

Course Specifications

Valid in the academic year 2018-2019

Politics of sustainability (H002013)

Course size (nominal values; actual values may depend on programme)

Credits	5.0	Study time	150 h	Contact hrs	45.0 h
---------	-----	------------	-------	-------------	--------

Course offerings and teaching methods in academic year 2018-2019

A (semester 2)	Dutch	group work	12.5 h
		microteaching	5.0 h
		lecture	27.5 h

Lecturers in academic year 2018-2019

Paredis, Erik	PS03	lecturer-in-charge
Block, Thomas	PS03	co-lecturer

Offered in the following programmes in 2018-2019

	crdts	offering
Linking Course Master of Science in Social Work and Social Welfare Studies	5	A
Preparatory Course Master of Science in Social Work and Social Welfare Studies	5	A

Teaching languages

Dutch

Keywords

Sustainable development, Sustainability transitions, Ecological footprint, Social justice, Climate, Sustainable cities, Critical policy analysis, post-positivism

Position of the course

This course aims at introducing students in the complex field of sustainability thinking. Sustainable development has been put forward as an attempt to bridge the gap between environmental concerns about the increasingly evident ecological consequences of human activities (climate change, biodiversity loss,...) and sociopolitical concerns about human development issues (financial & economic crisis, North-South divide). This course will approach sustainable development as a central political issue for the following decades and from a broad post-positivistic perspective on science and 'critical policy analysis' more in particular.

Contents

The lectures will present evolutions, theories, concepts and analytical frameworks to identify and analyse the political significance of socio-ecological sustainability challenges as well as the political implications of possible solutions. In a group writing assessment, students will be asked to apply this theoretical perspective in analysing a specific, self-selected sustainability issue.

In a first step, the lectures will introduce the basic concepts and perspectives (e.g. Brundtland, UN / Rio, Ecological modernization, OECD, Limits to Growth, Factor four, Ecological Economics, Environmental Justice, Degrowth, etc.) as well as the most widely used analytical frameworks for sustainability (a.o. the various schools of thought in sustainable transition discourse: Rotmans, Geels, Grin). Dealing with sustainability issues such as climate change, circular economy, science and technology, sustainable food, we focus on political questions of power, interests, values, democracy, policy and governance. A cross-cutting theme pertains to the question whether the current political-economic-technological regime presents an adequate perspective of dealing with sustainability issues or if rather a fundamental reorientation is needed. And whose sustainability counts?

In the group writing assessment, small groups of maximum 5 students will be asked to analyse the discourses of a current sustainability issue (a list of suggestions will be available). In a first step, each group presents a brief research proposal together with

a focus and timing. Interim results will be summarised in a draft paper that is presented to and discussed with the lecturers (and their research group collaborators). Following this mid-term feedback and evaluation round, a final group paper (max. 6000 words) is presented to lecturers and colleague students. Besides this mid-term evaluation round, if needed students can request further feedback throughout the whole writing process. If relevant, common difficulties encountered in this group writing assessment may be taken up and discussed further in the lectures.

Initial competences

None

Final competences

- 1 Students understand the central concepts, main perspectives and analytical frameworks of sustainability and know how to apply them.
- 2 Students can present and discuss major socio-ecological sustainability challenges.
- 3 Students can present a substantiated judgement with regards to a sustainability issue.
- 4 Students have an understanding of the political dimension of sustainability issues.
- 5 Students can identify and analyse political implications of sustainability issues.
- 6 Students are capable of translating socio-ecological sustainability challenges into clear questions of political relevance.
- 7 Students will gain experience in dealing with the complexity of a sustainability issue (i.e. climate change).
- 8 Students will be able to properly present and report on discourses of sustainability issues.

Conditions for credit contract

Access to this course unit via a credit contract is determined after successful competences assessment

Conditions for exam contract

This course unit cannot be taken via an exam contract

Teaching methods

Group work, lecture, microteaching

Learning materials and price

Lectures (no costs):

- Dutch or English publications of lecturers or other authors (downloadable through Minerva prior to the lecture).
- Slides of lecturers (downloadable through Minerva prior to the lecture).
- Students' personal lecture notes.

Group writing assessment:

- Relevant scientific publications are to be gathered by the students themselves (Library, Internet,...).

References

Following publications are recommended, but not required:

- DALY, H., FARLEY, J. (2011, 2nd ed.), Ecological Economics: Principles and Applications. Washington: Island Press.
- DRYZEK, J.S. (2005), The Politics of the Earth. Environmental discourses. Second Edition. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
- GRIN, J., ROTMANS, J., SCHOT, J. (eds.) (2010), Transitions to Sustainable Development. New Directions in the Study of Long Term Transformative Change. New York: Routledge.
- HULME, M. (2009), Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction and Opportunity. Cambridge University Press.
- MARTINEZ-ALIER, J. (2002), The Environmentalism of the Poor. A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- MEADOWS, D., RANDERS, J., MEADOWS, D. (2004), Limits to Growth: the 30-year up-date. Chelsea Green Publ.
- WCED/United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development (1987), Our Common Future. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.

Course content-related study coaching

Mid-term oral evaluation of group writing assessment.
Extra consultation is possible by appointment.

Evaluation methods

end-of-term evaluation and continuous assessment

Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the first examination period

Written examination with open questions

Examination methods in case of periodic evaluation during the second examination period

Written examination with open questions

Examination methods in case of permanent evaluation

Assignment

Possibilities of retake in case of permanent evaluation

examination during the second examination period is possible in modified form

Extra information on the examination methods

Periodical evaluation: written exam consists of

- One or more survey questions regarding the lectures' subject matter;
- One or more comparative questions regarding the lectures' subject matter;
- A few specific detailed questions (i.e. key concepts and figures) regarding the lectures' subject matter;
- One essay-question probing the student's capability to relate the subject matter to a concrete sustainability issue.

Non-periodical evaluation:

- First exam period: scoring on participation in group exercise, quality of paper and presentations, taking into account the assimilation of received suggestions and critiques.
- Second exam period: only possible in modified form, i.e. scoring on a short individual paper dealing with the theme dealt with in the group writing assessment.

Calculation of the examination mark

Periodic assessment : 70%

Continuous assessment : 30%