

Sustainability & International Standards

In the past decade, standards have assumed new prominence as an essential part of international commerce and the process of globalization. Many view the WTO, a relatively young institution, as one of the greatest engines of change today. The primary tools of this change are international standards. Some view the change as progress; others view the change as catastrophic. Regardless of your perspective, it is critical to understand the hidden life of international standards, how & why they are created, and their implications for sustainable development.

If you have ever tried to install a new piece of hardware on a computer only to be told that "it won't work with your system," tried to screw an American standard bolt into a hole with metric threads, or stared at a recipe while trying to figure out how many milliliters are in one third cup, you know the frustration of non-standardization. Standards affect all areas of life from the minute details of tasks such as cooking and shopping to global investments. It is difficult to imagine a sophisticated society without standards.

This course reviews the role of standards in the global economy and their potential impact on sustainable development. This is a survey course intended for graduate students. Although the course is primarily intended for students in the fields of environmental management, international studies, and business, it is available to any graduate student interested in this field of study, for example, law students, political science, and industry-sector specific programs. It is intended to provide graduate students with a broad understanding of the cross-functional and interdisciplinary issues associated with standards, the process of standardization and global governance.

READING REQUIREMENTS:

All required reading assignments will be available electronically. Additional recommendations for reading may be made as appropriate to Projects.

- Form and Style for ASTM Standards, "Blue Book" (PDF); last update 04/03;
http://www.astm.org/COMMIT/Blue_Book.pdf
- Regulations Governing ASTM Technical Committees or "Green Book" (PDF); last update 06/03; <http://www.astm.org/COMMIT/Regs200204.pdf>
- The WTO in Brief;
http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/inbrief_e/inbr00_e.htm
- WTO legal texts (emphasis on Technical Barriers to Trade);
http://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/legal_e.htm#tbt
- *Standardization in a Global Marketplace: Process and Implications.*
- *The Multilateral Trade System: A Development Perspective.*
- *Highlights of the Standards Setting Process in Five Example Bodies; diagrams.*
- *Trade, Gender and Poverty.*
- *The Global Governance of Trade as if Development Really Mattered.*

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PAPERS:

Papers will be developed individually; estimate 1000 words. Individuals will be assigned an industry sector topic. Papers shall present an overview of the global market relative to the topic. Papers should discuss the topic in terms of aspects of sustainability (i.e. economic, environmental, social). Papers should include an executive summary and appropriate references/notations. It is expected that the projects will be of significant quality, and worthy of publication in a national or international standards publication.

Industry Sector Topics are as follows:

Agriculture, with an emphasis on:

- Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)
- Fair Trade
- Traditional Practices

Consumer Products, with an emphasis on:

- Labeling

Healthcare, with an emphasis on:

- Precautionary Principle
- Traditional Knowledge
- Toxicogenomics

Finance & Corporate Management, with an emphasis on:

- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Investment Screens for SRI
- Corporate Governance (e.g. Transparency of Organizations)
- Privacy of Individuals
- Real Progress Indicators (RPI vs GDP)

Energy, with an emphasis on:

- Climate Change
- Green Power
- Disaster Preparedness and Response

Water, with an emphasis on:

- Watershed Assessment & Monitoring
- Water Stewardship (management)
- Disaster Preparedness and Response

PROJECTS:

Projects will be developed individually. Individuals will be assigned an industry sector topic consistent with Paper Topic. Projects shall develop the following:

- PART 1. Identify existing standards and Standards Development Organizations (SDOs), if any relative to the topic; indicate the SDO and the SDO process, summarize the scope of each standard, and provide an assessment of the appropriateness of the standard in terms of its contribution to sustainable development. Discuss/organize standards in terms of aspects of sustainability.
- PART 2. Draft a standard relative to the topic in support of sustainable development.
- PART 3. Identify key stakeholders; prepare statement for each indicating who they are and why their expertise is appropriate. Indicate how their expertise is pertinent to each of the aspects of sustainability.