



UNIVERSITÀ  
DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA

## COURSE SYLLABUS

### Human Geography of Small Island Systems

2324-1-F7502Q016

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#### Aims

Mainly referring to the general framework of the Island Studies, the course aims to provide a set of tools useful to the analysis of socio-spatial dynamics within island systems. Furthermore the course aims to provide tools and interpretative models useful to understand how, at local scale, human communities (privately, socially and politically) cope with socio-environmental changes, crises, conflicts and transitions by producing a set of resilient practices, knowledge and adjustments

#### Contents

Geography of Archipelagos and Island States; Human Geography of Islands; Human Ecology of Island Systems; Environmental challenges in Small Island States; Trans-scalar Spatial Analysis of Island Systems; Environmental Policies of Small Island States, Islands as Ecotones, Archipelago and Aquapelagos

#### Detailed program

The course will be structured in two parts:

I. The first part of the course will be dedicated to the study of the human geography of islands and archipelagic states. Students will apply, even by adopting a critical perspective, a set of patterns and paradigms (such as isolation, vulnerability, distribution, concentration, center-periphery relationship and spatial dispersion), in order to understand the role of spatial features in shaping socio-environmental processes. Furthermore reading these socio-environmental processes by adopting a trans-scalar perspective helps students and researchers to stress the complexity of the human ecology of islands, coastal areas and archipelagic systems.

**II.** The second part of the course will be dedicated to the reading, at local scale, of the set of social, political and spatial measures and adjustments that human communities adopt to deal with the environmental challenges affecting island systems.

Lessons:

- Island Studies: an introduction
- Some interpretative categories
- Human ecology: an introduction
- The geography of islands and island states
- The human ecology of islands
- Small Island States: some environmental issues
- Small islands: geography
- Small islands: human geography
- Small islands: sustainability
- Small islands: resilience and social response to change
- Small Islands in the Mediterranean
- Environmental changes and challenges of the Maldivian Islands

## **Prerequisites**

## **Teaching form**

Classes will be provided by lessons, discussions of scientific papers, analysis of national and international reports, and reading of environmental assessments.

Students will be asked to work directly on a set of case studies, focusing on the geographical relevance of the environmental changes affecting small island systems in local, regional and supra-regional contexts.

The human geography of the Maldives will represent a reference for the understating of the interactions among human and environmental systems in small island states and archipelagos.

Oral classes + slides (weekly uploaded on moodle)

Readings, paper discussions and question time sessions will be included.

Lectures will be recorded, students may request to view them

Teacher and students will focus on the development of a set of scientific and soft skills and knowledge (see assessment method):

work on scientific literature,  
oral presentation,  
preparation of a presentation,  
reading,  
teamwork skills,  
deal with research question,  
literature review,  
knowledge of topics and models provided during the lessons

## **Textbook and teaching resource**

### **References:**

- A selection of essays from: Ratter B. (2018), *Geography of Small Islands*, Springer, London
- Baldacchino, G. (2008). Studying Islands: On Whose Terms? Some Epistemological and Methodological Challenges to the Pursuit of Island Studies. *Island Studies Journal*, 3(1), 37-56.
- Depraetere C., 2008, The Challenge of Nissiology (part 1), *Island Studies Journal*, Vol.3, No. 1, pp. 3-16
- Depraetere C., 2008, The Challenge of Nissiology (part 2), *Island Studies Journal*, Vol.3, No. 1, pp. 17-36
- Hay P., 2006, A Phenomenology of Islands, *Island Studies Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 2006, pp. 19-42
- J?drusik M., 2014, The elusive sustainable development of small tropical islands, *Miscellanea Geographica. Regional Studies on Development*, 18, 3, 26-30
- Kelman, I. (2014). No change from climate change: vulnerability and small island developing states. *The Geographical Journal*, 180(2), 120-129.
- Malatesta S., Schmidt di Friedberg M., (2017), Environmental policy and climate change vulnerability in the Maldives: From the 'lexicon of risk' to social response to change, *Island Studies Journal*, 12, 1, 2017, pp. 53-70
- Malatesta S., (2018), International actors as policymakers? Discussing the influence of international actors on the environmental policies of small island states, *Small States & Territories Journal*, 1, 1, pp. 95-110.
- Royle, 1989, A Human Geography of Islands, *Geography*, 74, 2, 106-116
- Stratford et al., 2011, Envisioning the Archipelago, *Island Studies Journal*, Vol.6, No. 2, pp. 113-130

Additional essays and case studies could be provided during the lessons.

## **Semester**

FIRST YEAR, SECOND SEMESTER

## **Assessment method**

ORAL EXAM.

Assessment method will be shared with students during the first lesson (see CLASSES\_ LESSON 1)

Assessment is based on three assignment:

Chapter presentation (oral) (to assess: work on scientific literature, oral presentation, preparation of a presentation, reading )

Teamwork activity (to assess: work on scientific literature, teamwork skills, deal with research question, literature review)

Paper writing (to assess: scientific writing, literature review, knowledge of topics and models provided during the lessons)

FINAL MARK: the average of the marks obtained in the three tasks

Please note: students are asked to work on paper, case studies and other documents according to the guidelines provided.

### **Office hours**

Friday 2,30-3,30 pm (Agorà (U6) Room 4147, IV floor) please write to [stefano.malatesta@unimib.it](mailto:stefano.malatesta@unimib.it)

### **Sustainable Development Goals**

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION | CLIMATE ACTION | LIFE BELOW WATER

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