



In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy
Erica Berejnoi Bejarano

Will defend her prospectus

**Spirituality as the Missing Link between Sustainability and Happiness:
A Framework and Tools for Holistic Sustainability**

Predominant sustainability pedagogy and science focus on fixing existing problems using solutions external to humans (e.g. carbon sequestration, renewable energy). While important, external interventions are not enough to promote sustainability. A thriving and sustainable environment should focus first on prevention of unsustainability as a first step toward sustainability. I suggest that such an effort will require a shift of values from the inside out that promotes spirituality. I define spirituality as the experience and process of five integrated factors: mindfulness, awareness, connection, compassion, and love.

This dissertation prospectus draws on three fields: spirituality, sustainability, and happiness. I propose three studies: (1) the development of a theoretical framework, (2) the development of a toolkit of contemplative practices to promote spiritual growth and sustainable behavior, and (3) an applied case study. In the first paper, I propose a theoretical framework, supported by an extensive literature review, that identifies spirituality as the missing link between sustainability and happiness. The second proposed study is the development of a toolkit of contemplative practices that cultivate the five facets of spirituality to promote both happiness and sustainable behavior. The toolkit will be developed using (1) a literature review, (2) personal experiences, and (3) participant observations and interviews with practitioners in Phoenix, AZ; Costa Rica; and Bolivia. The final proposed study is the application and assessment of the toolkit in a class in the fall of 2019. For 16 weeks, students will participate in reflective and contemplative practices as well as have a weekly intention. Assessments will come in the form of surveys and open-ended interviews. Analysis will come in the form of regression analysis and qualitative content analysis.

Through these studies, my goal is to (1) demonstrate that promoting the five facets of spirituality in the classroom has the potential of influencing happiness and sustainable behavior; (2) positively impact the lives of students using contemplative practices; and (3) add a new voice to the growing discourse that sustainability requires both inner and external interventions to be lasting and beneficial for all, which has the potential to impact sustainability pedagogy.

Tuesday, April 16, 2019
2:00 PM
Wrigley Hall, Room 323

Faculty, students, and the public are invited.

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Scott Cloutier
Dr. Rohana Ulluwishewa
Dr. Mary Margaret Fonow
Robin Afinowich