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Environmental Sustainability, Social Justice, and Spiritual Fulfillment
Speech – SPC 1017

Reflections & Lesson Ideas Based on
Earth Ethics Institute/College Training and Development Symposium –
CTD#4807a [Awakening the Dreamer Symposium](#)

I would like to propose that in one of my SPC 1017 classes next semester, I experiment with two different lessons that can be bridged together: 1) I would focus one unit—The Informative Speech—on Environmental Sustainability, but with the added emphasis on the balanced material that was shared at our recent Awakening the Dreamer Symposium. This would include topics drawing upon the Environment, Social Justice and Spiritual Fulfillment as three interdependent, interweaving branches of Sustainability. And, 2) I would follow this up toward the end of the semester with a final journal assignment in which students would integrate their understanding—by encouraging them to do an action/reflection project—entitled Personal Engagement & Communication.

The Symposium's mission is to "bring forth an environmentally sustainable, spiritually fulfilling and socially just human presence on Planet Earth." That's a mouthful. How to invite students to learn more about this? Often times, sustainability is treated as a separate domain, with an emphasis on the environment. And social justice is treated as a separate domain, with an emphasis on civic fairness and social equality. And spirituality—well, in my experience it's usually not dealt with well in education and college classes because, perhaps, it often gets confused with religion and the prickly concerns of public education together with separation of church & state.

My goal in creating this unit in SPC 1017 would be to give students a chance to understand better the interdependency of these three domains—Environmental Sustainability, Social Justice, and Spiritual Fulfillment. How to do this?

I would start out by discussing "Where are we?" and "How did we get here?"—Two of the early stages of the Symposium. I would refer to this as "the old dream." Then, I would invite students to research and discuss "What's possible for the future?" and "Where do we go from here?" This is the area of preparing the ground for the assignment that will be crucial in order to create an honest motivation on the part of students to research and discover new information. Some topics that students could research would be—Earth Charter, Bhutan Gross Happiness, Sweden Goes Green, Debt Forgiveness, Corporate Social Responsibilities, and Microcredit Financing. [These topic ideas, and many others that I am presenting here, are found on the website— www.awakeningthedreamer.org .] I would emphasize that the "new dream emerging" shares the following common qualities: "community, collaboration, life enhancing, Earth honoring." This, hopefully, will be a key for the students that will guide their research and inform their understanding of the interdependency that I mentioned above. So, if students select an environmentally oriented topic to research, I would ask them also to consider—as a related index—say, on a 1 -10 scale, how this same topic could also be seen as a social justice concern or a spiritual concern. Similarly, if students select a social justice concern, I would ask them to consider how this might impact environmental or spiritual concerns. Similarly, if they selected spirituality as a focus for their research, I

would ask them to consider how this might impact the environment and social justice realms. Other topic suggestions could include the following: Spiritual Revival (Noetic Sciences), Meditation, Spiritual Practices; the Re-localization Movement; and WISER Projects (World Index for Social & Environmental Responsibility)—connecting civil society, with private sector, and government, “working together to solve social & environmental problems.” [Again, this information is drawn from the Symposium’s website.]

Lots of new information could be unearthed by students, and brought to the class by way of their Informative Speech Topics, sharing source material, and estimating the triangle effect of our Interdependent Threesome--Environment with Social Justice and Spiritual Fulfillment. We would present these as Three Relationships: 1) Relationship with Earth & Environmental Sustainability; and 2) Relationship with Others/Community/Social Justice—and CSO groups (Civil Society Organizations) could be researched—for example, NGO’s, Trade Unions, Faith-based organizations, Indigenous People’s Movements, Foundations & Service Organizations doing good deeds, e.g. Kiva.org. Finally, with regard to the third area--3) Relationship with Self/Spiritual Fulfillment,--I believe this I would save for their last journal, a focus on Personal Engagement and Communication.

In this portion of their work, I would like to bridge the information the students shared via their Research and Informative Presentations with now, toward the end of the semester, their experiment in Communication Skills and Personal Engagement. Here, I would encourage students (and myself) to take small steps that could lead to bigger steps in the future. I would ask students to develop, over a two week period perhaps, practices that “delight, satisfy, and inspire” [taken from website]. I would ask that students observe interconnections, dreams, conversations, any activities that help them to personally practice the “choices in our lives”-- creating new practices that could be performed daily—“actions that would be consistent with creating a sustainable, fulfilling, and just human presence on Earth.” This principle would guide the students’ final Journal. These choices, these activities, would contribute to their reflections & engagement--ways in which they are enhancing their communication skills plus facilitating the “new dream” to emerge: they would be living then with more understanding of how to create a more sustainable environment, socially just community, and spiritually fulfilled life.

[Note there are many examples of activities that could be performed and reflected upon; these are provided by the handout we received at the Symposium—entitled “Daily Practices”—and there are many found as well on the Symposium’s website under Personal Practices.]

Addressing MDC Learning Outcomes 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10.