serve social needs?
5) What consumptive behaviors require the greatest level of transformation as we move toward more sustainable communities?

2:00 p.m. Renewable Energy Prospects: From Local to Global

Panelists: Katlyn Stillings-Morris (UVM graduate student-Plant & Soil Science, session chair)
Matt Peters (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources)
Nell Campbell (UVM graduate student-Natural Resources)
Netaka White (Executive Director-Vermont Biofuels Association)

Synopsis: This panel will consider a range of renewable energy issues, including local topics related to Vermont policy and the development of biofuels, as well as global topics related to clean development and large-scale bounds on energy consumption. The panel will be conducted in an open format to create a dialogue regarding future energy decisions at the local and global level.

Questions: 1) What are the ultimate limits on human energy consumption?
2) How can industrialized countries effectively aid the dissemination of clean energy in developing countries?
3) What is the potential for renewable energy development in United States agriculture?
4) What is the current state of biofuel development in Vermont?
5) How will Vermont incorporate renewable energy into the future?