

Lesson Week 1 – Introductions / Studying Online

Welcome to Systems Thinking!

Systems thinking, as presented in this course, consists of two main themes:

- A view of how the world works that draws on knowledge from the study of its complexity and interdependency how it affects all sorts of behavior.
- Thinking and management tools to improve our navigation of that world.

Because the themes are closely related, understanding in each depends partly on a grasp of the other. For this reason the course is structured to alternate instruction in each theme week by week, to gradually build understanding in stages that build on previous lessons.

The syllabus, briefly outlined by week:

1. **Introductions / Studying Online**
2. **Why Systems Thinking?**
3. **A Systems Thinker's view of how the world works**
4. **Visualizing Our Mental Models - Mind Maps**
5. **Complex Systems Science vs. Reductionist Science**
6. **Feedback Causality**
7. **Probing The Boundaries Question**
8. **Systems Archetypes**
9. **A Method Of Systems Thinking Practice**
10. **Working with Simulation Models**
11. **Systems Thinking Applied to Sustainability**
12. **Introduction to System Dynamics Simulation**
13. **Systems Thinking Practice**
14. **Holistic Management**

Important concepts. Terms in the lectures are **bolded** when they are important concepts that we will often use repeatedly as a foundation to build on in later lectures.

Submissions of Discussion Questions and Assignments. In order to facilitate meaningful learning in this course, the process of submitting work for evaluation will follow a different format. My exchanges with you, through evaluating multiple drafts, is the actual learning process here.

So I encourage you to submit by Wednesday first attempts of the assigned learning activities for that week - both discussion postings and assignments, even if you think they may still need refinement. I'd like you to expect to have revisions - there is no penalty for mistakes in these early drafts!

I value your learning (and mine) as a result of repeated attempts/drafts as necessary to do an activity, and will grade accordingly. Therefore, it's safe to say that an earlier submission is more likely to improve your grade than submitting once at the end of the week. So, please look at this as a valuable process and I look forward to working with you - here's to the challenge!

Discussion Forum Requirement. When you have read through a week's lesson, **in those weeks without an assignment or discussion activity**, post a short comment to the class discussion forum that relates some point or concept presented in the lesson material to something in your personal experience. Address the personal relevance of the content: Did anything in the lesson resonate or contrast with something in your personal experience? This will help you think about the material, and the sharing of your thoughts may help everyone engage with the material and hopefully generate useful discussion.

Any problem of access to online assigned readings or other resources can be solved by switching browsers from Firefox to Chrome. Vensim modeling software needed in the course is available at <http://vensim.com/free-download/>.