

# What Do We Owe the Future?

Friday, September 30, 2005  
2:00–3:00 pm (refreshments at 1:45 pm)  
LSE 104



## BRYAN NORTON

Professor of Philosophy, School of Public Policy, Georgia Tech

With so much poverty and so many social problems in the present, why worry about the future until we can care for present needs?

Economist Robert Solow, defines this challenge as the “paradox of sustainability”: “Today’s poor want consumption and not investment. So the conflict is pretty deep and there is unlikely to be any way to resolve it.” Does acting sustainably, and encouraging others to act sustainably, conflict with the obligations of intragenerational equity—equity for the poor and downtrodden of today? A new way of looking at intergenerational equity is proposed, based on the “community-performative” understanding of sustainability commitments.

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Norton’s research focuses upon intergenerational equity, sustainability theory, biodiversity policy, and valuation methods. His specialty is the integration of spatio-temporal scaling considerations into sustainability criteria. His research topics include: intergenerational impacts of policy choices on endangered-species policy, sustainability theory, and cultural

aspects of environmental protection. He also investigates socioeconomic impacts of global climate change for the US Forest Service Global Change Program and has several NSF-sponsored projects on biodiversity policy. Norton’s latest book, to be published this fall, is: *Sustainability: A Philosophy of Adaptive Ecosystem Management* (University of Chicago Press).

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For more information, call 480-965-2975 or go to <http://sustainable.asu.edu>.



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