*Water, Agriculture, and Sustainability Module*

Unit 1.2 > Activity 1.2a

**Reading Assignment and Online Discussion of Readings – What is Sustainability in the Context of Water?**

Activities by Robert Turner – 2016

Summary

This document provides context and guidance for Activity 1.2a – Reading Assignment and Online Discussion of Readings for What is Sustainability in the Context of Water? Following a short list of learning objectives, there is a reading list with active URLs and prompts for an online discussion of the readings.

Context

These activities enhance the critical thinking and communication skills of the students and helps them develop an understanding of the concepts of sustainability and sustainable development. It impresses upon them that there is a social movement to tackle the big challenges that face human civilization, one that they can participate in. After the bad news of the previous sub-unit, this unit demonstrates that there are proactive, hopeful visions for our future. However, the readings and activity also highlight how sustainability is a highly contestable concept that bucks the status quo.

Learning Goals

Participation in Activity 1.2a should help students advance in achievement of the following learning objectives:

1. Discuss how pursuing different sustainable development ideals can affect our future with regard to water resources.
2. Demonstrate improved ability to compare, synthesize, and assess multiple perspectives.

Activity 1.2a Instructions for Instructors – (Activities Take Place Outside of Class)

A. Assign the following readings to be completed prior to class.

* Hoopes, D (2004). Sacred Water. *Fisheries Magazine*, Vol. 29(5), 5p.
* Gleick, P, Gomez, S, Loh, P, and Morrison, J (1995). Ch. 3 Water and Sustainability, in California Water 2020: A Sustainable Vision. Pacific Institute. Pp. 23-28. <http://pacinst.org/app/uploads/2013/02/ca_water_2020_ch_1_43.pdf>

B. Host an Online Discussion of the readings.

This activity allows for a discussion that would take too long in class and it provides the less voluble students a venue to share their thoughts. It also provides a carrot/stick to foster better reading and thus preparation for the upcoming class.

Here is an example discussion prompt:

“After completing the readings, respond to 2 of the four questions below.

1. How does a concern for sustainability reflect a concern for ethics?
2. In what ways is sustainability a *contestable or debatable* concept?
3. What does the article Sacred Water have to do with sustainability?
4. What factors do you think are most important in promoting greater water sustainability?

4 points for posting a thoughtful or provocative response to one of these questions, or something else that is relevant. 5 points for doing that and responding to someone else's post.