

## Interdisciplinary Major Proposal: Social Justice and Sustainability

Jen Baker

In a world where an estimated 25,000 people die each day of hunger or hunger-related causes, it is only natural that something should be done to prevent the needless deaths of so many. Millions of people across the globe are fighting hunger on a daily basis, and unfortunately, short-term solutions often win out over long-term sustainable and healthy solutions. Short-term solutions include the degradation of the land, the introduction of calorie rich and nutrient poor foods, and other non-sustainable practices that contribute to the current global environmental crisis. Long-term sustainable solutions must be developed not only to preserve the integrity of the environment but also to provide the underprivileged with healthy and nutrient rich food sources. I plan to dedicate my life working at the intersection of environmental sustainability and working to provide the underprivileged with healthy food sources. Because these concerns are inherently interdisciplinary and are best addressed by coursework primarily in the humanities (religion, philosophy, and history) and in the social sciences (politics and sociology), I would like to create an interdisciplinary major entitled Social Justice and Sustainability. The committee for my interdisciplinary will include Dr. Capek and Dr. McDaniel, with Dr. Capek being the committee head.

Heifer International is an international not-for-profit organization that uses social, cultural, economic, political, and ecological methods in poverty ridden communities to create a system of plant and animal production practices that satisfy by human food needs and the needs of the environment. It is my hope that with a Social Justice and Sustainability major, I will have the educational background to contribute to the efforts of organizations similar to Heifer International in order to address the national and international food crisis with sustainable

practices I intend to create the foundation for the educational background through taking social/cultural courses, economic/political/historical courses, and ecological courses. Furthermore, I intend to supplement my interdisciplinary major through studying abroad with the International Sustainable Development Studies Institute based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, which is accredited through Kalamazoo College in Michigan. My coursework with the International Sustainable Development Studies Institute will provide me with a hand on understanding of the economic and political policies that influence the ecological integrity of agrarian societies of the underprivileged within Thai society. Lastly, I hope to strengthen my major through the undertaking of an internship for a semester of my senior year at an organization similar to Heifer International or the Delta Garden Study. My participation in an internship will serve as the foundation for my senior capstone experience and for my senior thesis which will be a 15-20 page paper detailing my experiences and their relation to social justice and sustainability within the modern world. Dr. Capek will grade my senior thesis.

I believe that an interdisciplinary major in Social Justice and Sustainability, will contribute to an educational background required for working with organizations similar to Heifer International. Furthermore, an interdisciplinary major in Social Justice and Sustainability will set the foundation for my pursuit of a graduate degree in Sustainable Food Systems.

**Major Requirements: (13 Courses)***Social and Cultural Cluster:*

- Sociology 390: Social Inequality and Identity
- Religion 270: Eco-theology: Religion, Animals, and Earth
- Sociology 270: Racial and Ethnic Minorities
- Anthropology 327: Human Rights and Social Justice in Latin America
- Sociology 340: Food, Culture, and Nature
- Anthropology 230: Cultures of US-Mexico Borderlands

*Economic/Political/ Historical Cluster:*

- Politics 260: Political Economy
- Politics 326: International Human Rights

Politics 365: Topics: Agriculture, Natural Resources, and Sustainability

History 310: The Iraq War

History 341: The Arab-Israeli Conflict

*Ecological Cluster (taken at the International Institute for Sustainable Development)*

Ecology 300: Political Ecology of Forests: Upland People and Natural Resources

Ecology 300: Agroecology: Social and Biological Factors in Sustainable Agriculture

Ecology 300: Culture and Ecology of the Andaman: Islands, Reefs and Mangroves

*Senior Capstone Experience:*

Senior Thesis and Internship: Internship with an organization similar to Heifer international or Delta Garden Study

**Committee:**

 Dr. Stella Capek

 Dr. Jay McDaniel