

COURSE CONTENT

Course Code / Title : HS0301 Environmental Sustainability

Pre-requisites : None

No. of AUs. : 3

Contact Hours : 39

Course Aims

Our planet is undergoing radical environmental and social changes. Environmental sustainability has now been put into question by, for example, our consumption patterns, loss of biodiversity, depletion of resources, and exploitative power relations. With apparent ecological and social limits to globalization and development, the current levels of consumption are unsustainable, inequitable, and inaccessible to the majority of humans. Understanding the environmental sustainability is a crucial matter at a time when our planet is in peril - both environmentally and socially. This course will show possible pathways for a sustainable earth.

Twenty years after the Rio summit in 1992, world leaders met in Rio once again in 2012 to discuss the environmental challenges facing the humanity. It was a time for them to reflect on how successful and effective the international community has been over the past two decades in managing the major identified environmental problems. Are we still facing the same environmental problems? Have there been improvements in the situation or are we worse off? Environmental and social vulnerabilities will continue to exist twenty years from now and beyond. The question is what kind of steps can and should be taken to manage these vulnerabilities? Have they been taken? Do countries across the globe experience the same type and degree of vulnerabilities? Or is the distribution of these vulnerabilities uneven? How is the distribution of these vulnerabilities decided and by whom? What are the prospects for a sustainable planet? This course will explore and examine environmental sustainability from both local and global contexts. Singapore being located in an environmentally vulnerable zone ardently needs courses like this.

Intended Learning Outcomes (ILO)

By the end of the course, you should be able to:

1. Explain the limits and possibilities of an environmentally sustainable planet.
2. Describe the key theories of the nature-society interactions.
3. Evaluate economic patterns, environmental landscapes, and social structures.
4. Apply critical lenses to current consumption patterns in order to make them environmentally sound, socially responsible, and culturally friendly.

Course Content

Week 1: Introduction: Learning about the environment

[Key issues/questions: We will discuss the course outline focusing on its objectives, pedagogy, scopes, expectations, evaluations, and weekly schedules]

Week 2: Global 'tragedy of the commons'

Key issues/questions: What are the environmental and social challenges/dilemmas we are facing today? Are they natural or anthropogenic? Are we facing a 'tragedy of the commons'? This week sets the agenda for the crying need for environmental sustainability]

Week 3: Sustainability: Historical trajectories

[Key issues/questions: What is sustainable development? Is there any tension between economy and the environment? What are the historical trajectories of sustainable development? What are different modalities of sustainable development? How can we translate our understanding of sustainability into practice? What are managerial strategies for and alternative paths to sustainable development?]

Week 4: Sustainability: Theoretical underpinnings

[Key issues/questions: What are different theoretical traditions of sustainable development? What is ecological modernization theory? How is it working? Is it a viable alternative to the current economic practices? What are the limits and possibilities of ecological modernization theory?]

Week 5: When nature strikes: Disaster vulnerabilities

[Key issues/questions: Are natural disasters really 'natural'? What are the causes and consequences of disasters? Are disasters linked to climate change? How do disasters affect society and the environment? How to manage disasters in effective manners?]

Week 6: Global Climate Politics: Deals and Disturbances

[Key issues/questions: Why is climate change a 'major' sustainability issue today? What are the global responses to this crisis? What are the policy options to address global warming?]

Week 7: Globalization and Sustainability

[Key issues/questions: What is globalization? What sustainability challenges are we facing under neoliberal globalization? What is the world coming to? What transformations are needed for global sustainability?]

Week 8: Sustainable Food: Safety, security and sovereignty

[Key issues/questions: How serious is the problem of global population growth? How to feed 8 billion people in next 50 years? Why and how are movements surrounding food safety, security and sovereignty emerging today? What is the future of food with green and bio-tech revolution?]

Week 9: Sustainable Energy: Security and alternatives

[Key issues/questions: Is fossil-fuel based energy sustainable? Is war for oil inevitable destiny for the humanity? What alternatives do we have? Is bio-fuel ecologically sustainable?]

Week 10: Sustainable Fish and Forest: Environmental certifications

[Key issues/questions: What are the key challenges with sustainable fish and forest? What international regulations do we have to address this sustainability issue? What are the limits and possibilities of environmental certification?]

Week 11: Sustainable Planet: Politics, Paradoxes, and Pathways

[Key issues/questions: What are central paradoxes and politics of sustainable development today? What are the broader pathways for a sustainable earth? Is new politics needed? What are emerging perspectives in global environmental governance?]

Week 12: Future of Global Environmental Politics

[Key issues/questions: What is environmentalism? How is environmentalism successful in addressing and resolving sustainability problems? What have we achieved so far from our three decades of environmental politics?]

Week 13: Revision and Future Sustainable Agenda

Course Assessment

CA1 In-class quiz/test : 20%

CA2 Class participation : 10%

CA3 Final Project : 30%

Final Examination : 40%

Total -----
100%