

**NR 5884 Sustainability Case Studies**  
Offered: Spring Semester

**INSTRUCTOR:** Andrew Perlstein, PhD, [asp789@vt.edu](mailto:asp789@vt.edu)

**REQUIRED TEXT:** No required text—all readings will be provided by the instructor.

**SUGGESTED TEXT:**

Yin, R. K. 2013. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (\$43.70 paperback, \$41.52 ebook)  
ISBN: 978-1452242569

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:**

This course will use two different versions of the “case study” concept. Teaching case studies present a story and a collection of facts, often based on a real-world situation. We will work through a series of such cases set in a variety of locations across the globe, as a vehicle for discovering key themes related to complex sustainability challenges. At the same time, we will think about case studies as an approach to looking at sustainability topics closer to home. Examining our own neighborhoods, cities, and regions, can provide insights into the challenges of sustainability on a global scaled. Each student will investigate the place where s/he lives and use the information gathered to develop a case study illustrating an important aspect of sustainability. This class provides opportunities to: learn from and draw upon insights from the perspectives and experiences of fellow students and to practice creative thinking, writing, and research skills as we analyze their communities’ connection and interaction with natural resource systems, such as water, food and agriculture, climate, and energy.

**COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING:**

After the first week, we will divide the rest of the semester into two-week segments. During each two-week segment, you will have two main assignments: 1) to read one of six case studies and discuss in small groups and 2) to prepare a short essay in which you reflect on and investigate a sustainability topic in the town, city, or region where you live or work. In addition to these two assignments, there are two other assignments to complete during the semester. The first is to write brief summaries of two published research articles (a selection of articles will be available on Scholar). The second is an end-of-semester project in which you have the chance to build on one of the essays you wrote earlier in the course.

Grades will be computed on the following basis:

Case Study Discussion	30%
Essays and Academic Paper Reviews	30%
Project	30%
Feedback to classmates	<u>10%</u>
Total	100%