

# COLUMBIA SPECTATOR ARCHIVE

Columbia Daily Spectator, Volume CXXIX, Number 74, 9 September 2005 — Big-Name Profs Draw Large Crowds  
[ARTICLE+ILLUSTRATION]

## Big-Name Profs Draw Large Crowds

By Taylor Walsh  
*Spectator Staff Writer*

Despite the 8:45 a.m. start time, promises of heavy reading, and the fact that the course fulfills no major requirements, 833 Mudd was packed with interested students Wednesday morning.

Seniors and freshmen alike crowded the aisles and sat on all available floor space of Jeffrey Sachs' Challenges of Sustainable Development course, his first at Columbia designed for undergraduates.

Sustainable development is the relatively new discipline that a 1987 United Nations report defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own

needs," and which is at the core of the Earth Institute, which Sachs heads. Sustainable development is a highly interdisciplinary field that approaches problem-solving from political, economic, scientific, and social angles.

"Sustainable development is a way to think about complicated problems through a broader understanding of interconnections among seemingly disparate paradigms," Sachs said.

This lecture's format is based on courses Sachs teaches in the Ph.D program, but he does not require students to have a scientific or technical background. "Discussions within an undergraduate class can still be on a very high level," Sachs said. "The biggest difference between this class and one for doctoral students is that

my goal is to present the issues and debates surrounding sustainable development, not train professionals for future research in the field.”

One hundred thirty-five students are listed as registered on CourseWorks, and Sachs refused to put a cap on the much-anticipated class.

When asked why she decided to enroll, Fernanda Diaz, CC '09, said, “It wasn’t a decision, it was more of a necessity. I changed my entire schedule—University Writing, Lit Hum, dropped my language—because there was absolutely no way I would miss this opportunity. I’m a gigantic idealist, and idealists are always pushed aside because they don’t take action. But Jeffrey Sachs is

the idealist with a plan in the world we live in today, and he amazes me.”

Sachs, formerly of Harvard University, joined the Columbia faculty in 2002 as the director of the Earth Institute and a professor in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, SIPA, and the Mailman School of Public Health. He has served as an economic adviser to governments throughout the world and the United Nations, and was named one of *Time Magazine's* 100 Most Influential World Leaders in 2005.

Though Sachs is widely considered to be one of the world's leading economists, students were not intimidated about taking the class.

“He seems very personable. The class experience was a lot more intimate. He connected with everyone. He was very engaging,” said Maya Koenig, CC '09.

“My lectures leave open lots of opportunity for discussion, I want to know what the students think,” Sachs said.

Sachs said he plans to keep the conversation topical, using current examples like Hurricane Katrina, the AIDS epidemic, and the rise of international poverty to teach students to approach problems systematically and from multiple angles.

“It's a different way of thinking and can be challenging but also very rewarding,” he said.

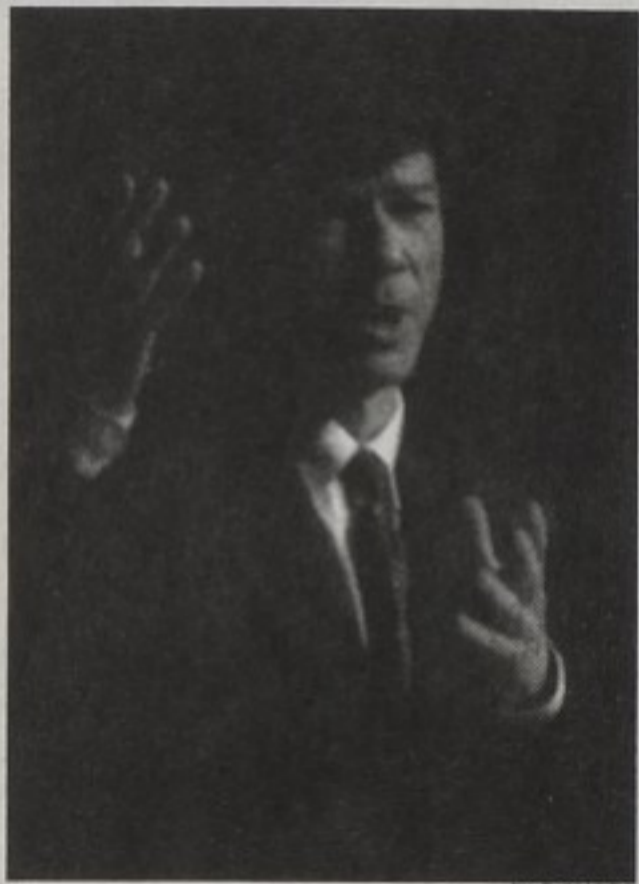
As students poured out of the classroom after the first lecture, a general air of excitement was palpable. Sachs shared his students' enthusiasm.

“When Dean Quigley proposed that I teach an undergraduate course, I jumped at the chance. I'm really excited to be doing it, I think it's going to be great,” he said.

Sachs is not the only big-name professor teaching undergraduates this semester. University Provost Alan Brinkley, a perennial favorite with undergraduates in the history department prior to his ascension to that position, will return to teaching this semester with a lecture on America Since 1945. University Professor Joseph Stiglitz, former chief economist for the World Bank and economic adviser to the Clinton administration, will be co-teaching a section of the freshman-heavy Principles of Economics.

"I'm really happy I'm in this class," said Jon August, CC '09, as he left the first of Stiglitz's lectures. "I'm really excited that I get to go to lectures with a guy who is one of the forefront figures for economics in the world ... and he's teaching Economics 101. Yeah, it's gonna be difficult, but it's an amazing experience."

—*Sadia Latifi contributed to this report*



FILE PHOTO

**Jeffrey Sachs, the head of the Earth Institute, is teaching an undergraduate course on sustainable development.**